

The background is an abstract watercolor painting. It features a mix of vibrant colors including reds, pinks, yellows, and purples, with some darker, almost black, silhouettes of what might be leaves or abstract shapes. The colors are blended and layered, creating a rich, textured effect. The overall composition is dynamic and colorful.

HASP REVIEW

2018

*An Anthology
of written work
and original art
By members of HASP
Volume XXVII*

GALAXIES

HASP *Review* 2018

Volume XXVII



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Cover Art – Galaxies
By

Jane Lindemuth



Not long ago I participated in a watercolor class where the concept of “loose” painting was demonstrated. The idea is to let the water do the painting. Consequently, control of the paint is not exact, but it can be coaxed with some gentle maneuvering. This is what I was practicing as I pretended to “create” a galaxy to go with the written piece I had submitted to the *HASP Review*.

My initial goal was to capture just a little bit of the wonders of space – and the beauty that we cannot begin to imagine, or see, from Earth. As I sat dribbling colors onto water-soaked paper, delighting in shapes that emerged each time paint touched that page, I learned that “creating galaxies” is a lot of fun.

You might see some blobs of paint on this cover. Or your imagination might allow you to see my idea of galaxies in the making. Or you might see yourself as the joy and the light exploding from the core of who you are and what resides in your spirit.

Jane Lindemuth

Chairman's Notes



Donna Bogle
Chairman of Communications Committee

We began the year growing the committee to 12, with a new Editor-in-Chief. This is how we change, progress and thrive. Looking at the results of the summer survey, we became more aware of how the *Review* encourages reflection, engagement and aging well among HASP members.

Encouragement to write or draw for the anthology was expressed by blurbs written by committee members for the Monthly Bulletin. Writing “prompts” were available in January, February and March at monthly meetings and reinforced by President Judy Parr verbally. Some of you were inspired to use one of those.

Having a writing class available to members also supplied us with interesting and well-written material for the *Review*. The art editors solicited illustrations from member artists and sprinkled these throughout this issue. The full color cover by Jane Lindemuth became the inspiration for division headings. Many pieces were submitted for consideration and all were worthy, so keep drawing.

As you read this issue, be aware that it takes courage to be a writer or a visual artist: It can be daunting to be in front of an audience for the first or tenth time. Therefore, I would ask you to contact by email or phone or in person the author of a piece that gives you hope, solace, inspiration, a chuckle or enlightenment. Start the conversation and see where it leads you. And my sincere “Bravo!” to each member represented in this HASP *Review* 2018.

From the Editor



Bob Godfrey
Editor-in-Chief

As you peruse the following pages, take time to enjoy the stories, drawings, paintings and photos that make up the 2018 HASP *Review*. Some are serious; some are joyful. Some are funny; some are sad. Some evoke memories; some portray futures. All are written, painted, drawn, sketched and photographed by your friends, neighbors and associates. All are submitted and published here as HASP. We are HASP.

And that's the point. HASP members come together every year to sing their songs, raise their voices, communicate their hopes and sorrows, joys and regrets. They – and we – are all here, in this *Review*. We thank them for writing, illustrating and sharing their lives. It's not easy to do this. Creating is hard work. There are no soft or easy ways. And that's not the half of it!

Behind the scenes, the HASP Communications Committee has been meeting regularly since last fall, as it does every year. The Committee encourages HASP members to contribute. Praises their efforts. Reviews their work (twice per submission). Retypes it into Word documents. Edits it again. Two more times. Selects the cover. Organizes and lays out the submissions into the format you see here. Prints and proofs the galleys. And, finally, re-reads the entire tome before green-lighting the printing of the final product.

So there you have it. The best HASP literary and artistic work of 2017-18, all attractively packaged for you, for your families and for your friends. Enjoy. And do let us know what you think. We always like to hear from you.

Table of Contents

Cover Art – Galaxies	1
Chairman’s Notes.....	2
From the Editor	3
Table of Contents.....	4
Big Bang Theory	7
A Medical “STORM”	8
A Not So “Endeering” Story	10
A World War II-Era Memory.....	13
Christmas Memories	14
Encountering the Dutch Couple	16
It Happened to Me At the Airport	18
Kindergartner Walk to School.....	20
Submitted Art	21
Miracle on Ice.....	22
Misa Kuribayashi	24
Moving to the Big City – My Athletic Beginning	26
My Brushes with the Presidency.....	28
Once a Yooper.....	31
Submitted Art	33
Sledge	34
So This Little Freckle-Faced Kid... ..	36
The ABCs of the Old School House	37
The Walk.....	39
The Die is Cast	40
What I Had Hoped to Become and What I Became.....	42
What I Learned at the Country School.....	45
Submitted Art	47
Luminosity	48

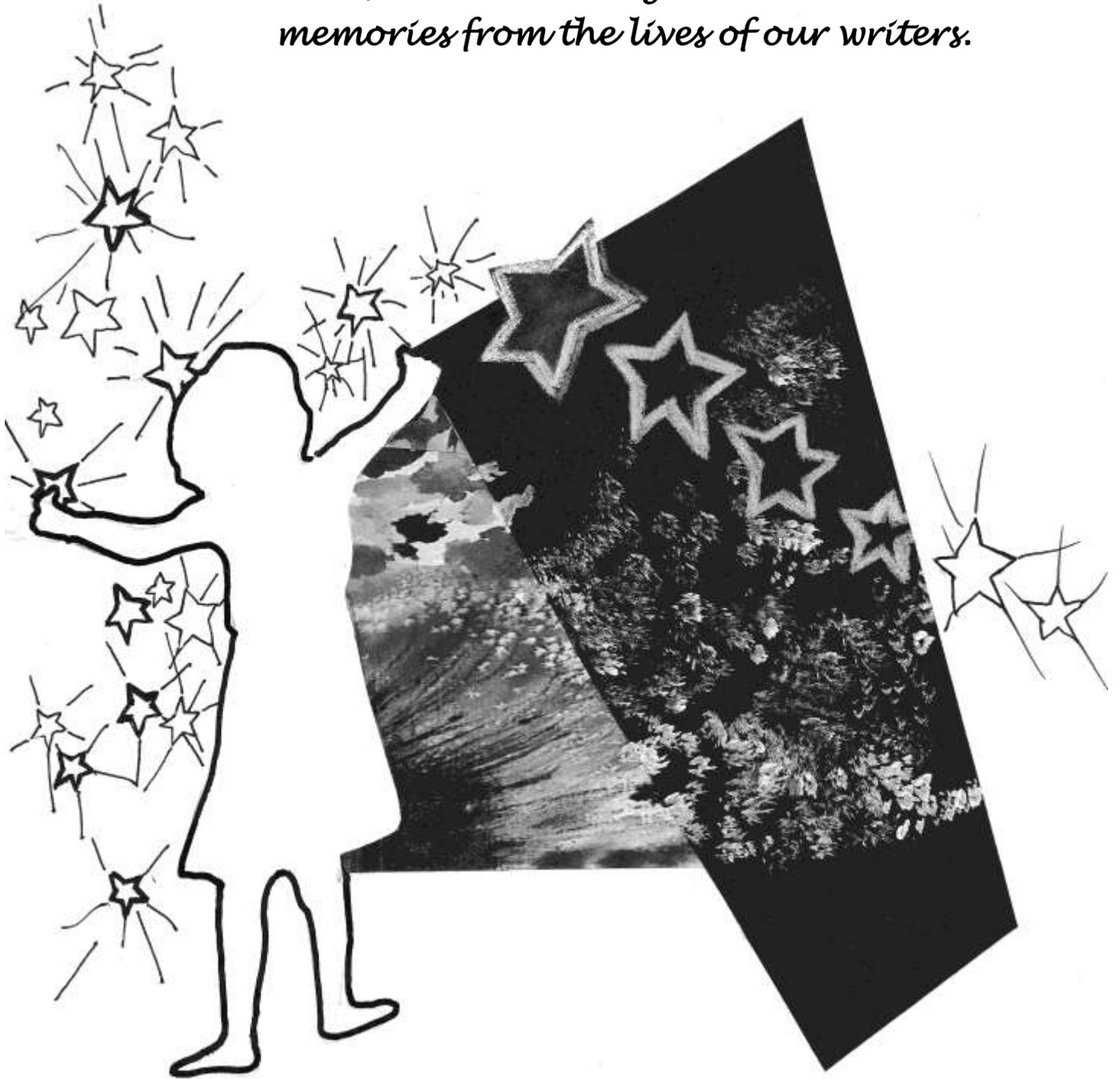
A Great Refugee Story	49
An Unforgettable Christmas Eve	51
Context	53
Diagramming the First Sentence of the Declaration of Independence.....	54
Dominga	56
From Sailing to Lifelong Learning.....	59
Galaxies.....	61
Hands.....	63
He’s Just a Mutt!	64
Submitted Art	67
Maggie.....	68
Pre-Dawn.....	70
The Importance of Insects to a Little Girl.....	72
The Voice of Art	74
Submitted Art	76
Trilogy.....	77
Wallpaper	81
Star Cluster.....	82
Aftershock	83
Then Comes the Dawn	85
I Think I Am Praying	87
Submitted Art	88
Words	89
To You – Death Comes.....	90
The Greatest Gifts Come in Small Packages	91
It’s All in Your Mind	92
Missing You	93
Singles Group.....	94
Song for Suzanne	95
The Cane Mutiny.....	96
The Loss of Summer	98

Submitted Art	99
Comets	100
Acronyms	101
Soaring Imagination	102
The Never-Ending Trip	104
Cell Phones.....	107
The Purple Suit.....	108
How to Make a Marine Corps General Laugh	110
The Coincidental Meeting.....	112
Oscar.....	116
Fingers.....	118
Cupid’s Difficult Assignment	121
Let’s Make a Deal	123
Mountain Rescue.....	125
My Time in San Quentin State Prison.....	127
Bowling across State Lines	130
Sleepless in Saugatuck	133
Tank, Sally and the Roller Dome	135
Bay City Beauties.....	137
Veni, Vidi, Vici	139
Our Artists.....	142
Submission Index by Author/Artist	143
Your Communications Committee at Work	144

Big Bang Theory

*The beginning of it all - our universe
and our 2018 Review*

*Our first section begins and ends with
memories from the lives of our writers.*





A Medical “STORM”

In October 2015 I was hit by a storm. It did not involve wind or rain or snow. It did involve gravity. The storm, at first, was very severe. Then it became less fierce and gradually (too gradually) receded with almost all elements of the damage gone.

I was putting summer toys and chairs into the attic above the garage. I had one more item to put there – a large inner tube to fit in. I climbed up into the attic to adjust the extension ladder to allow the inner tube. I adjusted the ladder from the top – a very bad decision. One should always adjust it from the bottom. I took a couple of steps down; a step gave way and gravity took me to the garage floor.

My wife and a neighbor came to my aid. One of them called 911. In a few minutes police and an ambulance arrived. I was taken to Holland Hospital. X-rays showed the extent of the “storm” damage and an ambulance took me to Spectrum Hospital in Grand Rapids. On the way the emergency staff asked for my Social Security number. I knew it. My wife was very pleased. Thankfully I didn’t hit my head on the concrete. If I had, I wouldn’t have known my SS # and I would not have been able to write this essay.

The x-rays revealed five broken vertebrae, three broken ribs, and a fractured neck and tail bone. The doctor pondered what to do. He decided not to fuse my tail bone and neck to my vertebrae, in order to provide a little more flexibility in my back. He told

my wife he wanted to do it the way he would have done it for his father.

My back was fused with metal plates, screws, synthetic material and human cadaver parts. I would rather have had gorilla cadaver! I don’t remember much from my days at Spectrum. The medical storm and medication put me “out of it.”

Nine days later I was transferred to the Inn at Freedom Village in Holland. I had a front and back turtle shell as well as a neck brace. The latter was the worst because of the discomfort and difficulty with eating and talking. The bed was not lifted higher than 30 degrees. I had many visitors: my wife and family, church members, neighbors, tennis friends, HASP members and more. The nurses and physical and occupational therapists were very caring and useful. They helped me ride out the medical storm I was in. They were literally a godsend for me and my family.

I went, by ambulance, back to Grand Rapids to Mary Free Bed Rehabilitation Hospital. This is a state-of-the-art facility. There are great physical and occupational therapists there. A side benefit in weathering my medical storm was that I ate very good food which I picked from a menu! I played games, walked with a walker, took memory tests, lifted weights, played Wii tennis, rode a stationary bicycle and much more.

On January 13, 2016, I went home, after many weeks away. Well, I did get to go home for one day on January 1. The

recovery from my medical storm damage was slow but sure. An occupational therapist helped with navigating me around our home. The physical therapist got me doing upper-body and lower-body exercises. The therapists' names were Charity and Angela!

As the medical storm damage receded, I began returning to all my normal activities – church, walking, doing the dishes, vacuuming the carpet, HASP classes, watching basketball games, playing with grandchildren and driving. I started to drive again in April 2016. I went twice a week and then once a week to outpatient physical therapy until January 2017. In the summer I mowed the lawn and walked two or three miles outside or on the treadmill. In winter I cleared the driveway with a snow blower. As I continued my recovery from the medical storm, I had two goals: riding a bike

and playing tennis. I have not yet tried the bike. I have hit a tennis ball across the net with friends and family, but lack the court coverage to play regular tennis. I now play pickle ball at the Commons of Evergreen.

There are a few elements which helped me survive this medical storm. First, I was surrounded by people who shared their love and concern. In my theology their love was the presence of God's love for me. I am also somehow blessed by a tilt toward thinking positively. I could have been depressed or angry at myself for making the ladder mistake. I didn't lose my sense of humor. I kept telling "John jokes," my punny responses to other people. Our daughters laugh at them even though they think they are dumb. And if someone asks if I have any allergies, I respond that I do – gravity.





A Not So “Endeering” Story

Whether or not it happened, and if it did, whether or not it happened in the way it was told, the telling and retelling of its happening seldom failed to inject a great deal of carbonation into any conversation concerning it.

As it was, I don't recall ever seeing the bears, wolves, coyotes or poisonous snakes that history and lore alleged once roamed in the woods and along the Indian trails of what eventually would become the site on which our little town took root. But growing up, I do recall having seen plenty of pheasant and deer. While even to this day I marvel at the beautiful feathers of the white-ringed neck of a pheasant, it's the symmetry and size of a deer's rack that has always held my fascination. Even though I've never participated in the fall ritual of deer hunting, nor have I ever come to truly appreciate it as a sport, I admit the whole endeavor still fascinates me.

Back then, there was no mistaking who the deer hunters were. Besides toting rifles of various lengths and calibers, their apparel gave them away. Most hunters back then wore a canvas-like, coffee-and-cream-colored jacket over suspender-supported, blood-, grease-, and mud-stained trousers, which typically rested atop a pair of often unlaced rubber boots bearing any number of mismatching patches. To the back of these jackets, those who were law abiding would pin their annually required deer hunting license in what typically was a not-so-clear see-through plastic envelope purported to contain and shield one's hunting license from the elements.

For ease in loading and reloading one's rifle – whenever such loading and reloading might be required – the fronts of these earlier hunting jackets featured a series of corrugated loops designed in such a way as to contain, as well as make readily accessible, the ever-popular 12-,14-, or 16-gauge red, yellow or green shells. It would only be later, when styles changed and things evolved to a point that deer rifles were capable of containing clips with a sufficient number of rounds to take down an entire herd without reloading, that those once-popular bullet-clutching loops became redundant. And like most things that no longer have a purpose, those loops gradually disappeared. Despite the destructive nature of modern-day deer rifles, I confess that those linear arrays of looped bullets, for some reason, appeared to be far more lethal to me.

To complete their attire, most deer hunters back then wore funny-looking Elmer Fudd-like ear-flapped caps that could be pulled down to keep their ears warm on colder days and could be pulled up and tied together with a neat little bow atop heads whenever the weather would be more balmy. These caps rested atop often difficult-to-identify faces. Difficult to identify because many of the hunters who wore them were sprouting seasonally appropriate and, one could only assume, spouse-approved beards.

This entire scene never failed to tickle my funny bone. However, given that these hunters always looked so serious and

intentional, not to mention the fact that they were toting guns, even as a youngster I recall thinking it best to keep my snickering to myself.

I was not yet in my teens when I first heard the story about how one of our locals who, for reasons soon to be evident, had come to be known around our neck of the woods as “Buck.” Though I presume he has long since gone to that happy hunting ground in the sky, his story lives on among those of us old enough to recall it. Because I realize there may be a certain amount of risk in retelling Buck's story, given that some of his family and friends might still be living with a lingering sensitivity to the incident, I apologize in advance.

By the way of background, Buck was always considered highly successful, at least when it came to deer hunting. It would be as uncommon for him not to get at least one deer a season, as it would be for him not to get his deer on opening day.

As the story is told, on this one particular opening day Buck shot a deer considered by those who knew anything about such things as a “hanger.” In colloquial terms, a “hanger” was defined by outdoorsmen as something caught or shot worthy of being mounted and hung above a fireplace – assuming that the woman of the house agreed to such mountings and hangings. (Come to think of it, perhaps it was the lack of such approval that explains why so many deer heads were prominently hung somewhere on the outside of garages or barns for the benefit of passersby, but I digress.)

The fact is on this one particular opening day, the deer that Buck shot sported a 14-point rack, making it the largest rack ever “officially” recorded in the area to that date.

That gave him all the more reason to participate in what had, over the years, evolved into a tradition among the locals. Downing a deer of *any consequence* – as defined by those who participated in this annual deer hunting event to be a buck whose rack bore evidence of anything north of six points – gave its shooter an unwritten, but locally approved, invitation to participate in the local tradition.

It began by tying the carcass of a deer of *any consequence* to the hood or front fender of one's car or pickup using cord, rope or binder twine. The proud hunter would then parade the carcass of his prized deer up, down and around the main street of our town. To gain the full impact, the deer was typically poised and positioned on the hood or fender in such a way as to “show off” its rack. Despite the gore of the gaping bloodied gutted hole in the deer's belly, and the fact its tongue might be hanging out as if it had just finished running a marathon, the antlers flattered the deer to such an extent that most of these displays elicited the oohs and aahs, if not merely the attention, of any number of random onlookers.

So it was that Buck, using some discarded twine, tied his 14-point prize to the front quarter-panel of his 1950 Ford pickup truck that unfortunately bore evidence of more rust and wear than any vehicle ought to be required to bear – much less paraded before a public. However, in Buck's defense, it was all about the deer. The truck was just a means by which to display it.

Despite the fact the daily temperatures during these *parade-ings* could potentially negatively impact the quality of the meat, the general consensus among deer hunters seemed to be that shooting a deer of *any consequence* had more to do with displaying than with consuming it.

This particular day was warmer than usual. Buck was seemingly ignorant of, or merely ignoring the possibility of, potential spoilage and many onlookers judged Buck's vanity as merely a waste of good meat. Typically such maneuvers would be concluded after three or four trips around town, but many onlookers that day swore that Buck made the circuit at least 12 or 13 times before his luck ran out.

On what would prove to be Buck's final circuit around town, somehow the fender on which the deer had been tied took leave of the truck, with its temporary burden still attached. Both came crashing down onto the road. Because it all happened so quickly, before Buck could react to the sudden departure of his fender and his fender-tethered deer, he had run over both. A quick assessment of the damage proved the fender to be beyond repair and the deer to have been relieved of a goodly number of its points.

Many of those who witnessed this tragedy were steeped in the Holy Scriptures, and though the caution in the Proverbs about "Pride going before the fall" seemed applicable, because it had all happened so quickly few made such a judgment or even found the humor in it all until much later. Instead, most onlookers found themselves feeling sorry for Buck as they watched him on hands and knees, gathering up the scattered antler remains and placing them, along with the carcass of the deer and what was left of the fender, in the back of his truck.

Needless to say, that deer disappeared never to be seen again, and rumor has it that despite shooting his share of deer after that incident, Buck never again participated in the local tradition of parading a deer of *any consequence* up, down and around the main streets of town.

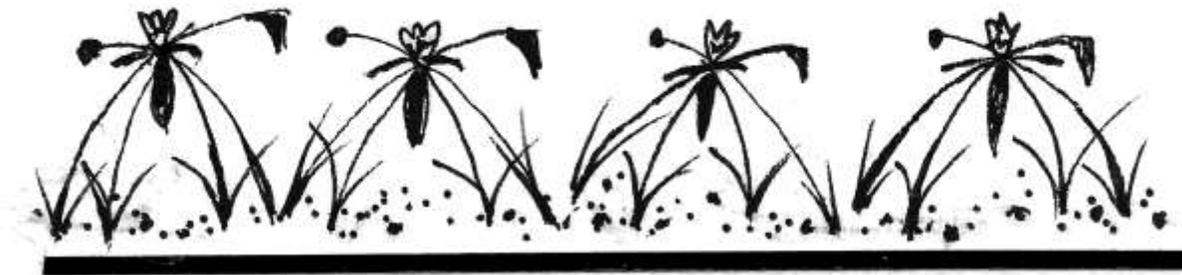


Illustration by Mary Porter



A World War II-Era Memory

Muskegon, Michigan, had become a war industry town, and the foundries and factories were operating 24/7. Hourly wages were time-and-a-half for overtime, double time for weekends. I was ten years old, and every Wednesday afternoon after school, I walked to the end of the city bus line to take the bus (five cents for kids) to our church for a children’s Bible study/catechism class.

One Wednesday afternoon I got on the bus as usual, and several stops later a man got on, apparently heading to work on the second shift at one of the factories. Amid the chattering among the passengers, that man’s

loud voice stood out. “I hope this war goes on forever. I’ve never made so much money!” I remember a stunned silence among the passengers.

Suddenly the driver slammed on the brakes and the bus screeched to a stop. “GET OFF MY BUS!” the driver yelled as he opened the bus door. That passenger, without another word, got up and left the bus in the middle of a block. There was an awkward silence among the passengers. The bus proceeded along its route, and one ten-year-old pondered the meaning of patriotism – and the power of greed.





Christmas Memories

1950s

I remember standing on tiptoes, looking out the kitchen window and seeing white snow on the orchards below.

I remember the music of Christmas carols.

I remember my sisters and me playing a piano trio of “We Three Kings” for our grandparents.

I remember waiting and waiting and waiting for Christmas.

I remember running to my father’s dresser and pulling out his big, warm work socks to hang by the fireplace. They would hold so many more toys than my own small stockings.

I remember jumping out of bed and running downstairs to see the tree, the lights and the presents.

I remember seeing the precious “walking doll” standing next to my stocking.

I remember....

1980s

I remember my husband driving our young family through the snow to Grandma’s house.

I remember aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, cousins and grandchildren.

I remember Sue and Joe, Ruthie and Mike driving all the way from Pennsylvania.

I remember the house smelling of popcorn and hot chocolate.

I remember the special games from Grandma’s classroom that the children loved to play with.

I remember Beth getting a whole backpack of new toys from Uncle Hal and the little girls getting special nightgowns that could be colored and decorated.

I remember baby Elena with her bright red hair.

I remember Grandpa talking with each of his children and reflecting on their good lives and their good children – just three days before he died.

I remember the sound of Uncle Steve playing the piano and the rest of us gathering around to sing.

I remember Grandma and Grandpa loving us all.

I remember....

2000s

I remember Christmas at Grandma’s condo in St. Joseph.

I remember Uncle David driving us along the bluff to see the marvelous Christmas lights.

I remember Kimberly, Beth and Jon coming home from college to celebrate with us and Kimberly singing a solo at midnight church.

I remember Stephen loved to swim in the pool and Grandma loved to listen to Lawrence Welk.

I remember Aunt Sue sending us all socks from Pennsylvania—and Katie's were bright pink!

I remember the taste of Aunt Jean's cookies and the smell of Aunt Becky's pot roast.

I remember playing cards and Scrabble and double solitaire and talking long into the night.

I remember....

2012

I remember Grandma in the nursing home – ill and close to death. “Non-responsive,” the doctor said.

And we were gathered around her – her children and grandchildren.

I remember we felt lost and didn't know what to do – and then Uncle Steve said, “Let's sing to her.”

And so we sang to her for an hour. We sang every Christmas song we knew. And we surrounded her with love.

And I remember, after an hour, looking at her face and realizing that she had quit breathing.

Sometime in that hour, surrounded by the love of her family, she had quietly passed away.

I remember....

2017

And now – now is a new time.

We who were young are old.

The children are grown, the grandchildren are scattered –
To Illinois, Indiana, New York and Florida.

And yet we are still together, still connected.

Connected by love, caring, blessings and memories.

Those special memories.

I remember....



Illustration by Donna Bogle



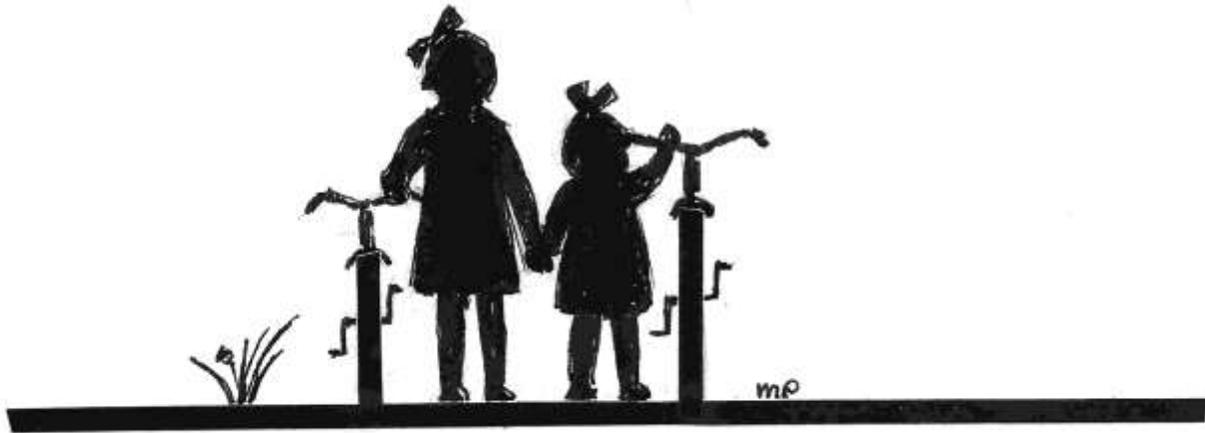
Encountering the Dutch Couple

My girlfriend Jane and I are enjoying the lovely late summer afternoon with our bikes. Although seven-year-old Jane has a bike just her size, I have to ride an adult-sized pre-war bike from my aunt. I am 15 months younger than my friend.

"Let's change bikes." Great idea, we both agree. We know our mothers have

wondering if others see the fun we are having. But men are still working while mothers are preparing food for their families, so there's no audience.

No audience, that is, except the elderly woman rocking on her front porch. She waves to us, so we think, and we wave back. We do not realize that her elderly husband,



established strict rules against exchanging bikes and against bike racing, but the thrill of excitement overrules caution.

Our adventure begins as we turn the corner from Jane's home on the avenue to the street. Enjoying the feel of the wind cooling us down as we travel, we increase our speed as we pass the funeral home, the IGA store and our friend Ali's house, all on the opposite side of the street. We turn the corner and pedal the short avenue across from the church. Rounding the block, we turn again on the street at top speed, laughing and yelling at one another and

Illustration by Mary Porter

pedaling his black Dutch bike, wearing his black Dutch cap and wooden shoes, carrying his dented black lunch bucket, coming home for supper, is turning off the road into his driveway.

Girlfriend Jane makes it past him. I am not so lucky. We crash. He falls. I fall. Our bikes fall. The old lady rushes down the steps, hoping her man is not hurt. I am hurting and extremely embarrassed. I have to get away from the situation fast. I grab my friend's bike (the one that I was riding), quickly give it back to her and guiltily take mine home. Maybe no one will notice, I hope.

I manage to sneak into the house without Mom noticing, and go straight to my bedroom located next to the kitchen. I am shaking and crying when Mom walks in. I learn Jane tattled to her mom, and now I am in serious trouble. Mom reminds me that the rules were made to prevent accidents like mine. What are the consequences? I don't remember if I received a spanking from Dad (he was the punisher when we were really

naughty, and this did qualify!), or if my parents felt the pain I suffered physically and emotionally was sufficient.

That night I am told the Dutchman is fine, for which I am very grateful. I don't remember anything more about the elderly Dutch couple, except that to this day, almost 70 years later, I feel guilt and a touch of pain when I ride past that house.



It Happened to Me At the Airport

When I was leaving for Germany in March, something happened to me at the check-in counter at the airport that left me staring in disbelief at the airline representative. I had been preparing for my six-week vacation for quite some time. Since I have a tight timeline to visit different family members and many close friends all over Germany, I had to do a lot of planning where I would be at which time. All the visits had to be lined up in the direction I was traveling

It was all organized. My brother had made a reservation for dinner with my brothers and sisters-in-law at a beautiful restaurant on my first Sunday there. My sister-in-law made appointments at the hairdresser and pedicurist that I like to go to every time I am in my hometown. Easter reservations had been made at the home of my other sister-in-law, my friends whom I was going to visit knew exactly when and how long I would stay with them, and so and so on! We were all looking forward to seeing each other.

Then, of course, I had also to arrange a lot of things here for the time I would be gone. I had to inform several people and friends of my absence at different activities. I also had to make arrangements with family members to care for my 17-year-old cat, who has only four

teeth and cannot eat dry food any more. I spoil her and feed her one or two teaspoons of paté cat food several times a day. So during my absence she had to be fed at least twice a day and also cuddled, so it was agreed that my daughter, grandson and granddaughter would share this important job. I had to cancel my newspaper and have my mail sent to my daughter's address.

A few weeks earlier, I had started to declutter my two storage rooms. It was amazing what I found because over the years all sorts of things had been dumped in there. It was difficult to decide what to do

with all of it: what to give away, what to throw out, what belonged to my children, what to keep or even what to save for my future great-grandchildren. I had not anticipated that there would be so much to do and it took much longer than I had planned. But I had to have it all done before leaving. Whenever I go away, I want my house to be in perfect order, so I was driving myself a little crazy!



Illustration by Jan Gebben

On the day of my departure, I was ready! I had my suitcases packed, which also was no easy task because any kind of weather is possible in spring. I had to have something to wear for cold, hot, warm, rainy and snowy weather. My daughter picked me up,

and since she has a very busy life, I suggested she just drop me off at the airport. Luckily she wanted to come in and keep me company. So there we were at the check-in counter. A very friendly lady helped us, but when she looked at my passport, she called a colleague, and they talked about it for a while. I was not in the least alarmed because I wanted to come back to the States the beginning of May and my passport was valid until June 27. They looked at me very seriously and told me that I could not fly. After coming back to America, the passport has to be valid for at least three more months, most countries even six months. I could not believe it and I think I stared at them with an open mouth! I had never heard about that and was totally flabbergasted. I even said, "Can't you make an exception? I am a good citizen!" That sounds really stupid now, but I could just not face the fact that my trip was over and done. In the meantime, my daughter had googled it and showed me in writing that that is indeed the law. So what could I do? Nothing, except go home.

On the way home, I quickly recovered. Who knew what all this was good for? I was very disappointed, but why dwell on something that could not be changed. I decided right away that I would postpone my trip until September since I did not want the stress of rearranging everything on short notice.

After that, my daughter and I got quite excited because now I would be here for Easter and we would be able to celebrate this special time together with the whole family. And this year, for a change, I would be here for Tulip Time! I could find more and more reasons why it was quite nice to be

here. And on top of everything, I had something to look forward to – autumn in Germany with all the wine festivals is beautiful.

I had, of course, a long list of phone calls to make. Because of the time difference, I called in the middle of the night to cancel the rental car at the airport and called my brother to tell him that I was not coming that day. The next day I was on the phone for hours and hours informing everybody and repeating the same unbelievable story over and over again.

All in all, I must say that I learned that day that we never stop learning! Of all the people I talked to, here as well as in Germany, only a handful knew about this law. Several people even thanked me for informing them so that they would know this for their next international trip.

It was quite strange to come home so soon after I had left. I came back to a perfectly organized home, and I had never before unpacked a suitcase of only clean clothes.

The aftermath of this decisive day was actually quite funny. Whenever I went shopping or went to events, I would hear, "What are you doing here? Why aren't you in Germany?" One friend told me after church that she glimpsed me walking by and said to a friend, "She looks like Karola, but it cannot be her because she is in Germany." I asked a friend in my bowling group whether I should let everybody know before our next date. "No, no, just come. I want to see their faces!" So I came when everybody was already there, waved a big hello, and they looked as if they were seeing a ghost!



Kindergartner Walk to School

The walk to Harlem one-room school was a mile, a long walk for a kindergartner. The first quarter mile was safe for I could still see our farm house. But then, I had to walk up the small incline and past the Wassink Farm. This was the first wild place on my treacherous and dangerous trek to school. Here is where the fiendish, free-range, attack rooster waited joyously for me each morning. After running past the Wassink house, outrunning the rooster, I had to cross over the Harlem drain bridge, a bridge that may well have had green and yellow trolls and snakes living below, whose wild grasp could capture me. Next on my hazardous journey, I would quietly sneak past the pasture filled with man-eating cows, now on past the 20-foot-high wheat field where anything conjured in my imagination, big and scary, could hide. When I managed my ordeal this far, Marilyn Timmer would join me, and we would continue to school, arm in arm, smiling and skipping for the last quarter mile.

But first I had to make it past the attack rooster, who sprang out of the lilac bushes and chased me every morning. Mom said he would not really hurt me. He just liked my new beautiful red coat that she made for me from one of Aunt Hazel's coats. Dad said nothing, but on Tuesday, after school, Dad had a strongly worded talk with Mr.

Wassink, explaining that his free-range rooster chased me every school-day morning. I felt sure I would be safe for the remainder of the school year.

But Wednesday morning came and so did the attack rooster – running wildly at me, full speed, white wings spread, giant red beak open. I cried and yelled, and ran as fast as I could all the way to the troll-infested bridge.

I heard the gunshot, but I didn't see the ferocious giant bird fall. Frightened as I was, a gunshot made me stop and turn around. The rooster lay in the sandy road, wings spread, beak open. As I raised my eyes to our farm, I saw Dad walking down the hill toward home, gun over his shoulder.

I assume the Wassink family had chicken soup for dinner that evening. No one would let a perfectly healthy bird go to waste.

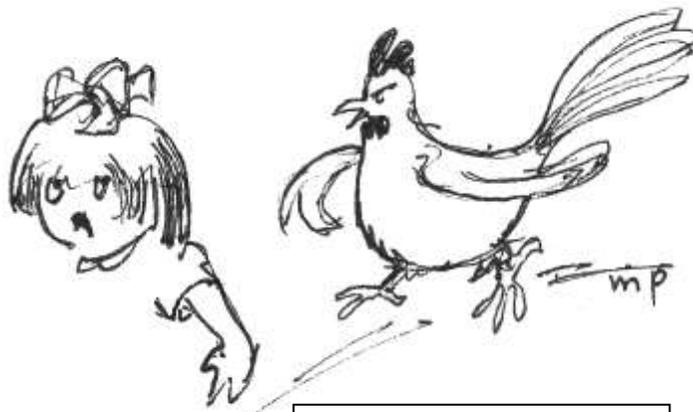
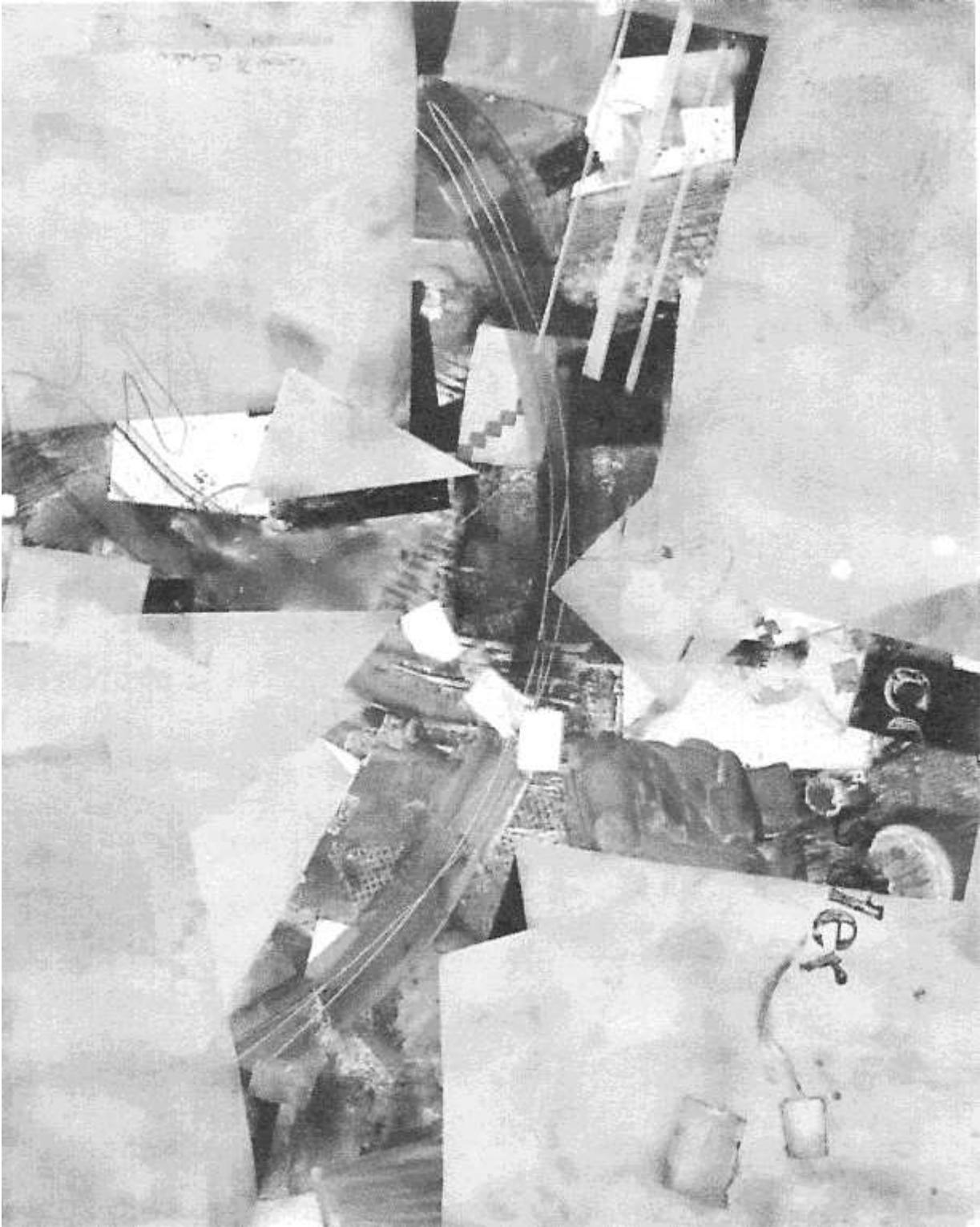


Illustration by Mary Porter



A grayscale representation of an original work by Cindy Bender



Miracle on Ice

The 10,000-seat Olympic Ice Arena was filled to capacity. Even though the temperature was cool inside, the red-hot energy of the spectators warmed the fans. This was the semi-final match of the 1980 Men's Winter Olympic Hockey Team at Lake Placid, New York. The amateur U.S. college men were playing the professional Soviet team. The Russians were highly favored to win and were considered the finest in the world with their four times defending the gold medal run.

The game was tied 2-2 when the Russians added a goal. Then the U.S. team again tied the match, and in the last few seconds scored again to win. The crowd went wild as the Russians stood silent. How could this have happened? The game came to be referred to as "Miracle on Ice," and later a movie by the same name was produced. The last step to winning the gold was a match with Finland. It was secured and the Americans won gold.

Lake Placid was part of a planned tour that my wife and I recently had in the Adirondacks. As we sat in the rink where "Miracle On Ice" took place, our guide relived that event with great emotion. He explained how Lake Placid secured both the 1932 and 1980 Olympics. This certainly put the area on the map.

The 1932 Winter Olympics, though not as spectacular as the 1980, still held some interesting events. The-then New York governor, Franklin Roosevelt, opened the event. Figure skater Sonja Henie took gold. She would later become a movie star. Seventeen countries participated and the U.S. took 12 medals (6 gold, 4 silver and 2 bronze). It would seem that the earlier event set the stage for the big 1980 event.

Lake Placid is a relatively small city of 2,500 people, but this did not prohibit it from securing these international events. It is the only U.S. city that has hosted two Winter Olympics and only one of three in the world to do the same. One problem that other Olympic cities had was that they invested such large amounts of money in the facilities but then these were relatively unused after the events. Even today, prospective Olympians use the area for summer and winter practice. The ice rinks are used for lesser competitions. The ski jumps, which are considered the best in the world, are outfitted with plastic for summer use.



To cut down the cost of construction, the cities put to use already existing buildings. The classic-style high school is right next to the ice arena. It was closed for a month and

housed the television and media coverage. In 1980, a new federal prison had not yet opened and was used to house 1,000 athletes as the Olympic Village. Our guide said the only way we could see it now was to commit a crime. Artificial snow was first used here, and the entire downtown area was closed to vehicular traffic.

A building that houses the hockey arena also has an Olympic museum. One of the most spectacular record holders is Eric Heiden. In

1980 he won gold in all five speed-skating events.

Lake Placid was an iron mining town. Today it is a tourist destination with 70 percent of the visits in the summer. Lake Placid leaders have used the games to keep the city vital. Today it has 2,000 lodging rooms, but to host the Olympics again 40,000 rooms would be needed, Chances are slim that that could happen. There is still enough to do here to be a stop in the Adirondacks.



Misa Kuribayashi

I first met Misa Kuribayashi in September 1961, in Saga, Japan, where we had just moved to serve as missionaries cooperating with a group of Japanese churches. These many years later, her story continues to inspire me.

Mrs. Kuribayashi was married to a well-known dentist in Saga City, on Japan's southern island of Kyushu, and worked as her husband's assistant in his dental clinic. He was an active supporter and board member of both a local Shinto shrine and a Buddhist temple, and was prejudiced against and adamantly opposed to Christianity. Near them lived a Reformed Church missionary couple, the Rev. Stephen Ryder and his wife, Reba, who were assisting the Japanese pastors in the churches of the Saga area during the 1920s. They went for dental care to Dr. Kuribayashi's clinic, and they often invited the Kuribayashis to attend church services. Misa showed an interest in going, but her husband forbade it. However, she was able to visit Mrs. Ryder at the missionaries' home, ostensibly to learn to play the reed organ. The two women met regularly to play the organ and sing hymns and study the Bible, and after some time Misa became a Christian. Forbidden by her husband to attend worship services at Saga Church, she nevertheless surreptitiously read her Bible, but he discovered it and destroyed the book. Despite this persisting tension between them, Misa continued to assist her husband, learning more and more about the practice of dentistry, until she eventually studied for and passed the exams to qualify

as a licensed dentist herself, while also raising their only child, a son.

Their son grew to adulthood and was drafted to serve in the Japanese army in World War II. He was married shortly before leaving for the battlefield, and the young wife lived with her in-laws, a common practice in Japan. She soon learned that she was pregnant. Their son, Shin-ichi, was born with very severe developmental disabilities. The baby's father was killed in the war, never knowing he was a father, and the young mother also died during the war, leaving the child to be raised by his grandmother, Misa. She found that other families faced similar circumstances, with mentally retarded children to care for in a society that rejected them, that saw such birth defects as probably hereditary. Feeling the ostracism, some families tended to hide such children out of a sense of shame. Amid her grief and loss, and caring for her disabled grandson, Misa felt that she could only carry on if she could be sustained by the practice of her Christian faith.

Misa made several bold decisions. Without her husband's permission she was baptized and became an active member of Saga Church. She separated from her husband to escape his persecution, but she acted to save face for him publicly. To support herself, she opened her own separate dental practice across town, but she publicly called it a branch of his clinic. She lived at her clinic, and she of course took her grandson with her. She hired people to help her take care of

him and several other developmentally disabled children. As her dental practice prospered, she bought property next to her clinic, and there established a Christian home for these children. She named it “Megumi-En,” which means “Garden of Blessing.” With the conviction that these children, too, can praise God, she taught them, all from non-Christian homes, to sing and to pray and to know the love of Jesus.

Misa gained approval and a license for the home from the Japanese government welfare department, which meant financial support for operating expenses, while preserving her right to operate as a Christian institution. While continuing to practice dentistry, she served as director of Megumi-En, and she trained the staff needed to care for the children. Fifty resident children were nurtured and educated patiently in a healthy, happy environment. Misa also legally adopted a relative’s child as her daughter; she grew up to become a Christian and to share the vision and become a teacher and leader at Megumi-En. When the daughter later married, her husband also became a Christian, and he, too, shared in the leadership at the home for developmentally disabled children. Meanwhile, Misa’s estranged husband became extremely ill. She returned to his home and nursed him

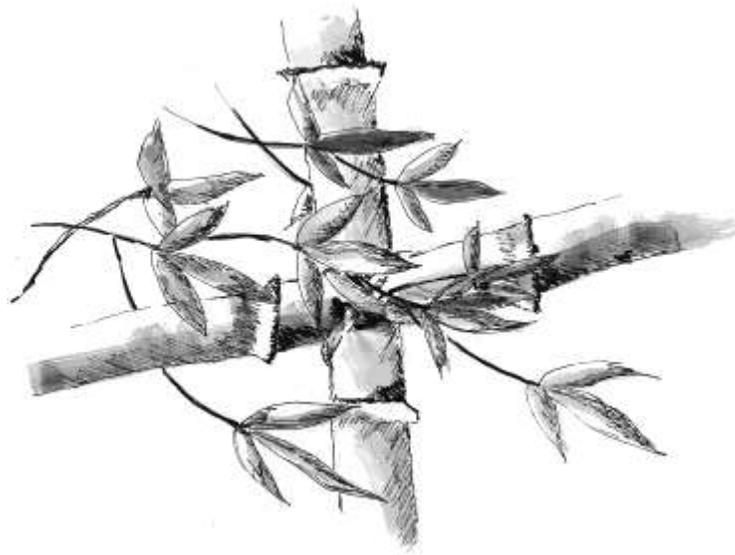


Illustration by Donna Bogle

back to health. All that she had done eventually broke down his opposition and antagonism. He rejoined the family and began to support Megumi-En, serving as chairman of its board of directors.

Megumi-En was licensed to admit and care for children only to the age of 15. After graduation, some were able to return to their families or to enter into a safe environment where they could be employed for low-

skilled work.

Unfortunately, many were taken advantage of and ended up in prostitution or criminal gangs. To address this problem, the

Kuribayashi family established a second Christian home, named Fuji Gaku-En, to serve about 40

developmentally disabled adults. These young adults, classified as not educable but

trainable, were thus able to live in a caring, nurturing, healthy group environment. While living together with many staff members, they were able to learn various skills and to participate in several small-scale farming and industrial projects.

Interestingly, even Dr. Kuribayashi, so long the tormentor of his wife, became a Christian in his seventies and came to support enthusiastically the family’s loving ministry among the developmentally disabled.



Moving to the Big City – My Athletic Beginning

The year 1947 represented a major change in my life. Some special and new opportunities were about to happen. In April I entered Buckingham Junior High as an eighth grader. This was a major event after coming from one- and two-room country schools. My mom joined me to assist this country youngster on his first day. She dressed me in a wool suit and necktie. Unnecessary, we quickly realized.

This first day was the beginning of major changes in my school life. I had moved from a contained country classroom with outdoor toilets into a vibrant and moving educational society. The junior high consisted of grades 7 through 9 with five hundred-plus students. The eighth grade had seven home rooms. Each day, in our assigned home room, we pledged allegiance to the American flag. After some announcements the bell would ring and everyone in the building marched off to the next class. As a home room, we stayed together for the day as we attended classes in English, math, history and others. I later learned that we were all grouped according to test scores prior to entering Buckingham. My home room was classified as 8.6. The smart kids were in the 8.9 home room.

A most important memory was my introduction to gym class or, to be more formal, physical education. This was truly a new experience for me. I was assigned a locker and required to change into a uniform

for class. Also, this was my first introduction to wearing a jock strap. The group shower after class was a new experience for a country boy, recalling weekly Saturday night baths in a bathtub.

Gym class was one of my favorite classes. Before class, many basketballs were available to us. I vividly remember my first time to ever bounce a ball on a hardwood floor and also to shoot a ball at a basket. Most likely I tried to make long shots and probably missed them all. I knew nothing about the skills of playing basketball. In classes we had sessions on the fundamentals of basketball. The teacher instructed us in the skills of dribbling and passing the ball. An important memory was how to shoot a lay-up. Just lay the ball soft on the backboard. That was my first chance to play basketball. Other activities included calisthenics, relay running and many competitive games. This may have been the beginning of my lifelong career in physical education, coaching, and professorships in kinesiology and exercise physiology.

Allow me a little sidelight, if I may. A few blocks from the gym, basketball was invented in 1891 at Springfield College where the peach baskets served as hoops. I was unaware at the time that I would be playing basketball in later years for Springfield College.

The next year I tried out for the ninth grade team. In short, I did not make the team. However, a close friend, Donnie Hallett, asked me to join his Congregational Church team. This was the first basketball team I played on. I recall my first game in the Church League. Mom and Dad were there to watch. (Allow me to brag a little.) Yes, son Buddy was the high scorer with 24 points. And we did win the game and Donnie scored 23 points. Also, I think the team we beat was



not very good and I think all my baskets were lay-ups. Most important, though, it was my first game of basketball.

My playing on the basketball team at the Congregational Church required attending Sunday School. The Getchell family (Mom, Dad and sister Betty) attended the Methodist Church. They understood the importance of my playing basketball. Now you know where Buddy boy was on Sunday mornings!



My Brushes with the Presidency

Between 1975 and 1980 I traveled with *Up with People*, an international non-profit, educational group of young people who, “through music and action, empower youth to be positive agents of change to build a more hopeful, trusting and peaceful world.” I was primarily involved with public relations work. I would go to a city three weeks ahead of the group to promote the show, find housing for 50-150 cast members and discover ways the cast could learn as much as possible about the town. Between public relations assignments, I would travel with the group and be part of the show, singing and dancing, but that was not my specialty.

In those three years I traveled in Europe, Canada and Bermuda and throughout the U.S.A. – over 80,000 miles on a bus! The travel provided many opportunities: everything from meeting a Holocaust survivor in a nursing home (after I had toured Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland), performing at the American Broadcasters’ breakfast, listening to Charles

Schultz (the cartoonist of Charlie Brown and Snoopy), to watching the group perform at the Super Bowl X halftime show in Miami.

Another unique opportunity was to cross paths with famous people (and a few infamous ones such as those in prison, including David Berkowitz, aka “Son of Sam,” an American serial killer). The famous people I met were U.S. presidents, their families and some vice presidents. Let me tell you a few stories.



Well, let me back up because my first “brush with the presidency” came earlier in life when I was ten years old. Matter of fact, it began with disappointment and anger. Our family was invited to Washington, D.C., by friends to witness the inauguration of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. How exciting! Yes, for the adults, but not necessarily for a ten-year-old girl focused on her weekly Brownie Scout meeting that she’d have to miss. I was not happy and made it known to my parents, probably through a temper tantrum! I didn’t see the significance. The things I remember and don’t remember

about the weekend are pretty typical for that age group of children. Eight inches of snow fell in Washington on the morning of the inauguration, and I remember the “grown-up” privilege of waking in the middle of the night to fold and deliver newspapers with the teenage boy we were staying with. I recall nothing about the inauguration or parade, just faint memories that my dad fell on the bleachers and we had to leave.

The next “brush with the presidency” came on the eve of my involvement with *Up with*

“What’s ya gonna do if things get worse, who ya gonna blame?
Are you gonna crawl into a hole and just complain?
Are we gonna wait for some great leader, or some mysterious ‘they,’
And watch the dream just slowly fade away?”

After that show I auditioned and joined the group a year later.

My third of five “brushes with the presidency” came in Vail, Colorado, during the time of Gerald Ford. I was doing advance work in the mountain ski town where the Fords owned a condominium. We knew that Mrs. Ford and daughter Susan were to attend our show. They gave commanding instructions that no one was to approach the Fords during any of the audience participation segments. Oh, how tempting, but we ALL understood clearly. But then there was Nelson Gonzales from Venezuela. After pulling Mrs. Ford into the conga line which ended up on stage, he explained to the Secret Service, in broken English, that he was so sorry but just didn’t understand English well enough. Ah, what a sight. Mrs. Ford and the Secret Service

People. It was Friday, August 9, 1974, and we were living in Grand Junction, Colorado. The show was ready to begin when the announcer explained that the show would be delayed because of a special announcement by the President of the United States, Richard Nixon. That night he resigned in light of the near-certainty of impeachment due to his involvement with the Watergate scandal. Twenty minutes later the show opened with the song “What’s Ya Gonna Do?” The words couldn’t have been more “right on.”

contingent looking like the U of M defense, swaying back and forth to the tune of a Flemish folksong!

The fourth “brush with the presidency” was in an elevator at the LBJ Presidential Library in Austin, Texas. I was doing advance work with a young woman who had a strong southern accent. Looking at our options for educational experiences for the cast, we spent time checking out the library. Earlier we had met two Secret Service agents who agreed to talk with the cast about their jobs guarding presidents – and specifically about guarding President Johnson’s college-age daughters. They showed us some of their equipment, and we settled the details of their presentation to the cast members.

Back to the elevator: As we stopped on the second floor, an elderly woman stepped on with a burly man carrying a silver metal briefcase – just like the one we had seen being used by the Secret Service. In her deepest southern drawl, my colleague said to the man, “I know what that is. It’s a machine gun.” The elderly woman extended her hand and, in a similar drawl, said, “Hi, I’m Mrs. Johnson.”

My last “brush with the presidency” came in the men’s room of a luxurious hotel in Washington, D.C. Well, to be honest, I wasn’t in the men’s room, but I still count it as one of my stories. We would be performing early for the American

Broadcasters’ breakfast. Shortly before the show began, four of the guys from the cast went to the men’s room. They had the habit of rating any fart they heard from 5.5 to 8.0, just like the Richter scale. They couldn’t resist when a roaring blow came from the far left stall. “Yep, for sure that’s a 7.5!” and out walks Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey. The only comment the director said when he heard this story was, “Don’t tell me that you didn’t have your costumes on.” Of course they did.

And so my “brush with the presidency” came to an end in 1980 when I left *Up with People*.



Once a Yooper...

I was born a Yooper, but I did not know it for quite a few years. Like most kids, I took for granted where and how we lived—on a farm in the eastern UP, halfway between St. Ignace and Sault Ste. Marie. For quite a few years, we lived on what had been my paternal grandfather’s farm. Through his own miscalculations and through the inescapable effects of the Great Depression, he lost ownership of the farm; it was taken over by the Federal Land Bank, an arm of the U.S. government.

As a result of this loss, the interior of the house was never completed; there was no stairway between the first and second floors. I had to climb a ladder to get to my bedroom. At the time, I thought it was cool because no one I knew had a ladder to his bedroom. After a few years, my parents had a staircase installed, somewhat to my regret—then and now.

The house had no electricity. We lit the barn with kerosene lanterns and the house with pressurized white gas burned in a mantel. The light was brilliant, but in retrospect it seems it was also dangerous—even though no one I knew ever had a fire from either of these sources.

Eventually the Rural Electrification Administration installed a transmission line. We watched with curiosity as the big poles came closer. The line ended in our yard, but although the woman across the road had electricity installed, we never did. The Feds, for whatever reason, would not pay to have

it connected. My parents did not want to pay for installation in a house they did not own. We looked wistfully at our neighbor’s bright lights and especially at the colored Christmas lights she strung in her windows.

Because of my August birthday, I was barely five years old when I started in a two-room school called, appropriately enough, The Holland School. Getting there required a walk of a mile and a quarter, and walk we did, no matter the weather—rainstorms, snowstorms or temperatures below zero. No one ever froze to death; we just bundled up a bit more. In winter, our road was never plowed; it was packed down with huge steel horse-drawn rollers to create a road of solid ice. Adventurous, or foolish, people tried to drive on this surface. My father resorted to his team and sleigh—not the kind you see on Christmas cards, but a big, heavy, working sleigh. In spring, during the “break up” when most of the snow melted in a few days, the road to school would wash out, destroyed by the rushing snowmelt. We still had to get to school, so someone put a big plank, perhaps two by ten inches, across this roaring flood. We kids, putting our lunch buckets on our arms, crept slowly and fearfully across this torrent on the plank. No one ever fell in. I guess we were frightened enough to get a death grip on the plank.

The Holland School was a small brick building in an open field. It had no electricity, but it had no outhouse either, a fact for which we were continually grateful all winter. It had instead big chemical tanks

which were pumped out once a year. An artesian well in the yard furnished the necessary water. The classroom was heated by a big wood-burning furnace in the back corner. The seventh and eighth grade boys were charged with hauling wood from the shed behind the school. The furnace kept the place comfortably warm. If we were well behaved, we were allowed to study in pairs behind the furnace.

The second classroom was not used for classes as there were not enough students to warrant its use. Instead, it was a sort of makeshift gym, though there were no formal gym classes. The only sport organized at all was softball in the spring when the snow finally melted. The rumor was that the “big kids” did something called “playing doctor” in the unused cloakrooms, but when we “little kids” asked about it or tried to join in the games, we were not very politely told to shut up and go away. We did, still mystified.

At the front of the classroom was the recitation bench. When the teacher announced which class was to be taught next, we scholars moved to the bench for the session. Nothing prevented us from listening to everything that went on up there. When the schools were consolidated and we all rode the bus to the town school, I discovered I already knew much of what was being taught to other fourth graders, especially fractions. I still marvel that the teacher was able to juggle classes for eight grades and kindergarten and still maintain a kind of order.

I was just two weeks past my fifth birthday when I began kindergarten. The teacher discovered I already knew how to read—I do not remember ever learning to do so. He asked my parents whether it would be all right if I was moved immediately to first grade so as not to waste my time for a year. They agreed, so for the rest of my schooling in Rudyard I was the youngest member of the class. It was a move I never regretted.

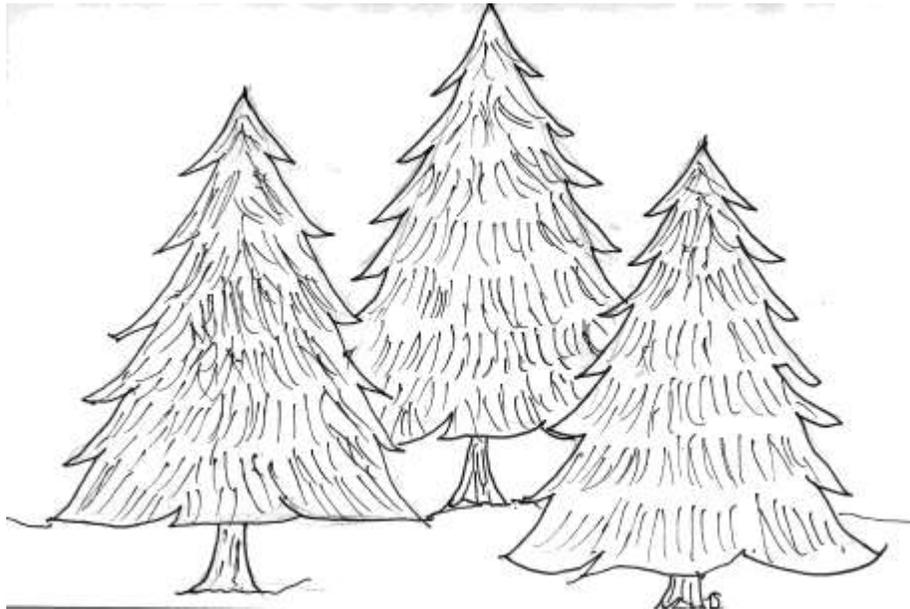


Illustration by Julie Sanders



A grayscale representation of an original work by Cindy Bender



Sledge

Traveling through Macon, Georgia, on our way driving a woodgrain panel station wagon, our goal was to see Mickey Mouse. Hearing a noise in the car just south of Atlanta, Georgia, we decided we'd better stop and check it out. We pulled off Highway 75, and near the exit there was a garage called "SLEDGE." The lettering on the side of the building was very faded. As we drove up to the station, a man in his mid-30s came out to greet us. We described the noise, and the man suggested that we put the car in the garage so they could check it out. This was about nine o'clock in the morning and we had hoped to be at Disney by the end of that day. Once the car was in the garage we set forth as parents to keeping the children occupied and not overly anxious. The mechanic looked at the car and said there was a wheel bearing out and he would have to go to the junkyard to find a part. He then said that he had to go dig up some shrubs first. At one o'clock the mechanic returned with the shrubs and no part. He proceeded to start planting the shrubs around the building.

Having packed a lunch, we fed the starving children. That activity lasted about 15 minutes.

At that point I came to the strong realization that we were in the South where some people move a little slower or have different

priorities from those we were accustomed to.

About 1:30 in the afternoon a man drove up in a new white Cadillac. I commented to the mechanic about that beautiful car. His comment was "For a N... He's not a bad man." Now came a time to gather the seven children around and talk about some societal differences in the way people are respected in the South.

We were not far from Plains, Georgia, home of Jimmy Carter. As you can imagine with young children, seeing Mickey Mouse won out over a visit to Jimmy Carter's hometown.

At 2:15 I asked Sledge if he would be able to have the part installed that day. He said it would be done before quitting time. A sign on the door said they quit work at 5 o'clock. Not wanting to be a "pushy northerner" I bit my tongue several times when I could see our car was on the rack with no action. It looks like our agenda to get out of there at an early time was put aside.

In 1975 we were given an inheritance from a great aunt. That \$3,000 bought two chairs and an ottoman, a Harman Kardon stereo system, a new sport coat and a trip to Disney World. \$780 was to cover travel by car, hotel rooms for nine people and entrance

into Disney World for two days. The \$90 cost of the wheel bearing was not part of that budget. The additional night in a hotel was also not part of the budget.

The highlight of the afternoon came at about 4:00 as Sledge turned the music up on the portable radio and started directing the

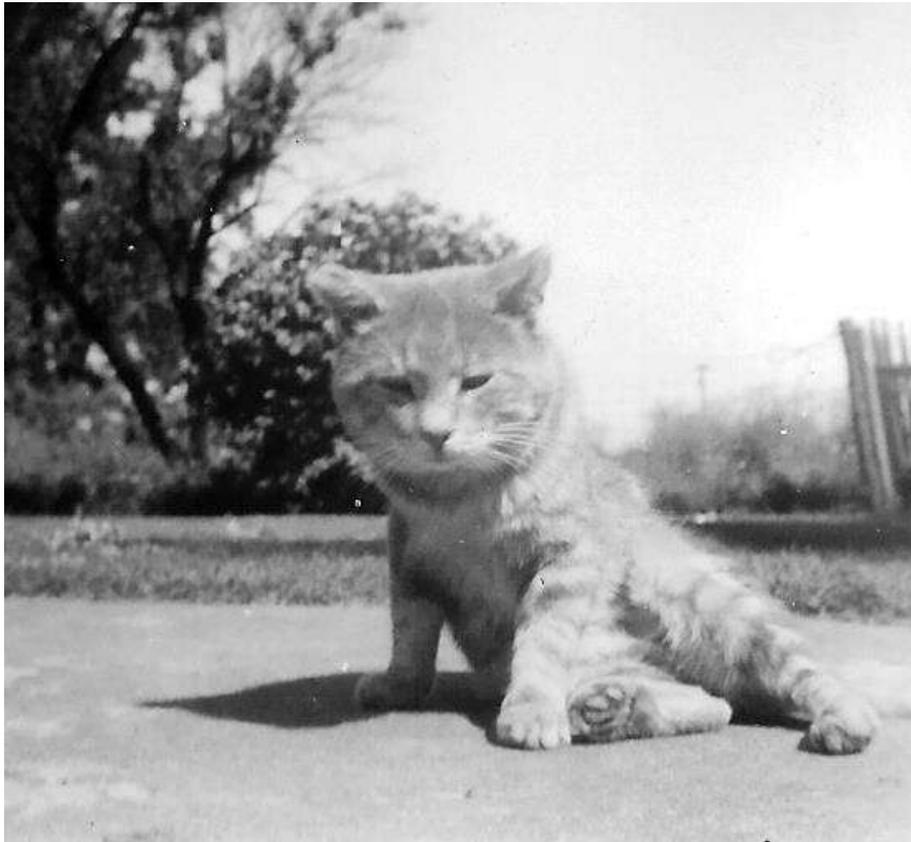
mechanics to work on our car. He danced; he waved his arms; he directed traffic, telling the employees what to do. He never touched our car. He could go home that night and say that he planted shrubs and had a customer from the north who appeared very impatient and pushy.

P.S.: We almost stopped to see if Sledge was still there on our way home from Florida this year, but didn't.





So This Little Freckle-Faced Kid...



"...so this little freckle-faced kid gets me from the shelter, y'see? He names me *Lassie*, of all things, and a few days later we are out together, ya' know what I mean? And he starts sinking into quicksand, and he yells to me, '*Lassie! Go for help!!*' But I figure, what the hell, I'm a cat, that's NOT what I do.

"So now I got a new kid who, thank *God*, named me '*Kitty*' so that's better and does not create any false expectations."



The ABCs of the Old School House

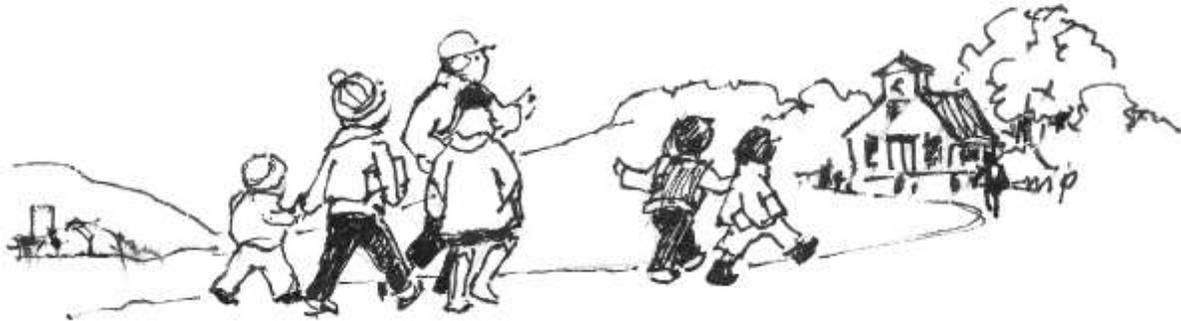


Illustration by Mary Porter

“In the old days we walked five miles to school, uphill, in the rain and snow with no coat!” Such was the story of some people who lived in the “olden days.”

My tale is a little different, but true. I walked to school one mile, uphill, along a major highway, in all types of weather, with three older brothers. We all headed to a one-room school named McClair School.

My institution of learning was truly a neighborhood school. Its students lived within four country blocks and everyone walked. The Bouwmans, however, were the only ones that walked along the busy Blue Star Highway. The rest of the students left together in the other direction on gravel roads. The school enrollment was around 30 students in grades K-8.

I can still picture the old schoolhouse where I attended through fourth grade. We would enter into a large coatroom with two large bathrooms off to the side. The bathrooms

were a little frightening. The toilet seats were raised about four inches, and when you sat down the toilet would flush the entire time. When you first used it, if you were little, you would be afraid a sea monster might rise up and attack. It is amazing that none of us developed a bathroom phobia.

Once past the coatroom, we entered the only classroom. There were windows on both sides of the room so we had a lot of daylight. There was a raised stage area in the front for the teacher’s desk and a table. Behind the stage was the furnace room. Toward the back of the classroom was a full kitchen. Parents rotated coming in on Fridays to make a hot lunch for the students. Parents also took turns being custodians for the building. Our library was a cabinet along one side of the room. We all sat at individual desks. My first teacher was Mrs. Davis, an old woman with gray hair, who taught me in first grade and then retired. The rest of my years at this school were taught by Mrs. Montique, a robust teacher with red hair.

My grade started out having three students: Bruce, Nancy and me. It was a sad day when Nancy moved to Holland, leaving only two. Each of us received a good education in this old-fashioned learning environment. My siblings and I are good readers and good at math, but all of us are terrible spellers. With only one teacher for all the grades, she didn't have time for everything. Out of the 30 students emerged a doctor, a policeman, a teacher, an engineer, a carpenter and other productive members of society.

We were a diverse student body, racially and religiously. We had two black students, and we had families who were Jehovah Witnesses, Catholics, Baptists, us Reformers, and those who didn't attend any church. The parents of my cousins, who attended either Christian or all-white schools, couldn't understand how my parents could expose us to these "irregularities." We all thought it was just the normal way of life, filled with good, unique people.

We had a huge playground with swings, an extremely fast merry-go-round, teeter-totters and a very high slide. Students would rub the slide with wax paper and we would slide down as fast as lightning. Except for a few scrapes and bumps, we all survived these instruments of terror.

Holidays at our school were incredible. We had Halloween parties in the evening, and everyone in the neighborhood came, even those without kids. We dressed up as ghosts, witches, hobos, cowboys, Indians – things that are not politically correct today. We had

evening Christmas parties where we sang, with gusto, religious carols and secular songs. We took field trips as far away as Detroit and traveled to take advantage of other educational experiences. On beautiful days we would spend more time outside enjoying the day and having group games. Art and music were fitted into the week whenever possible.

My school was not without some sadness. One day a student named Linda returned home from school and committed suicide. This became another learning experience, and we all attended her funeral. Even back then our little school was not without human pressures and problems.

When I was ready to enter fifth grade, my one-room schoolhouse closed. I had to ride a bus to a two-room schoolhouse. There were many students I didn't know and I felt very sad – much joy went out of my previously happy days. The following year that schoolhouse closed too, which was the beginning of the end for the small neighborhood schools in Allegan County.

As an adult, I taught in a very modern school with lots of technology. As the years went by, my teaching time became very regimented and filled with prescribed curriculum so my students could pass the MEAP and other state exams. Even though I still received satisfaction from my job, it lost some of its joy. My job became filled with many rules and little freedom. And there were days I sat at my desk and wished my students could enjoy the experiences of the old-fashioned schoolhouses I knew so long ago.



The Walk

In 1958, Detroit had eight all-boys Catholic high schools. I was fortunate to attend one, Salesian. My best friend, who was a year older, went there as well as several boys in the neighborhood. The school was in the heart of the city and drew students from all directions, boys from wealthy families that lived in Birmingham and Grosse Pointe, Irish kids that lived with ten people in small three-bedroom houses, Polish kids, African-American kids and many middle-class kids. We were considered a melting pot school.

Making the school swim team, I decided to walk the two miles from our school to the recreation center pool. I can only speculate why that walk in late October of 1958 was such an awakening for me. Perhaps it was because my 13-year-old world was expanding beyond my immediate family and friends.

The journey started at my high school in the New Center area of Detroit and proceeded north on Woodward Avenue to the Boston-Edison district. The new building of my high school was built in 1922, the original in 1899. This is about the same age as the buildings on my walk, and most of the buildings were well maintained with functioning stores, apartments or small office buildings.

With a sport coat and tie on, I started the trek north, past the upscale clothing stores,

past one of Motown's recording studios, past the small grocery stores (one on every block) and into the high-end Boston-Edison district, home of the early automotive pioneers. The 200 yards as I entered that district were the most memorable.

Northern High School was just getting out as I passed. About 250 students were on the sidewalk in front of the school. Ninety-nine percent were African-American. It wasn't the differences that I noticed but the sameness. They carried their books, acted and dressed the same as kids in public school in the suburbs. There were no hate stares, rude remarks or confrontations. We were all second-generation products of the auto industry. Unlike the trade unions, the United Auto Workers allowed African-Americans to join. We were all part of the upward mobility movement.

It did not seem unusual to me that a section of the city would be from one ethnic group. Hamtramck was predominantly Polish; Dexter-Davison, Jewish; Cass Avenue, southern white; Delray, Middle Eastern. That was Detroit.

In that 200 yards I felt exhilarated, and because of my high school experiences I was confident that I could walk in any area of the city and be a part of it.



The Die is Cast

As told to me, Judy Hoffmann, the wife of Al Hoffmann

May, 2017. We stand, Al and I, side by side, cameras in hand, hats shading our eyes, revisiting the field which held so many memories of a teenager's love for flying and adventure. Still a rural area outside of Klausheide, Germany, the airport, now named Luftsportring Grenzland ev. Nordhorn, includes a small terminal and modern features never imagined when the handmade flight glider the youngsters planned and built flew over the same land and trees.

Recollections and reflections of years past return. The war is over; the year is 1952. Life normalizes after the family settles down in Nordhorn, a German border town with the Netherlands, known for its textile industry, and located in the county of Bentheim. Al is now 15 years old and is working in his first apprenticeship program, with studies in the fields of gas, water, heating and air-conditioning.

One of the teachers in the apprenticeship program is a former sailplane pilot, then a German fighter pilot. No planes powered by an engine are allowed in Germany at this time. As the former pilot's interest in flying continues, he gathers together a few students who share his interest, including Al. Also

joining is a high school teacher with a few of his students. News of the project spreads mainly by word of mouth. The teenagers involved range in age from 15 to 19 years, including two sisters.

This small group gathers at the Frentje Restaurant in Nordhorn during the summer of 1952 to discuss their common interest in flight and glider planes, including what is a glider plane, how to build a one, how to gather needed materials such as plywood and canvas, and how to share responsibilities.

The location for further meetings, preparations and parts building is the basement of the Vocational Training School. The plan is to build a SG-38 glider plane, a Schulglider designed in 1938. Accurate measurements are figured to build each of the parts, such as the wings, the fuselage, the tails. The group usually meets Fridays and Saturdays, and an occasional Sunday.

The day comes when the many parts are ready for assembly. Can it be the members have forgotten to factor in the size of the parts? Their new challenge: how to find a way to get the large objects out of the basement for assembly outside.

After school is out that Friday, and the building empty, the group gathers to work out its solution. Without permission, the boys cut the iron grates off the basement window. The large plane parts are maneuvered outside the building. The grates are ground smooth. Three apprentices studying welding weld the



grates back to the window. The youth finish the inside efforts by giving the grates a fresh coat of black paint. Apparently no one notices, or cares, about the

long evening's endeavor, for no known objections are ever heard.

Imagine the group looking over a field of parts, trying to determine where each piece belongs in order to make a working, trustworthy plane that would really fly them safely. Once the glider is assembled, it is time to put it to a test. It is taken to a hilly area about ten miles from Nordhorn, with the help of a student's father who owns a construction business. The group launches the glider from the top of a small hill using a bungee cord. Once the tests are completed and the glider certified as "flight worthy," everyone is eager for a turn.



The youth apply for a membership flying license with the Deutschen Aero Club. Al's membership card lists him as

number 25, dated April 9, 1953, at Level A, a learning level. Each member practices flying the plane, one at a time with catapult starts, in the surrounding towns with hills 30

to 50 feet high. Depending on the launch sites, the flights at this time are up to 15 minutes each. If someone damages a part on the plane, that person is responsible for fixing or replacing it.

During the next two years, the flying club acquired its first "real" sailplane, known as a



"Gronau Baby."

Al acquires his Level C sailplane flying license. Flying adventures take precedence over other

important weekend events, such as church attendance. When Al's father realizes he is missing too many services, he jumps on his motorbike (they do not yet own a car), with his mother hanging onto the back, and speeds to the airfield. He jumps off, asking, "Where is Al?" Pointing to the sky, the answer comes back, "There!" Father looks up, studies the situation, jumps back on the motorbike with his wife and speeds home, realizing "the die is cast."



Although the incident did not deter Al's passion for flying, he was worshipping with family in church the following Sunday!



What I Had Hoped to Become and What I Became

When I was about six, I found a small Bible at home and had my picture taken on the steps of our front porch. My mother had curled my hair with a hot curling iron and I made sure I was wearing my best neatly ironed Sunday clothes. It was probably Sunday afternoon.

I'm not smiling. That could be because I couldn't go to the neighborhood woods and play beside the creek in my good clothes, or it could be because I was about to read scripture. Was I thinking about becoming a church pastor?

When I was about eight, I helped butcher chickens at my grandparents' farm near Hudsonville. It was a time of high drama with my dad and grandpa going into the chicken coop and the chickens squawking in loud alarm. Grandpa would emerge carrying a flapping chicken by its feet. My dad would grab the chicken's head, and my aunt with a sharp knife would slit the chicken's throat.



I was given the chicken to hold by its feet until the blood was drained. I liked this adventure because I could wear blue jeans. I lost my grip on one of the chickens and I had to catch it as it fluttered around the chicken yard. After my mom dipped and swished the dead chickens around in boiling water, I helped her yank out the feathers.

Later in the kitchen I pulled more pin feathers from the wings. I watched my grandma and my mother cut up the chickens. My grandmother advised my mother about where to cut and how to remove the innards. Fascinated, I watched my mother carefully cut open the gizzard. I could see what the chicken had been eating. "Be careful," Grandma said to my mother. "Don't cut into the gall bladder. If the chicken gall squirts out, the whole chicken is unfit to eat." Observing this operation on the kitchen table, I thought it would be fun to cut up bodies. I thought I'd like to become a doctor.

In the sixth grade I read from an encyclopedia how the heart works like a pump, and I wrote an essay about it for health class. Mrs. Dudley praised me, telling me that it had the quality of a eighth-grader's work. In the tenth grade I wrote a poem about Norsemen for a world history class, and Mrs. Jerue read it aloud

to the class. She gave it a grade of A+ and wrote M.A. and Ph.D. under my name. I thought I'd become a philosopher. I wanted to go to college and then to a university.

When my parents were visiting my other grandparents in Holland, I walked downtown and browsed the paperback

books near the front window of Fris's store. I paid 60 cents for *The Story of Philosophy* by Will Durant and read it cover to cover before my freshman year at Hope College. I enrolled in Dr. Dykstra's Intro to Philosophy course but discovered that reading philosophy was harder than reading about philosophy. I took botany and zoology but discovered that lab practicals were a nightmare. I learned from my grades in philosophy and the sciences that philosophy and medicine were not for me.

But I enjoyed the English courses, even the hard ones taught by Dr. Mueller, and I received good grades in them. After class one day in my junior year, Dr. Mueller asked me about my career plans. I told her that I was considering teaching—either high school or college English. “Ad astra per aspera.” she said. As a Latin minor, I knew that meant “to the stars through striving.” She encouraged me to consider applying to graduate schools.

During the spring of my senior year, I eagerly awaited mail from the five graduate schools to which I had applied. When Ohio State University offered me a teaching assistantship, I eagerly accepted it. A week later Michigan State University also offered me a teaching assistantship. My parents, who wanted to keep me close to home, urged me to turn down OSU and accept MSU. I had to make a decision, so I listed and pros and cons of each and scheduled an appointment with my mentor/advisor, Mr. Wilson. In his office my rational preparations soon melted into tears, and I was glad there were plenty of tissues at hand. He was a good listener but the decision had to be mine. The next day, I explained my dilemma to Dr. Mueller, and without hesitation she told me I was out of my mind to consider MSU instead of OSU, her alma mater. Several days later, I crossed

paths with Dr. Hollenbach near the creaky stairs of Van Raalte Hall. Smiling, he said that he had heard about my “embarrassment of riches.” I told him I had chosen OSU, declining MSU. I wanted to follow the path of Dr. Mueller. I would make my vocation college English teaching, preferably at a liberal arts college, and live with cats and a dog in a house full of books.

In the summer of 1967 I started my graduate studies at OSU, spending some of the best years of my life studying the works of great English and American poets, authors and dramatists. I enjoyed teaching freshman English courses and learning more about rhetoric and writing styles. While earning M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, I was gainfully employed and left college and graduate school with no debt. And I had fallen in love with another graduate school student, Bill Parr. In 1971 we were married in Holland in Western Theological Seminary's chapel with our wedding reception in the dining room of the Warm Friend Hotel.

Because of the highly competitive job market in the humanities ever since the end of the Viet Nam War, my career plans were diverted. Even though Bill was willing to give priority to my career plans, I first could not and later would not follow the career path of Dr. Mueller (who in 1979 left teaching, bought a farm in Wisconsin, and raised sheep).

Looking back at what I had hoped to become and what I became, I see my childhood and youth as times of exploring various interests and testing my abilities to follow one path or another. Various junctures in the path limited the range of further choices but gave me focus.

My work—as an adjunct English instructor, newspaper reporter, higher education

administrator, computer programmer, technical writer, technical content analyst and developer of computer-learning courses—has been satisfying. My marriage to Bill has nurtured my heart as well as my mind and has taken me to far places—in the U.S., Canada, Europe, China and more.

And discovering HASP in my retirement has enabled me to use skills I've been developing over my lifetime. I can teach eager students

how to diagram sentences and help them understand and appreciate various works of literature without having to prepare tests and grade papers. I still love books and hope to live long enough to read many, many more. In ways I could not have dreamed of as a college senior more than half a century ago, my life has been an “embarrassment of riches.”





What I Learned at the Country School

For the first five years of my education, I attended a one-room country school. It was a wonderful experience for my sister and me. The school sat on a hill surrounded by orchards and woods. Only one farmhouse was visible and that was owned by a man who also had a slaughterhouse on his property for processing turkey meat. The schoolhouse was made of brick and sat high up on a concrete foundation. There were tall windows high up in the brick walls and about ten steps leading up to the schoolhouse door. There was a large bell in the steeple with a long rope hanging down into the schoolhouse. When it was time to start the school day or when recess was over, the teacher pulled hard on the rope several times to ring the bell. The loud bong told us it was time to stop our play and return to our studies.

My sister Jean and I walked to school. It was almost a mile. We walked on the dirt roads past orchards and a deep pine woods. We passed only one house on our entire journey. However, we were not alone. The children from a neighboring farm usually stopped by our house to walk with us in the morning. When we got to the corner where three roads merged, we usually met my friend Rusty. He was my very best friend in those years. He was a skinny little boy just my age. He had reddish-blond hair and freckles. He was always full of energy, adventuresome ideas and usually a little mischief.

The school had about 20 students between kindergarten and sixth grade. There was one large classroom and one teacher. There was

no teacher's aide, school secretary or janitor. The teacher was the only adult in our schoolhouse. Out of necessity, we all became very independent learners. With seven grades, the teacher was not able to give us much individual attention. Our assignments were written on the board each morning, and we did our best to understand what was required. If I needed help with a math problem or understanding a reading word, I would just quietly tiptoe up to my older sister and ask for her help.

When I was in fourth grade and my sister in sixth grade, we had a teacher named Mrs. Lapham. I liked Mrs. Lapham. She was pleasant, calm and liked to laugh with us. She often had special projects for us, and she always seemed to encourage my desire to learn. I do not recall her ever having angry outbursts or being overly strict.

One day in the spring of that year, we arrived at school and found a nasty surprise. The plumbing in the schoolhouse was not working. Mrs. Lapham patiently explained this to us and said for the day she had arranged for us to go to the slaughterhouse on the adjoining farm if we needed to use the bathroom. Of course we all had to do so numerous times during that day. The slaughterhouse was some distance away, and we needed to walk through an orchard to get there. It was a rather scary place. We could hear the men working in the main room. We could smell the odor of raw turkey meat and see the blood splatters on the floor. Mrs. Lapham seemed to understand our nervousness and allowed us to walk there in pairs.

We survived the morning fairly well and were getting on with our studies even without the plumbing. Eventually even Mrs. Lapham had to use the restroom. There were no other adults in the schoolhouse, so she would have to leave us unattended. She made sure we all had assignments to work on and assured us that she would be back in a few minutes. It was a beautiful spring day and windows were open, allowing a slight breeze into the classroom. We were not worried.

As soon as she left us, Rusty decided we needed some excitement. He looked outside at the sunshine. He went over to the open window and looked down. "Hey," he said looking at me, "let's jump out the school windows." I just looked at him. The windows were very high, at least eight feet off the ground. "Come on, come on," he said. "It will be fun." I walked over just to take a peek, and he promptly jumped off the window sill down to the ground. "Hey, that was great," he said. "Come on, try it." I sat on the window sill. I looked down at the black dirt beneath the window. It looked like a really, really long way down. I felt my stomach tense. I took a deep breath. I pushed myself off the window sill. I flew through the air and landed on all fours in the dirt. It was really fun. Just like flying.

Rusty ran back into the schoolhouse, and I followed him. "Come on, come on," he said. "Let's do it again." He and I climbed back up and jumped off again. Soon at least half of the other students had joined us. We were all climbing, jumping to the ground and running back into the schoolhouse to do it again.

However my older sister Jean would not participate. She looked at me, scowled and shook her head. After all, she was in sixth grade and eleven years old. She knew we were supposed to listen to the teacher and follow the rules even if the teacher was not there. And she certainly knew that jumping out the window was against the rules.

Pretty soon Mrs. Lapham was on her way back from the slaughter-house restroom. I can only imagine her dismay as she turned the corner and saw her students jumping out of the eight-foot-high windows. Of course we had "consequences." All students who had jumped had to stay in at recess and write "I will not jump out of the school windows ever again." We had to write this over and over and over again until we had written it 100 times. And we stayed in for as many recesses as it took to complete that.

My sister Jean and the few other obedient students were able to go outside and play. They could swing, ride the merry-go-round, play hopscotch and do whatever they wanted on that beautiful day. We were stuck inside the dreary building, writing.

So what did we learn in the country school? Well, Rusty and I learned not to jump out of windows. I'm sure Mrs. Lapham learned never to leave her students unattended even if the plumbing was not working. Sister Jean may have learned the most important lesson. She recalls that recess that day was not much fun. Without the rest of us out there, it was just lonely and boring and sad. Who cared about sunshine when there was no one to play with? Years later she said that was the day she learned it is sometimes better to ignore the rules, jump out windows and have adventures with your friends.



A grayscale representation of an original work by Susan Miller

Luminosity

The amount of light emitted by a star

Our writers are stars.

*Their writing emits
the light of creativity
for all to enjoy.*



John and Mary Buttrey

A Great Refugee Story



Starting Out

In 1975 the United Church of Christ in New Brighton, Minnesota, sponsored the Le family from Viet Nam. The parents, Thu and Dung (later changed to Kim), and their four children had French nicknames – Mini, Pipo, Bobi and Minou. Dung and the children flew from Saigon on the last plane out. Thu hopped the fence on the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. He had been an aide to a U.S. general. The family was separated for at least several weeks. It was hard to get reconnected because Le is a very common Vietnamese name.

The church found an apartment for them and helped with food, transportation, clothing and money for only a month or so. A member found Thu a job at Deluxe Check Printers and that income was adequate to cover their needs. He retired from Deluxe after working for that company in Minnesota, San Diego and Salt Lake City. Later, Dung got a job at Control Data.

When they first arrived at the Twin Cities airport, we and several other church members welcomed them. We took them to a park for a little picnic. They came dressed for winter because they had been told that Minnesota was cold. However, it was July and the temperature was probably in the high 70s. Thu had prepared a little thank-you message in English for us. After he read a couple of sentences, Dung started laughing. She realized that her English was better than his!

When it was time for the children to enroll in school, Mary and our Korean daughter,

Heidi, went with them. The principal asked several times, “You have five children?” Mary asked Dung if she knew why the principal thought that she had five, not four children. Dung replied, “No.” Mary discovered that he thought our daughter Heidi was also a Le child.

Two Funny Stories from the Early Times

Our children were of similar ages, and one day Mini came over to play dolls in our daughter Amy’s bedroom upstairs. Mary went up to see how they were doing, when neither of them knew the other’s language. Every once in awhile, Mini would say, “Please, thank you, you’re welcome, how are you? Fine, thank you, may I go to the toilet?” Our Amy, also age five, had no idea how to respond.

One evening we were invited to the Le home for a meal served with chopsticks. It was very tasty. However, when Dung saw how John was doing (actually not “doing well”) with his chopsticks, she had a big laugh.

A Very Sad Part of the Story

The eldest son, Pipo, contracted encephalitis at age 11. He and the family lived through the severe disabilities from the disease. He died when he was 17. It was a difficult experience for them and those of us who loved them. Dung thought that they had fled from terrible things when they left the horrors of the Vietnam War, and then this happened.

Late 90s Events

In 1989, Thu was still at Deluxe, Mini was a sophomore at the University of Minnesota,

Bobi was in high school, Minou was in the church's confirmation class. One of the members wrote this about the family: "It was really neat, just knowing how hard they work. They really assimilated themselves into society right away and are such special people." In 1990, the family moved to San Diego. We think they were attracted to the climate there! Why would they think that? Does San Diego have a better climate than Minnesota? Actually, at least one of the children missed the change of seasons. What was not a better climate was the school situation for Minou. She was very smart and very pretty. Unlike the school in Minnesota, the one in San Diego had a Vietnamese group. Many of the Vietnamese boys were attracted to her. However, some of the Vietnamese girls were jealous and one of them set fire to her locker. Dung called us and asked if Minou could come live with us for a semester until they found a home in another school district. We said, "Yes, of course." She was a model teenager. She always had her homework done on time. She rejoined the second year of the two-year Confirmation class. Every Saturday morning she asked Mary for a cleaning assignment or something to help us. What an easy kid to parent!

Skipping Ahead to 2016

We kept in touch with the Le family through Christmas letters, phone calls and emails. We reconnected with them when they were in Salt Lake City doing a Mormon tour. In the winter of 2016 we visited them in San Jose. Minou and Mini wanted Thu and

Dung to move to California. Thu said they couldn't afford it. Mini owned a condo and told them that the rent would be very affordable! The visit with them was great. In San Jose, we met Mini and her husband, who is from Sweden. We met Minou and her daughter, Franny, in San Francisco. Minou also is married, but her husband was away on business.

Minou is a pediatrician with a specialty in the gastrointestinal tract. She had recently removed a nail clipper that a child had swallowed. Mini is a social worker with the San Jose police department. She works with a program called TEAM (Together Empowering and Mentoring Kids), a program to keep kids in school, off drugs and out of gangs. Bobi did a tour in the U.S. Air Force and then flew planes as a civilian. He is now at the University of Wisconsin graduate school working toward a master's in engineering.

There you have a little bit of "A Great Refugee Story," a super-positive example of refugees arriving and succeeding in the USA!

P.S.: When Minou learned we were involved with our Holland church in sponsoring a refugee family from the Middle East, she sent a check for \$57 to the refugee fund "from one refugee family to another." Fifty dollars was from Minou and seven dollars from nine-year-old Franny, who wanted to share from her piggy bank.



An Unforgettable Christmas Eve

Al and I have moved to a subdivision in Westlake, Ohio. It is Christmas Eve. Snow covers the neighborhood grounds. Yards are decorated for the holiday season. Inside our home the artificial Christmas tree, which has served our holidays for almost 20 years, stands in front of the patio windows. It is decorated and surrounded by carefully wrapped presents, teasingly waiting to be opened. Our family is gathered: my parents visiting from Holland, Michigan; our older son Michael, home from Michigan Tech for the holidays; and younger son David on break from the police academy he is attending.

Tantalizing smells from the kitchen mean our holiday meal will soon be ready, while a card game of Hand and Foot, backgrounded by Christmas music on the phonograph, occupies our precious family time together. The schedule for the evening is as follows: first, David runs over to feed the neighbors' cats, while their family basks under the Florida sun; then our ham dinner together; then the opening of presents.

"I'm leaving now to feed the cats," calls David. "It won't take long." He puts on his coat, closes the door and hurries across the street through the cold and snow, key in hand, to open the neighbors' front door.

The meal is ready. David should be back. Sure is taking him a long time! I'd better check to see if he needs some help. I grab my coat and hurry through the cold to the house. No one in sight. I open the front door, step inside, and call. No response. The cats are there. His coat is there. No footprints

come out from the house, but no one appears to be inside. I quickly return home, confused by David's mysterious disappearance.

I express my concerns to the family. Al, Michael and my father get their coats and walk quickly across the street. Mom and I wait for them to return. The meal is now waiting; the table is set; we're hoping we will soon be enjoying dinner together.

No one returns. We wait and wait, and wait some more. Have we now lost all four of them? This is too weird. What is happening? Again I grab my coat. Again I hurry over to the house. Again I notice there are no footprints leaving the house. I enter the front door. Call. No answer. What is going on?

Finally, sounds. The lost have been found! All together we tramp back through the snow and sit down to eat our now-much-cooler food, eager to hear the unusual adventures of the evening. As we eat, the story comes tumbling out.

David tells his part. "I enter the house through the front door and go to the kitchen in the back of the house. I take off my coat. I discover there is no cat food in the kitchen, so I must get some from the attached garage. I open the door that leads into the garage. The door slams shut behind me. It locks. No problem. I will just open the garage door and go back into the house with the cat food through the front door. Problem! The garage door will not budge."

My turn to interject a comment. "Our neighbors mentioned to me before they left

that the garage door had just broken, would not open or close, and they would get it fixed after they returned. I'm sorry, David. It never occurred to me to mention this to you."

David continues. "I try shouting, but I am not heard. Thinking someone will soon come to find me, I turn on a small dilapidated television standing on a shelf. Surprisingly it works, but with a very hazy picture. Without my coat I am feeling cold. I have to get out of this freezing garage soon. From my police academy studies, it occurs to me that I may be able to knock down the locked door. So I kick and kick – and kick. I make considerable headway. Then I hear the cats meowing on the other side. Fearing the door might fall in toward the kitchen, on top of them, I slow down my efforts."

The men now take over the story. "We also find no footprints in the snow leaving the

house. We enter the house through the front door and check around the place. We call to David. The garage! Did the sounds come from the garage? We find the kitchen door halfway kicked in. We open the door to let David back in the house. As the cats are being fed, we try to repair the damaged door, at least enough to keep the cold out of the house."

So with the cats cared for, our hunger satisfied, the presents opened, and our bodies warmed by the fireplace, we agree it has been a lovely, albeit unique, Christmas Eve after all.

Imagine our sun-tanned neighbors' surprise upon their return to find not only a broken garage door, but also a seriously damaged kitchen door. They fully appreciated David's dilemma and had everything fixed, thankfully, with smiles and a sense of humor.

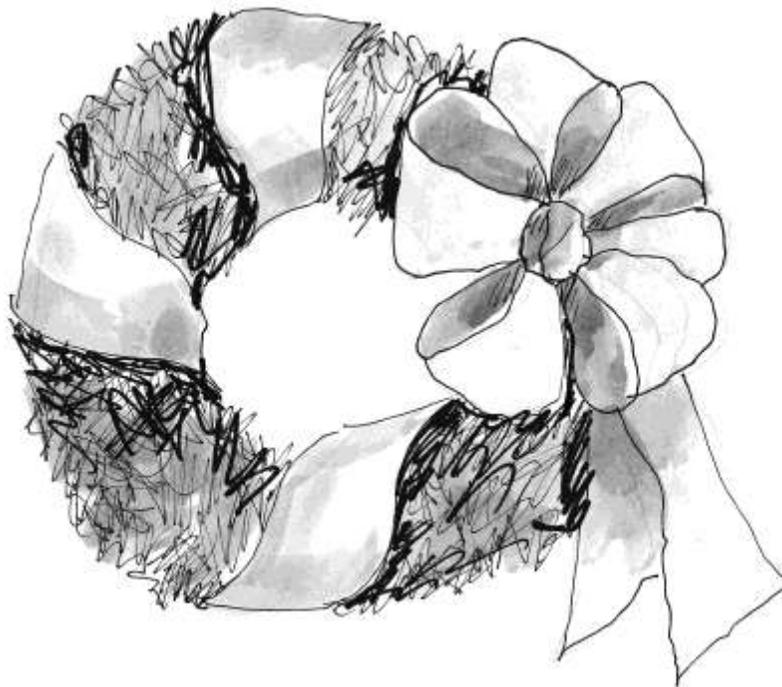


Illustration by Donna Bogle



Context

“Just feel this girl’s chest.” Yes, I said it. I said it aloud. I meant it. It was no whisper. It was no whim. It came out very naturally and sincerely.

To whom? To our son-in-law, who was standing nearby. He was nonplussed, looking at her and wondering about her. She was sitting on my lap at the time, and I was sitting in my usual La-Z-Boy.

Now you’re telling me this “got around” because somebody visiting us passed near and overheard me say it. We only had a few house guests that evening, so it had to be one of them. It boils down to about five possible people. Most people were in the living room, but several, mostly women, passed by my den where I was sitting at the moment as they went to the kitchen—thus someone overheard.

I understand that responses by people who know me have pooh-poohed the idea. But others had various responses, ranging from “You never know what’s going on in some people”—a rather general, evasive response, to “How much had he had to drink?”—trying to alibi for me or offer some explanation for my unusual words.

I also heard someone remarked, “I guess we all have a ‘dark side’ to us.” Someone else noted, “Well, a lot goes on at parties behind the scenes.” And someone else observed, “People have different ideas about ‘fun,’ I guess.” Our son-in-law told me about these remarks. I don’t like any of them – and I’m

rethinking what I feel about people I thought I respected.

Anyway, Sheila was sitting on my lap of her own accord; I did not invite or coerce her. You know what she looks like, and our son-in-law certainly does after these past years. And you know she does not care and is not embarrassed by any kind of attention she gets. She never has been. She eats up any attention from anybody. She just happened to choose me and of course brought her chest with her.

She’s not susceptible to any comparisons or judgments about her size. You know how different she is from Rachel – it’s so obvious, people mention it all the time, in her presence as well – she careth not. I suspect she’s very proud of it – the way she walks among us.

So, Hon, I hope you can help me squelch this stupid gossip going around before it goes any further. It’s too much to explain and expect people to understand. Besides, it was our son-in-law who brought it up—making the size comparison with Rachel, who doesn’t care either, though they’re sisters.

Anyway, you understand, Hon – and for your sake I don’t want this to spread any further either. Do you think a simple email to our attending friends might stem the tide? Especially if you do it. Would you? I’ll help with any wording.

Also, when Sheila was on my lap, I noticed her claws needed clipping again.



Diagramming the First Sentence of the Declaration of Independence

The first sentence of the *Declaration of Independence* is no tweet.

“When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with one another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.”

Parsing this sentence shows its grammatical parts. Note that the [] enclose subordinate clauses, { } enclose infinitive phrases, and () enclose prepositional phrases. The main clause has “respect” as the subject and the verb “requires” as its predicate.

[*adverbial clause*: **When**

(*prepositional phrase*: **in the course**)

(*prepositional phrase*: **of human events**)

it becomes necessary

(*prepositional phrase*: **for one people**)

{*infinitive phrase*: **to dissolve the political bands**

[*adjective clause*: **which have connected them**

(*prepositional phrase*: **with another**)]}.

and

{*infinitive phrase*: **to assume**

(*prepositional phrase*: **among the powers**)

(*prepositional phrase*: **of the earth**),

the separate and equal station

[*adjective clause*; **to which the Laws**

(*prepositional phrase*: **of Nature**

and

(*prepositional phrase*: **of Nature’s God**)

entitle them]}],

a decent respect

(*prepositional phrase*: **to the opinions**

(*prepositional phrase*: **of mankind**

requires

[*noun clause*: **that they should declare the causes**

[*adjective clause*: **which impel them**

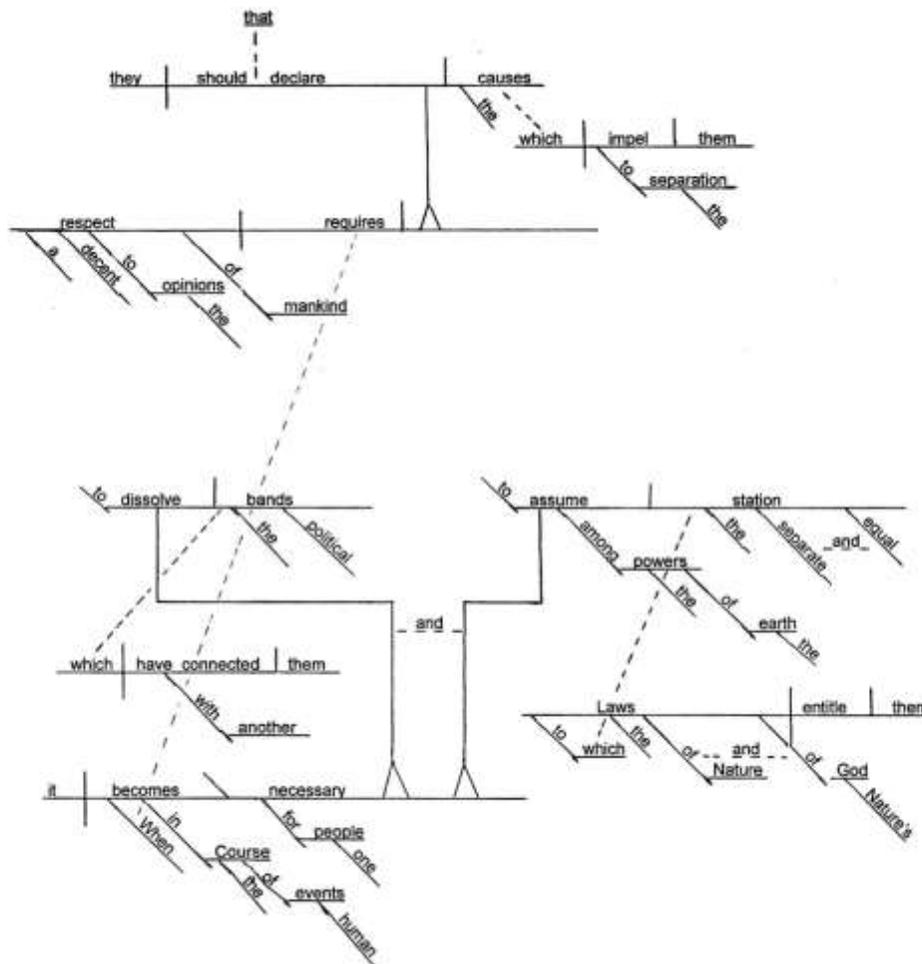
(*prepositional phrase*: **to the separation**)]].

The relationships of main clause, subordinate clauses, and phrases can best be shown by diagramming the sentence as shown below.

Because the main clause comes near the end of the sentence, it is considered a periodic or Ciceronian sentence – named for the Roman author and orator Marcus Tullius Cicero, whose sentences often followed this structure. Those reading or listening to such a sentence would have to wait to the very end to make sense of it. It called for a long attention span.

Notice the pair of pedestals connecting infinitive phrases “to dissolve...bands” and “to assume...station,” each modified by an adjective clause. This pairing gives a sense of balance to the actions that are foreseen to be the outcome of the separation being proposed. Writers during the Enlightenment valued rationality and proportion, logic and balance, not only in their architecture but also in their literature.

After this opening sentence Thomas Jefferson proceeded to declare the causes for the separation of the American colony from its British colonizer. The purpose of the “Declaration of Independence” was to convince nations that the separation of the American colonies from their owner was justified by a detailed list of causes for the need for independence.





Dominga

It was a white-knuckle ride as we bounced in our rented Jeep up the mountain. The final 20 miles up the narrow, steep, rocky road were bone-rattling. My brother-in-law, Lauren, after four years in the Dominican Republic, was at ease with the hair-raising style of driving common in his newly adopted country. Traffic laws in this beautiful island were regarded as mere suggestions, and survival on the road was for the biggest or most nimble vehicle. This seemed to be fine with Lauren, who now could swerve, brake, honk and shake his fist as well as any of the native drivers. There were no guard rails on the mountain passes, and it was not uncommon to round a bend and see three vehicles occupying two lanes coming toward you. “No problema,” Lauren would say, as he easily navigated through and around the looming disaster coming directly toward us.

When we arrived safely in the town of Vallejuelo, my brother-in-law’s home, the first thing I did was spend some time thanking St. Joseph for getting us there safely. Then I settled down, to take in the view of the little mountain town where we would be staying for a week.

The year was 1985. While some of the Dominican Republic was modernizing and becoming very first world, most of the country was not. We were in a particularly poor region, close to the border of Haiti. This was my first time in the DR, the first of six visits to this region, and the second visit for my wife, Wanda, who had been there

two years earlier to visit her brother, a Peace Corps volunteer. Our good friend Mark, a bachelor and always the adventurer, did not hesitate when we asked him to join us for the trip.

I was struck by the easy, slow-moving nature of Vallejuelo’s main street. Merengue music played from the occasional storefront, but mostly it seemed to be a quiet and tranquil small town, with brightly painted brick buildings surrounding a park-like town square. The town, nestled in a valley, was surrounded by hills covered by crops as a backdrop. Occasionally a motorcycle would dart past, and burros loaded with heavy bags brayed and protested on the side of the road. Locals waved and smiled as we drove past. Children ran along after our Jeep. Men sitting on the sidewalk with little cups of espresso in front of them, many wearing straw hats, momentarily halted their domino game to watch us pass and wave to us, then turned back to their all-important game. As we leisurely bounced along on the rutted dirt streets, Lauren honked livestock out of the way with authority and frequently poked his head out of the window and angrily shouted in Spanish at the dozens of children appearing from nowhere, trying to get them to stay out of the way of the car.

We stopped, at last, in front of Lauren’s little palm-board house and found ourselves surrounded by children, gleefully smiling and peering into the Jeep, trying to be the first to see Lauren’s U.S. family who had come to visit. From a more discreet distance,

Lauren's friends and neighbors had gathered and stood and stared, waved, smiled and gradually worked their way up to us, chattering excitedly in Spanish and providing a very warm reception.

The first person I formally met in Vallejuelo was Dominga, Lauren's housekeeper. She hesitantly approached us, and I saw her eyes, alert, warm and friendly, and her slight welcoming smile. Her job was to make the morning coffee, prepare Lauren's breakfast, sweep, clean, wash clothes and otherwise maintain a tidy environment in the two-room house and the backyard porch, outdoor shower and outhouse. Dominga's presence was comfortable and pleasant. We immediately felt drawn to her. She laughed easily and sang Christian songs in Spanish as she worked. She lived nearby in her own small house with her four children. Obtaining the job as Lauren's housekeeper, even at the meager salary Lauren could pay, made her the envy of the village women, most of whom would have wanted that job.

Dominga and my wife became close friends. Although neither spoke a word of the other's language, they could be seen frequently throughout the week laughing and attempting to communicate. Dominga enjoyed taking Wanda around town to show off her friendship with Lauren's American sister. They went to the river where Dominga showed Wanda how she washed clothes on the rocks, and they visited many ladies of the town for coffee.

When our week in Vallejuelo was over and we left to tour more of the country, we all reluctantly said goodbye, fully expecting to see each other again. But, sadly, that would be the last time for Dominga and Wanda. Wanda had been enjoying a brief remission from late-stage breast cancer and some time after we returned home, the cancer returned

and she died at the age of 38. I was told that upon hearing the news of Wanda's death, Dominga, in her grief, gathered some of the ladies from the town, and they had a day of mourning for Wanda, praying and singing along with the customary wailing that continued throughout the whole day. The next time I saw Dominga, a few months after Wanda's death, I brought her scarves and a necklace that belonged to Wanda. She hugged me and, through tears, thanked me over and over.

As for Dominga, in spite of her seemingly joyful heart, she continued to experience a harsh and difficult life on many levels. Financially, she was destitute. Her home was literally built out of sticks. She had a dirt floor and cooked for her four kids on a charcoal stove under a lean-to in the yard. If not for my brother-in-law, who kept a steady supply of food on hand, her kids would probably have eaten only one meal a day. She had no water supply except what she and her kids carried from the town spigot daily. Dominga was resourceful and had a yard filled with vegetables, fruit trees and sugar cane growing. One problem was that her yard had no fence and, in a town that had livestock roaming free, she was forever chasing a neighbor's burro or goat out of her yard.

After one of my visits to Vallejuelo, I could not get Dominga and her day-to-day challenges off my mind. A year later Mark and I returned to Vallejuelo, and this time Kristen, Wanda's college-age little sister, went with us. We decided that on this trip we wanted to make some kind of contribution to make Dominga's life a little easier. We all liked her very much, and I wanted to honor the friendship she had shared with my late wife. We offered not money but something that would help her

day to day, something for which she might be dreaming and wishing.

So with Dominga's and Lauren's input, we made a short list of items that would make dreams come true for her:

1. Instead of a home with a dirt floor, she wanted a cement floor throughout the house to help keep her house clean. She had throw rugs everywhere, but it just was not working. She also wanted to have a cement floor in her outhouse and her outdoor shower. This was always unaffordable.
2. She also wanted to be able to tap into the town well and run a pipe up to a spigot in her yard, so her household water would be close by.
3. She desired a fence around her yard to keep the roaming livestock out of her garden.

This was all she desired in life. To this day, when I need a dose of perspective, I think of the things Dominga dreamed of, how little it took to bring her happiness.

The cement floor was done first. Lauren told me that neighbors came by for days, to admire the newly poured cement in her house and outhouse. He said the admirers knelt down and slapped at the floor, stomped their feet on it, talked about it at length and generally were in awe at her wonderful new gift. He said Dominga was beaming for days and telling everyone she saw to come and see her floor.

Eventually water supply was brought up to her backyard. Dominga no longer had to haul heavy buckets of water every day. The spigot was just outside her back door, and she could wash dishes and clothes right in her backyard. She felt happiness and pride, and her children were ecstatic.

A few months later she got her fence to protect her wonderful backyard garden. That was the year that Dominga also invested in her own pig.

Lauren shared with me later that she regularly talked about her new gifts for months and often became tearful and would begin thanking God and the saints along with Bill, Mark and whoever else came to mind.

I have been blessed to have known Dominga. I learned and have been reminded about joy, humility and love from her. I am also reminded about how to embrace friendship and how to care deeply.

One of Dominga's sons, David, is finishing medical school in Cuba. He often sends me Facebook messages and photos, and we converse online frequently. Even as a 26-year-old, intelligent, handsome medical student, he learned from his mom to be humble and caring.

David tells me his mother still lives in Vallejuelo, in the same house where he grew up. He says she is doing well, is a loving grandmother, even has a new boyfriend, a retired Dominican army sergeant. And her lush garden, surrounded by the fence, is richer and fuller than ever.



From Sailing to Lifelong Learning... How I Discovered HASP

My experience in Holland began in 1972 when Bill and I found an ideal harbor in Lake Macatawa at Jesiek Brother's, soon to become Eldean Shipyard. Our sailboat on a mooring was our weekend destination. I did not discover the town of Holland or Hope College for many years until I was in graduate school studying for a master's degree in nursing and needed to locate a resource with healthcare references. That is when I discovered the Van Wylen Library and Hope College. Writing papers, studying for exams and sailing became the weekend norm for me. In the winter of 1986 when a planned stay at Point West and some cross-country skiing was disrupted by the lack of snow, an impromptu visit to Woodland Realtors resulted in our becoming Lake Macatawa home owners for a weekend destination and later when we retired and reprioritized our lives.

After I left Loyola University Medical Center, where I had enjoyed a career in ICU nursing, administration and teaching, I found the Nursing Department of Hope College. Retirement priority took place in the form of volunteer and mentoring sophomore nursing students in the nursing skills laboratory and lecturing on healthcare finance to the senior students. This will be my tenth year with the college!

Bill and I were fortunate to discover HASP when we took a walk into the Central Park area by the chapel one afternoon and met two HASP members, John and Mary Nonhof, who asked to share a bench we were sitting on at the fire dock on Lake Macatawa. Thanks to two inquisitive conversationalists and Hope grads, we soon learned about HASP. A week later we found copy of the HASP curriculum in our mailbox and an invitation to join John and Mary at a monthly meeting. The rest is history.



We have been members for nine years and I can't think of a better organization to stimulate one's life, reprioritize it, and meet interesting people who care about our community and desire to keep learning and who contribute in so many ways. HASP serves its members well with multiple activities like special events, the varied year-round curriculum, activities at the college, stimulating monthly programs and a strong peer-led leadership which will have its 30th year organizational celebration in 2018.

Bill and I enjoy taking classes, the heart of HASP and lifelong learning. We both have ushered for the Grand Rapids Symphony concerts held each year in Holland and Zeeland. Bill has participated in leading two

trips, one a Mississippi River boat cruise and the other to the Morton Arboretum in Lisle, Illinois. Member at Large, Board of Directors, working with our HASP board and Executive Director on our official

alignment with Hope College, and serving as president of HASP for two years (2015-2017). I can't imagine a better way to spend your "new reprioritized time!!" GO, HASP AND HOPE!

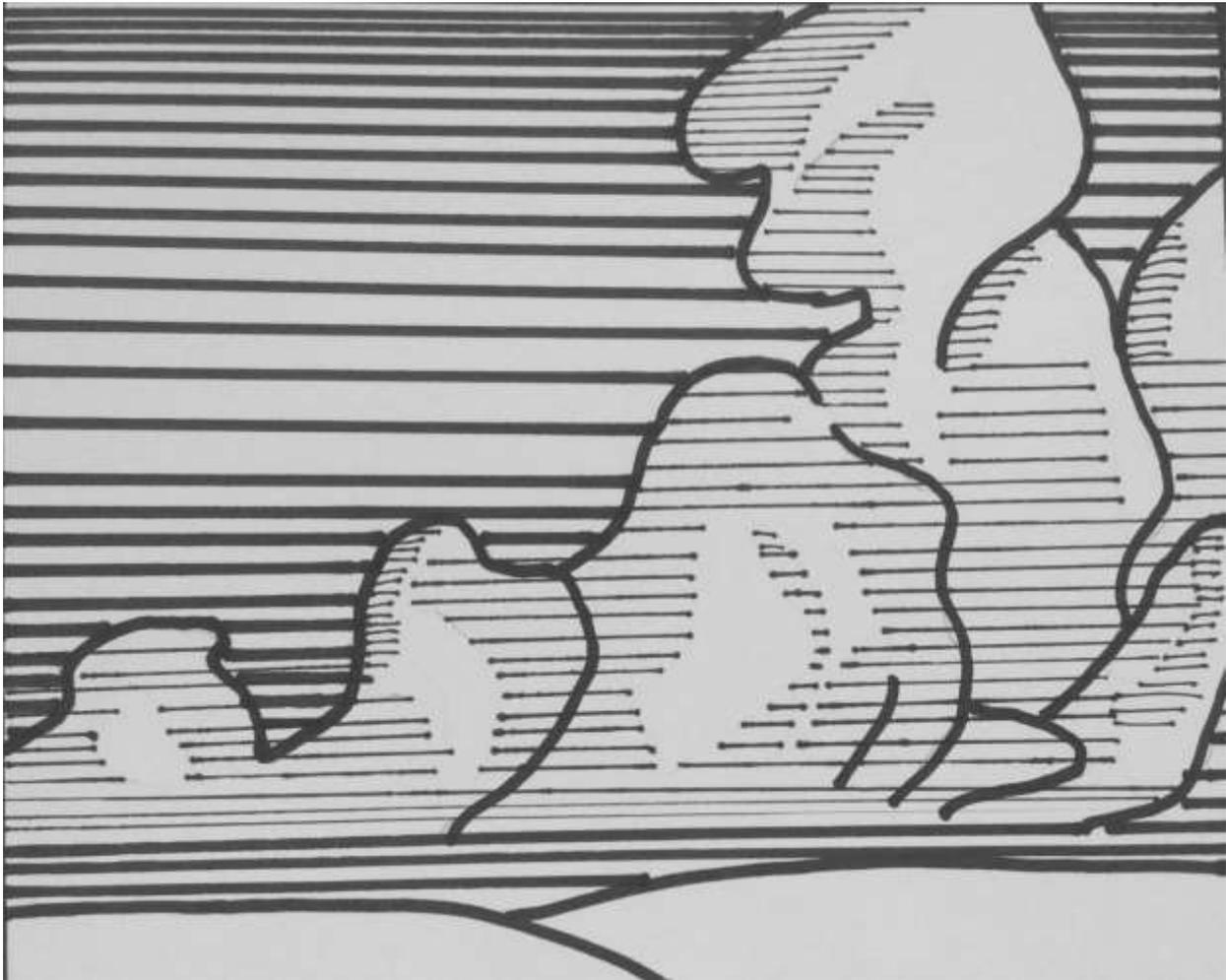


Illustration by Gary Bogle



Galaxies

On a recent Sunday evening on television's *60 Minutes*, I watched a report on the USA's Hubble space craft and the images it has been sending back to Earth for almost three decades.

The photographs shown are surreal. Magnificent explosions of color and towering masses of cloudy wild shapes pierce the darkness, birthing stars and planets and meteorites and galaxies millions of miles beyond our own starry Milky Way. I've seen these pictures before, but that *60 Minutes* segment changed me, and I have been struggling to process what is whirling around in my head.

And this is it:

Hubble has shown us what lies beyond the blackness. When our scientists trained the eye of Hubble's camera toward a vast, deep, dark hole of nothingness in outer space, mind-boggling points of light and color eventually materialized. Millions, maybe billions, of galaxies apparently exist in the blackness—which is impossibly farther away than the blackness of earlier exploration and study.

This beauty, this vastness, has unsettled me. To comprehend what I clearly see in front of me is impossible. And when I try to work through the magnitude of the information provided, I am dumbfounded. Dumbfounded and lost, really.

Walt Whitman's short poem "When I Heard the Learned Astronomer" comes to mind. In the poem, Whitman is listening to a lecture. Charts and diagrams are being presented by that "learned astronomer." But the poet is overcome, cannot grasp his universe being



reduced to proofs and figures and charts and diagrams. He leaves the lecture room to gaze at the stars themselves.

The poem was written in the 1860s. How much more than Whitman's astronomer's diagrams and charts Hubble has sent us? How much more am I overwhelmed and confused by the information? How much more do I question this planet, my life here, the gods that dominate various civilizations, the idea that I am special in the Christian teachings?

In short, Hubble has left me unhinged. Certainly in the wombs of those millions of galaxies there must be planets and suns and life and religions and knowledge and seekers.

How could there not be?

I discover that I am even less than the dot I imagined myself to be. If a God controls the “way beyond,” if God created this “way beyond,” has He made Himself known Out There too?

It’s too much for me. I can feel my mighty Christian anchor starting to drag across the smooth sand of my sea floor. I’m adrift. And rather than floating atop choppy waters, I am falling end over end through one of those endless black holes.

Is anyone truly counting the hairs on my head? Does it matter? If my soul flies to Heaven one day, how many millions or billions of miles will it have to travel? Regardless, it’s way too far. I’ll never, ever make it.

Childhood beliefs put Heaven just beyond the moon and the stars I could see from my own back yard. Beyond the fluffy clouds and the pink sky of sunsets, I knew that Heaven was a golden, ordered, peaceful world of sorts. Populated by angels, and puppies, for starters. Warm apple pies cool on low cottage window sills and weeping willows gracefully surround deep blue ponds alive with swans and goldfish. White picket fences add a homey charm, as does

lush flowered vegetation. And “downtown” offers the proverbial streets of gold.

A few years later, though, I didn’t know what Heaven might be at all. Confusion set in. Knowledge completely obliterated my fantasy. I became a seeker; attended numerous Bible studies, participated in Christian retreats, listened during deep theological discussions with people smarter than I. I asked unanswerable questions.

Trapped in this tenuous state for much of my adult life, I still seek answers. Some days I think that I can feel the warm comfort of faith: a lifting of sorts, an angel’s wing around me, a heavenly whisper in my ear.

But the Hubble thing has completely undone me.

Would God have created this one tiny planet populated by millions of sometimes angelic, but most often narcissistic, beings – and then left all of the other galaxies devoid of life? Or are we one of millions? An experiment of life? Failing on this place called Earth – a nearly imperceptible planet muddling around in circles as we travel inside the Milky Way galaxy?

It’s blowing my mind.

And now, darn it, BBC television’s *Blue Planet II* series is revealing oodles of cartoon-creepy sea life living in the utter blackness miles below the oceans’ surfaces. What do these guys do!?

Wow! I’ll stop writing now.



Hands

Watching people's hands in their normal day-to-day activities can give us an insight into the emotions that connect us all. Even more important, the few seconds we see the hands in motion can create an image that lasts a lifetime. One image that is still etched in my mind occurred in Vietnam.

I was a flight engineer on a CH-47 Chinook helicopter, and one mission stands out. The Viet Cong had stolen all the rice from a small village and had taken it to their camp high on a jungle-covered hill. After the infantry retook the hill, with help from the villagers, we loaded the rice into our helicopter to return it, but one of the workers accidentally dropped a bag of white rice. I can still see his hands as he gently scooped up the rice with as much care as if it were gold.

Year later, I saw the same gentleness as my wife folded my shirts while doing the laundry. The slow meticulous way her hands moved demonstrated her love for her family.

There is an old Civil War song that states, "A cannonball don't pay no mind – though you're gentle or you're kind." Neither does cancer. Almost two years after my wife succumbed to cancer, as I was putting on a shirt I realized this was the last shirt I would ever wear that she had lovingly washed and carefully folded. For the first time, I really cried and also realized she is still with us. Now it is my time to honor her memory by gently picking up the rice and lovingly folding the clothes of others.



Illustration by Mary Porter



He's Just a Mutt!

Many years ago our kids were lobbying hard to get a dog. They eventually wore us down and we found ourselves looking at a litter of six-week-old puppies at the pound. My wife and I felt that a female dog would be calm and less aggressive. As we watched the puppies frolic before us, we couldn't easily identify their sex. Three excited kids were pointing at one pup after another as THE one we should have. As our daughter sat back watching, one of the puppies left the group and climbed onto her lap. We knew then that we had our dog and that it had chosen us. It was male.

All the way home the children were debating over what to name our dog while he slept peacefully in my wife's lap. As the puppy roamed around his new surroundings, our oldest son commented that every time the dog seemed nervous, he sat down and scratched himself. So we all watched to see if this observation was correct. It was. The puppy had determined his own name: Scratch!

Scratch was a very active and playful dog and yet seemed to know that there were limits as to how rough he could get. He would tumble around the floor with the kids,

play-biting and yapping, but he never bit down hard or bared his teeth in anything like anger. He loved tug-of-war with any found rag but never chewed up a good item of clothing. We never determined how he knew a rag from a good garment. Nor did he ever attempt to teeth on furniture.

The kids and I were for roughhousing. When Scratch needed loving calm, he went straight to my wife. He had already attached a hierarchy for the family. The eldest son was his soul mate and confidant. Our daughter was second in command for comforting, and he liked to lounge next to her. Youngest son was his wrestling partner. Scratch felt that he was an even match. I was the Alpha male handing out discipline. I got his attention and respect but was not first in his mind for play time or comfort.



Illustration by Jan Gebben

The quickly growing mutt turned out to be extremely easy to house break. Within the first week he was paper trained. After he was shown the rewards for alerting us to his needs and using the great out-of-doors, he was trained! The impressive part of this was that he chose the farthest corner of our property to use as his bathroom. We never had to police our lawn because he never used it.

Now it was time to take him to the vet. Scratch took one sniff of the place and determined that this was the house of pain. After we dragged him into the examining room, he stood passively with his ears down and his tail between his legs while the doctor checked him over. The vet's first comment was, "Well, he's a dog. I have to enter his breed into the record but I have no idea what to put down." After Scratch was calmly given his shots, the doctor said that we had a really special dog. "He is one of those rare ones who seem to understand that I'm here to help. Now that I've looked at him more closely, I think we can call him a Border collie/spaniel mix. But that is just a wild guess."

One of Scratch's favorite toys was a ball, as long as it included long, keep-away chases. It was a joy to hear our kids yelling instructions to one another as to how to trap our elusive dog. He seemed to know that the game wouldn't be fun if the kids never won. He would fall down or drop the ball so they could win and the game would continue.

Scratch loved winter. He and our children spent hours playing in the snow. One of Scratch's favorite tricks was to bury his nose to his eyeballs and run full tilt through the drifts. When snowballs were thrown, he snapped at them as they flew through the air. If one landed in the snow, the fun was to jump into the air and plunge face first into the hole it made. He looked just like the foxes that you see hunting mice on TV nature programs. He and the children had another game that was not my favorite. Using a board or sometimes my best softball bat, they would hit the pine tree trunks causing great avalanches of snow to fall from them. Scratch found this to be great fun as he hurtled skyward to meet the

descending deluge of snow. Of course I was not very happy to find that I now had a square aluminum bat.

A new indoor game revealed itself that winter. One night the kids were munching M&Ms in front of the TV. A few inadvertently fell into the multi-colored shag carpet. They seemed lost forever. As Scratch joined them, his nose quickly solved the problem of the lost treats. He zeroed in on every piece. This became a game that Scratch enjoyed. I would take the dog out of the room while the kids hid M&Ms. Scratch would unerringly scarf up every hidden treat as the kids giggled. This stopped when we found out that chocolate was very bad for dogs. However, our rugged mutt never had a problem.

Scratch loved chasing sticks thrown into the surf at Lake Michigan. There is nothing more invigorating than lying nice and warm on a beach towel and having your dog run up and shake several pints of cold water all over you. Our dog was used to the shallow water on our beaches, so while on vacation I decided to pull a trick on him. Hiking next to a river with a steep drop-off, I picked up a twig and said "Get the stick!" as I tossed it into the river. He rocketed forward and immediately disappeared under water. He surfaced, coughing and sputtering, then saw me laughing at him which was more than he could bear. He came out, shook water all over me, then stalked away. I wasn't forgiven for three full days.

At times we would look out the window to see him playing with a bunch of neighborhood dogs. There would be a German shepherd, a Newfie and a Samoyed all lying contentedly with our Border mix in the shade of the deck. When Scratch was five years old I brought home a stray female Terrier mix. We named her Frosty because

her hair stuck out like the hoar frost on windows. At first Scratch didn't take to this little interloper, but they soon became buddies. The Terrier was very territorial and would not have the big dogs sharing her yard. Sharing a bed, food dishes and even toys was all right, but not other dogs, pizza or chicken.

Scratch was picky about cleanliness. He didn't like to get dirty and was continually grooming himself. He loved being brushed by the kids, with our daughter being his favorite groomer. And he liked to be vacuumed. He would follow the vacuum around and whine until someone relented and turned the suction on him. Frosty was a slob. She never cleaned herself. This would make Scratch so aggravated that he would pin her down and thoroughly clean her himself.

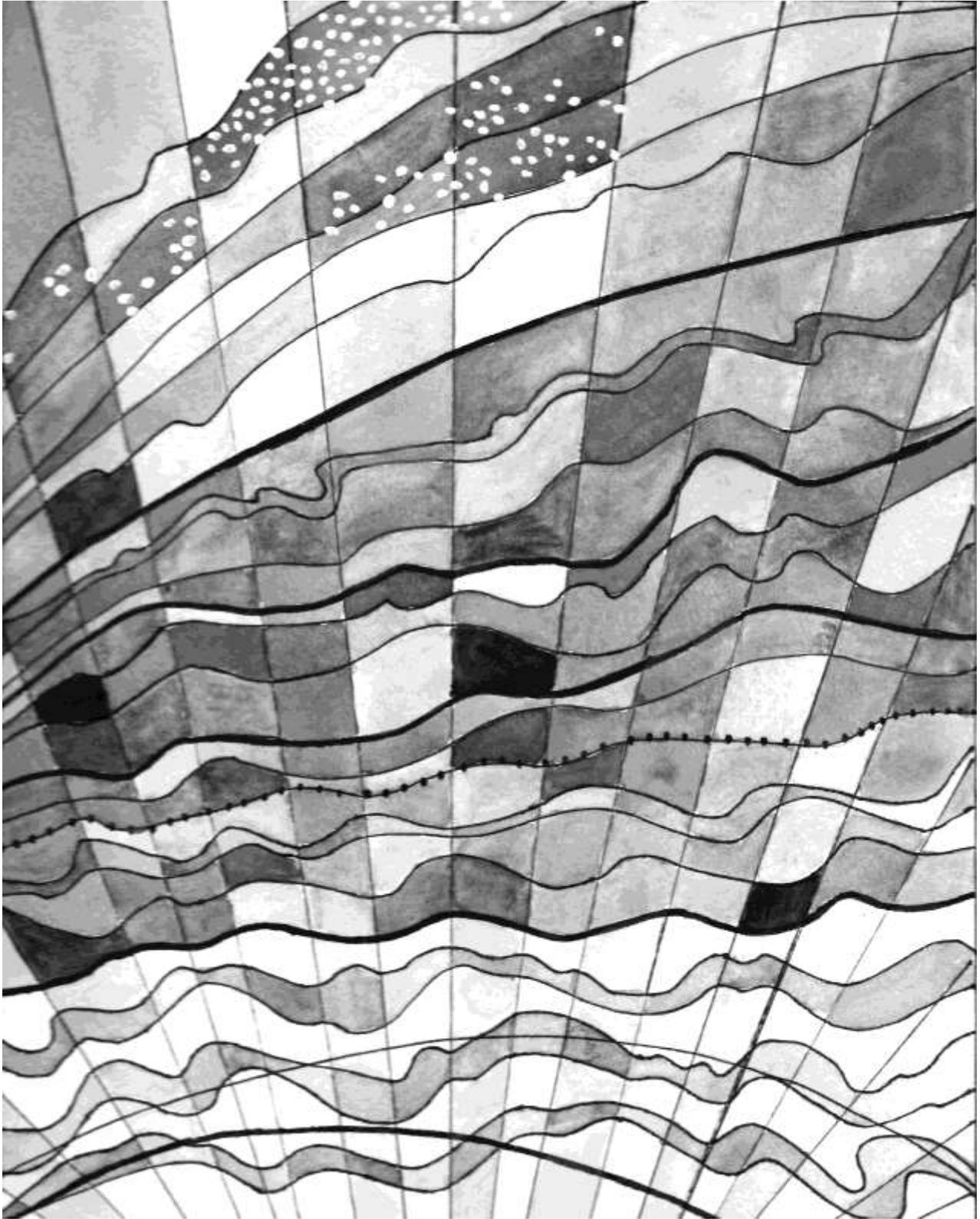
I do a lot of my own car maintenance. Oil changes and grease jobs were of no interest to Scratch. But when it came time for a tune-up with the tools and points and sparkplugs, he was right at my heels. He'd whine and pester me until I put an old milk crate against the front bumper. He would jump up on the crate, put his paws on the

radiator and there he would stay during the entire process. He got so good that he would nose a sparkplug toward me as soon as I removed an old one. He seemed fascinated by the timing light, but it was hard to adjust the timing with his head in the way. He was wary of the fan belt and noise but never backed away or got hurt. My wife felt he was a reincarnated auto mechanic.

One morning I let the dogs out for a run. Scratch returned ten minutes later barking frantically at the back door. When I let him in, he gently grabbed my hand in his jaw and pulled me toward the door. I said, "What's up, Scratch?" He gripped me harder and continued to pull. I thought that maybe Frosty had gotten muddy again. I put him back outside and left for work. It was then I saw Frosty's broken little body in the road.

Her death started the downward spiral. Scratch lost his exuberance for life, developed tumors and seemed to be in pain. He was deaf, had cataracts and was 14 years old. A decision was made and our Scratch was buried in the pine grove at our home. No one will ever be able to tell us that he was "just a mutt."





A grayscale representation of an original work by Carol Rickey



Maggie

Dear Maggie,

When we were together last summer, you asked if Uncle Ron and Wally had felt much discrimination because they are gay. It was a logical question to ask because the U.S. Supreme Court had just passed down their decision about same-sex marriage. Ron and Wally, after being together for over 20 years, were married the summer before, on the first day that it was legal in the State of Indiana.

I was with them last month so I asked your question. Their answer was pretty simple, “No.” They went on to say they think it’s because they’re not very flamboyant. In earlier conversations, they’ve said they thought it might be because it is one aspect of their life, but not the only one, or maybe not even the main one to other people. Among their friends, they are known as owners of a beautiful designer cabin they built themselves, as retired business owners, as wine connoisseurs and as world travelers. And as two men who are very hospitable who love to welcome people to their home.

Wally is also known as a loving father of three adult sons and a grandfather of two. In family gatherings everybody “knows” that if there is a baby in the room, don’t let Wally hold the baby first. If you do, Wally ends up loving the baby, the baby loves Wally, and no one else gets to hold the baby.

People know many sides of Ron and Wally, not just that they are gay. So, although their answer was a simple “no,” I thought you

might be interested in how they were accepted into our family.

It was back in 1994. Over a few months, Grandpa Peter and Grandma Blake found out that Ron was gay and they told your mom and uncles. At first, we got to know Wally as Ron’s “roommate” at family dinners. At Christmastime, your Grandpa Peter called my father and said, “Everyone in our family knows about Ron and Wally. Marilyn knows, Julie knows, and the kids know. Why don’t you invite Wally for Christmas?” A few days later, Dad called Ron and simply invited Wally to the family Christmas dinner. After a sincere “Yes,” Ron said, “I love you, Dad.” Dad responded with, “I love you, son.”

A few weeks after that, Dad called Ron again and said, “You know how Mom and I no longer give you kids gifts, but rather a check in the Christmas stocking? Would Wally be comfortable receiving that?”

“Not the check, Dad, but yes, he’d appreciate the stocking on the tree.” “OK.” And that was it. No conversation or discussion – just simple and loving acceptance.

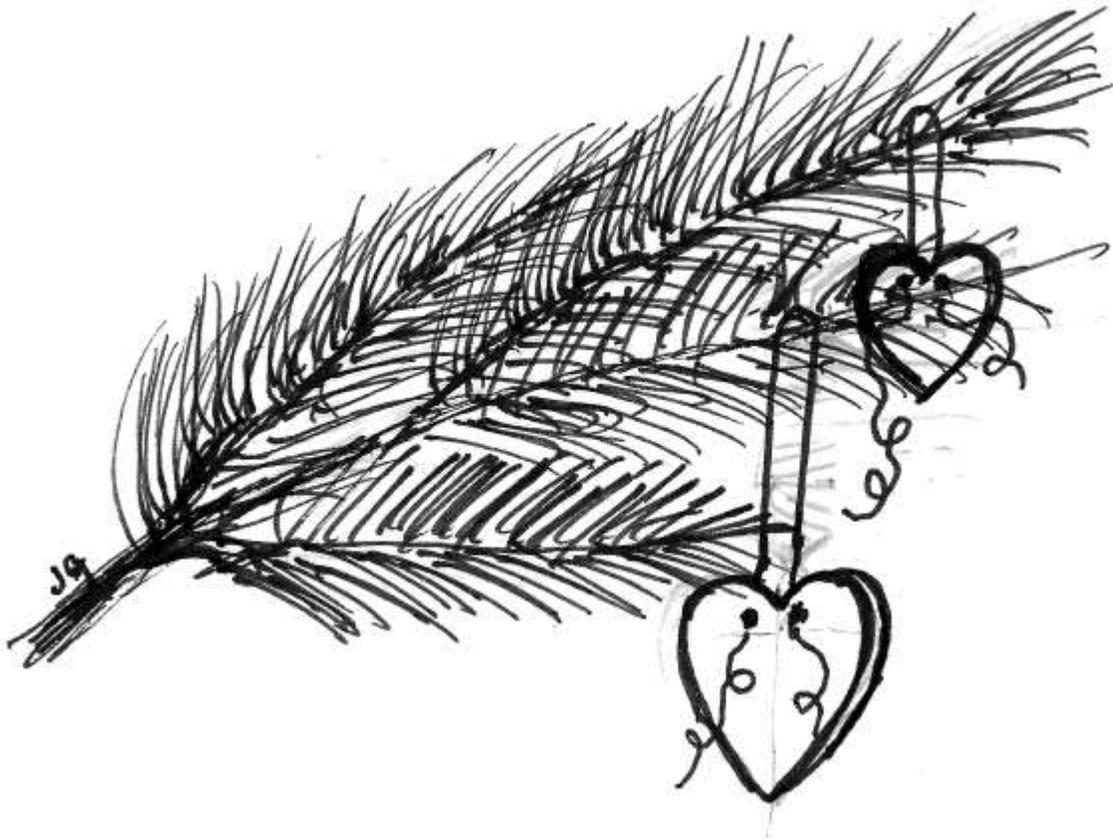
Five years later, when our mother was dying, we were talking about who would be the pallbearers at the funeral. Without hesitation, Dad said, “Matt, Dave, Brent and Wally.” There it is: that same, simple and loving acceptance.

Maggie, as I learn more about our family history, I see the same attitude of simple and

loving acceptance in past generations toward people of different churches and different races. It wasn't talked about, but it was

there. And now it is an attitude that we can take forward in our lives.

Love,
Great-aunt Marilyn





Pre-Dawn

The hour before the sun rises is mystical, supernatural and fills me with awe. It is a time for communion; a time of transition; a time for prayer.

lakeshore for a drink before beginning much activity. The crows sometimes follow and harass it, for reasons I cannot fathom. The creatures of the dusk, particularly the deer,



The creatures of the night are returning to their safe places to bed down. The day creatures, especially the birds, are waking. Cardinals first: their melody pure, simple. Next come the crows, their raspy ruckus a harsh contrast. The other birds join in at random. The red fox always makes a brief visit to the

Illustration by Karen VanDam Michmerhuizen

are active, feeding, vigilant but unafraid.

Usually the does move in small groups, though one is, and always has been, alone. The regal buck, usually just a shadow, presents himself on rare occasions, watching over his domain.

The marsh is often caressed by ground fog. Wispy, mysterious tendrils seem to move in random patterns as the light rises until they succumb to the sun and simply fade away. The frogs are unimpressed and continue their chorus, sometimes startling me with their volume.

Through it all, I walk. The paths are familiar but the experience never the same. As the light rises, the clouds' eastern edges turn pink, drawing my eyes to heaven. The lake water, slate gray and drab when I set out, becomes blue ripples as it reflects the

sky. The fishing boats stir it, creating patterns with their wakes, each unlike any other. The water birds float, unconcerned.

Plants bud, bloom in a myriad of colors and shapes, wane. Trees drop seeds, cones, acorns and leaves as the days pass, foretelling the changes to come. Dawn grows later as the darkness continues to intrude, exerting its influence whether welcome or not.

Through it all, I walk, grateful for the majesty, power and magnificence our God has chosen to share.



Illustration by Jan Gebben



The Importance of Insects to a Little Girl

Picture a sandbox with two five-year-old girls busily building a sand city. One of the girls is a blue-eyed blonde while the other has brown hair with grey-green eyes. Both girls are slender, but the blue-eyed blonde could be considered skinny with knobby knees. As you watch you notice the blonde girl is not coordinated and her movements tend to be jerky and awkward. It makes her seem fragile and people tend to want to pick her up, but when they do they usually make a comment about how heavy she is. Seldom do they pick up on the fact that what she appears to be is very different from what she actually is. When people asked, they were told that she had a mild case of cerebral palsy.

the panic she thought the ant must be feeling. It is such a big world when you are little. How much bigger and scarier must the world be to an ant that is even smaller. She was able to scoop the ant out of the pail and let it go before dumping the water into the sandbox.

As time went on, the girl often thought about that ant and wondered if there was any way to protect insects from the hazards they face in this world. As her dad learned of her interest in bugs, he gave her books on their habits and lifestyles. She found it fascinating that some of them, like ants and bees, actually live in their own communities. Others, like butterflies and moths, underwent amazing transformations. All of



Illustration by Mary Porter

It had rained sometime during the night before, so the sand was just the right consistency for building castles and making roads. When the blue-eyed girl started to pick up one of the sand pails, she noticed there was still water in it. On closer look, she noticed a small ant desperately trying to stay afloat. Her first reaction was

them appeared to have a purpose; though some, like fleas and chiggers, had questionable purposes. Then it came to her. She would make pets of them and give them a home where they would be safe. Little did she realize what a futile effort this would be.

The task of catching bugs for pets became one of her big activities during the summers of her elementary school years. Fortunately, there were a couple of vacant lots on the block, and often she would organize other kids in the neighborhood to help catch these critters. Under rocks she found what she called “roly poly” bugs, also known as pill bugs or sow bugs. They were one of her favorites because of the way the many-legged, armored creatures could roll up into a ball. Ladybugs, grasshoppers, crickets and caterpillars were among her other favorites to capture. The treat of the summer was when they would visit relatives in southern Illinois where her dad would help her catch fireflies to take home. Why fireflies were more prevalent there than at her home in Michigan, she did not know. These times with her dad became fond memories in her later years.

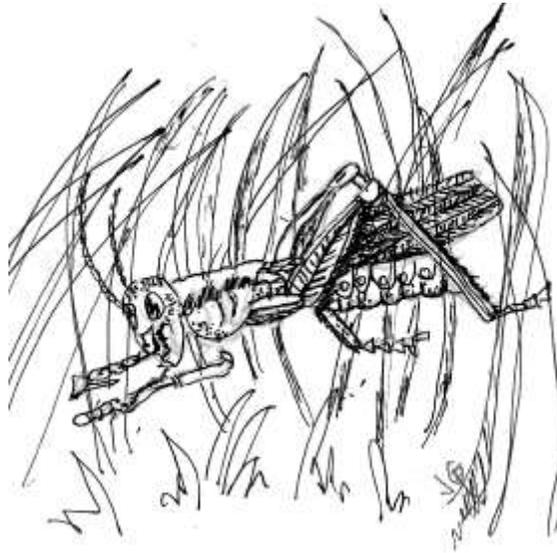


Illustration by Jan Gebben

Since she viewed these critters as pets and therefore part of the family, she was always grateful for her mother’s willingness to allow her to keep her jarred pets on a bookshelf in the living room, much to the dismay of some of her mother’s friends.

Of course, there was always a feeling of sadness when one of these pets did not last

more than a week or two in its glass environment. When she was ten years old, she read that in the Orient people kept crickets as pets because they were considered to be good luck. She read up on it and decided this was what she wanted to do. She successfully kept a cricket through an entire winter. In spring she found a jar in the corner of a closet and to her surprise it contained a live ladybug. She let both insects loose in the mild spring air and her desire to make pets of insects seemed to go with them. She later learned that ladybugs actually hibernate over the winter, so all she had done was give one a safe place to sleep. That didn’t matter any more.

Looking back over her childhood, the woman, who is still blue-eyed

but no longer blonde, realized that her need to protect the insects was really her own need to feel protected. Being able to release the cricket and ladybug after the long winter meant that she would be able to protect herself. There always seemed to be a conflict between feeling safe and secure and being independent, bold and daring. To this day she wonders which side will win the conflict.



The Voice of Art

Art – something that is created with imagination and skill. It's beautiful and expresses important ideas or feelings.

I am the voice of Art.

I have been around since the cave man became creative.

But believe me, I have eyes and I've seen it all – good and bad, primitive and refined, colorful and dull, big and small. I've seen art on papyrus, on canvas, on walls, art on cave walls and sidewalks, art on ceilings, on glass, on wood, cement, plaster, on skin...I've been a part of it all. But I've not had my say as to what's been created in my name. You see, I'm not entirely happy with an enormous amount of things that artists are calling "Art." They are giving me a bad name.

I can appreciate a Van Gogh sunflower, a Da Vinci Madonna, a portrait by Rembrandt, a fresco by Raphael, paintings by Loutrec, Klimt, Klee, Picasso, Rockwell, Escher, Warhol. Their work is "Art." It shows skill. It is appealing, showing more than ordinary significance. Somewhere along the way, artists took a wrong turn. The road turned

dark and murky. Sometimes the sun was barely visible, making colors hard to discern. At other times light came at you from all sides. Some shapes were nondescript; others were very descriptive and quite bizarre. What was happening?

When was the last time you went to an exhibit? Ah ha, I thought so. It's been a very long time, I would imagine, and I think I know why. Lately I have seen some pieces

created in my name that have nothing to do with me at all. Let me explain. A young woman walks into a gallery, takes the traditional glass of cheap wine and begins to look around. She sees a painting of a small, nude, human-like figure holding a brown apple in one hand, a very large glove on the other, and a donut on his penis. She also sees a very large painting that is simply a blob of deep blue, on a black background. That's it, nothing more. She sees a figure of Howdy Doody

carrying a large cross on his back. Next is a painting made up entirely of legs, yes, yellow and brown legs. Now she sees a sculpture of a bearded, decapitated head with tiny figures wearing long robes walking all over the face. Our young student of the arts is then confronted



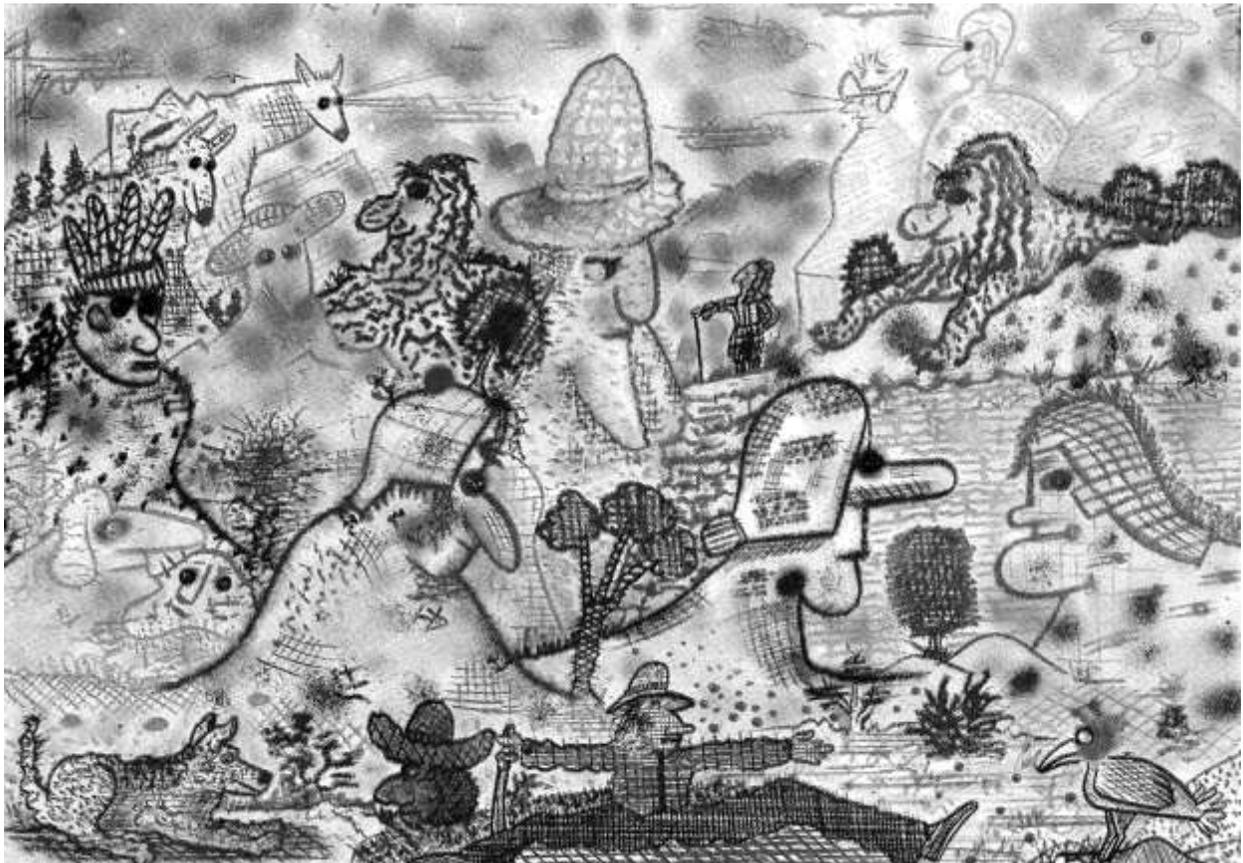
Illustration by Mary Porter

by a large painting of a very wild-looking man bearing three sets of genitals. Three! Time for a new gallery. Maybe things will get better. Let's see. A golden-brown painting with black spots called "Venice Afternoon." Yellow and green string-like shapes on a white background titled "Calcium." Red, yellow and blue background with large black X's dripping their "inky" images across the canvas, Red Series No. 31.)

Let's try a museum. This museum features a collection of works by contemporary artists (I use the word "artists" loosely). Now, what does our young lady see? The title is "Twiggy with a Dollar Bill," full face of a pretty woman with a dollar bill nailed to her forehead and long shiny boots attached to her lower eyelids. Our young woman then

moves on to a painting of a man in a suit and tie, paints down around his ankles (of course) sitting on a toilet. We'll end the tour with several "scribble and drip" paintings.

As I said in the beginning, I am the voice of art. I speak out when others don't. You may think that I am making this up, or that I have a very vivid imagination, but these are paintings that I have actually seen. So when I see several people gathered in front of a painting, discussing its meaning – and perhaps saying, "Why is he holding that apple and what is that round object with a pencil threaded through it on the lower part of his body...what does it mean?" I simply come out and say, "THAT LOOKS LIKE A YOUNG BOY WITH A DONUT ON HIS PENIS!"





A grayscale representation of an original water color by Cindy Bender



Trilogy

The Phone Call

It was about one p.m. this past June 9 when she walked across the living room to her desk and picked up the cellphone.

The screen came alive and the usual ten numerals appeared; one through nine with zero at the bottom. Even though this had been done hundreds of times before, she was nervous.

While the means of making a phone call has radically changed in her lifetime, the motive has remained the same: to connect with another. She'd dialed numbers on the black Bakelite candlestick model in her dad's home office and now was using this magical, multi-functional device called an iPhone.

Eighty-six years, two months and ten days earlier, she had arrived in this life and was immediately assigned to a loving, adoptive couple and raised as an only child in a nice neighborhood on Chicago's south side.

She'd been a good kid, devoted daughter, a stellar student. She went from high school to college – getting married the same day she graduated. She became a teacher, a mother, a grandmother and even a great-grandmother, filling each role with distinction. She knew of her adoption but never wanted to know about her origins.

For a while her loving husband tried to spark her curiosity to match his. She refused, yet he pursued it on his own and assembled a file of what he could learn. But she rejected

the notion of opening that file or even hearing about his meager discoveries. “My life is fine; I don't need to know.”

When her husband passed, the file lay dormant in his old desk drawer.

Five years later, curiosity about her origins began to form. What was her true ethnic origin? From what part of the world had she come?

When she heard of her friends' DNA test results, she remarked, “I want to find out! I want to do that!”

Utilizing the latest scientific, computer-generated methods available to the public, her report finally arrived. It revealed a map with most notations in Eastern Slovakia, near the border with the Ukraine. That was interesting, even exciting! She and her friends toasted her newly discovered identity, sipping a taste of Slivovitz plum brandy from the old country. “Nazdrovia!!”

But now there was more information at hand. That “more” was like a path of dropped bread crumbs. Some of those bread crumbs came from the report, and a few others merged with the contents of the file folder that was finally opened. Should she follow those clues?

Now, in her ninth decade of life, did it really matter?

Her thoughts raced through a myriad of feelings.

How much more of life's challenges and its great adventure could she handle or even want to experience? The situation called for courage.

"Am I strong enough to withstand whatever this might bring?" How can one adapt or expand one's self-identity at this stage of life?

"What if I hit a dead-end? What if I am rejected?"

But then again, "Perhaps this is a good thing! Am I trusting enough of my own instincts to follow this path?"

So on that afternoon of June 9, her nervous fingers tapped at those ten digits on the screen of her phone; one at a time and in the proper order; the first ones linking to an area code she'd never before called. The remaining seven numerals took an extra measure of concentration. It was a leap into the unknown.

Would that unknown be of darkness or light? It was surely an act of courage, trust, faith and...and...well, she just did not know. Should these dots be connected? Should she cross that fog-shrouded bridge that spanned before her?

Eight hundred miles away, a telephone rang.

"Hello."

"Hello, is this David?"

"Yes."

"My name is Audrey. I think I am your sister."

The Phone Call II

He was out walking his dog, Heidi, on this early summer day. It gave them time to greet neighbors, something they both enjoyed, and time for him to ponder things he liked to ponder.

The hot Georgia sun shone directly overhead as he and Heidi walked. About halfway along their route, the cellphone in his pocket rang.

As he had entered his 60s nearly a decade ago, he found he was becoming more reflective about his life.

His had been a life of unsettling search. He was able to commit to ideals and resulting actions but committing to individuals had been a challenge. His journey took him from Chicago's Grant Park during the Days of Rage in the summer of 1968, through more than a dozen states and eventually racing into Ontario in a scene worthy of an action movie sequence. There, he remained for nearly 20 years before returning to the U.S.

He had been adopted at birth into a well-to-do Chicago family, raised as an only child but was haunted, lacking a sense of connection to who he was and from where he came. So for 11 years, he obsessively (his wife's term for it) researched, trying to learn about his origins, engaging himself with virtually every genealogical and DNA-analyzing website he could find. The information gained, combined with his well-hewn sense of deductive reasoning, yielded many facts, but his inner sense of alienation from his origin remained. The facts formed a picture frame, but the frame lacked the picture.

He learned that from possible siblings, there was a brother and likely an older sister. He

located that brother and visited him in the Chicago area but their sense of bonding felt incomplete. It takes two for that process and, in this case, reciprocity was lacking. So his search continued. He did learn the mystery of his past was indeed just that – a mystery carefully crafted to avoid detection. Names, addresses and occupations had been intentionally changed on birth certificates and related papers. But a few repeated patterns emerged: nine children, a single mother, a series of biological fathers, an attorney – all adopted at birth by well-to-do families. All were facts, but those facts did not satisfy. They did not fill in that frame.

On this June 9, in his neighborhood in suburban Atlanta, it was about 1 p.m. when his phone rang. He switched Heidi's leash into his right hand and with his left, reached into his pocket, retrieved his phone and stared at the screen. He pushed the button and answered.

“Hello?”

“Hello, is this David?”

“Yes, it is.”

“My name is Audrey and I think I am your sister.”

For the first time in his life, a picture in that long-empty frame began to come into focus. A sense of belonging began to fill his emptiness.

A Knock at the Door

It had been less than a month since that initial June phone call and those days were filled with a whirlwind of thoughts, emails and a few more calls. They had been marked with a rapidly expanding sense of identity. If research states the human brain can no longer grow at an advanced age, it is

mistaken. Those researchers never met Audrey and they never met David.

Certain she was no longer an only child, the list of siblings, half-siblings, cousins and shoestring relatives popped up like a vast field of dandelions with many seeds scattered to the wind. Where most had landed and germinated remains unknown, but curiosity was certainly sparked.

So a knock on her apartment door came as no great surprise. It was expected. It was planned, but her nerves were still honed razor-sharp.

David had arrived from his home outside Atlanta. For the first time in his life, he met his oldest sister. For the first time in her life, Audrey met her brother, 17 years her junior.

Without trying to look too obvious, each took delight scanning the other for physical resemblances. With ears dialed-in to the other's voice, they listened and processed, rewiring with so many new connections.

It was a head-spinning visit, 36 hours of chatter and introducing him to nieces, nephews, the next two generations of both, friends and places. There was not much time left for sleep. The talk was constant, the connecting was strong and open. Light was eradicating the darkness of an unknown past.

In Audrey's building, a close-knit community of seniors, this proverbial stranger in town became a hot topic of discussion – especially since their friend and neighbor was escorted about on his arm. “Boyfriend? Tsk! Tsk!” Those kinds of things do happen in places like this. It was not until formal introductions were made that this misnomer was cleared up.

“For the first time in my life, I was introduced as someone’s brother!” David declared. His statement was moving. “My drive here from home was made worthwhile by hearing those words alone.”

How does one get to know a sibling in this brief, intense time at such a stage of life? Seven decades had passed for one, more than eight for the other.

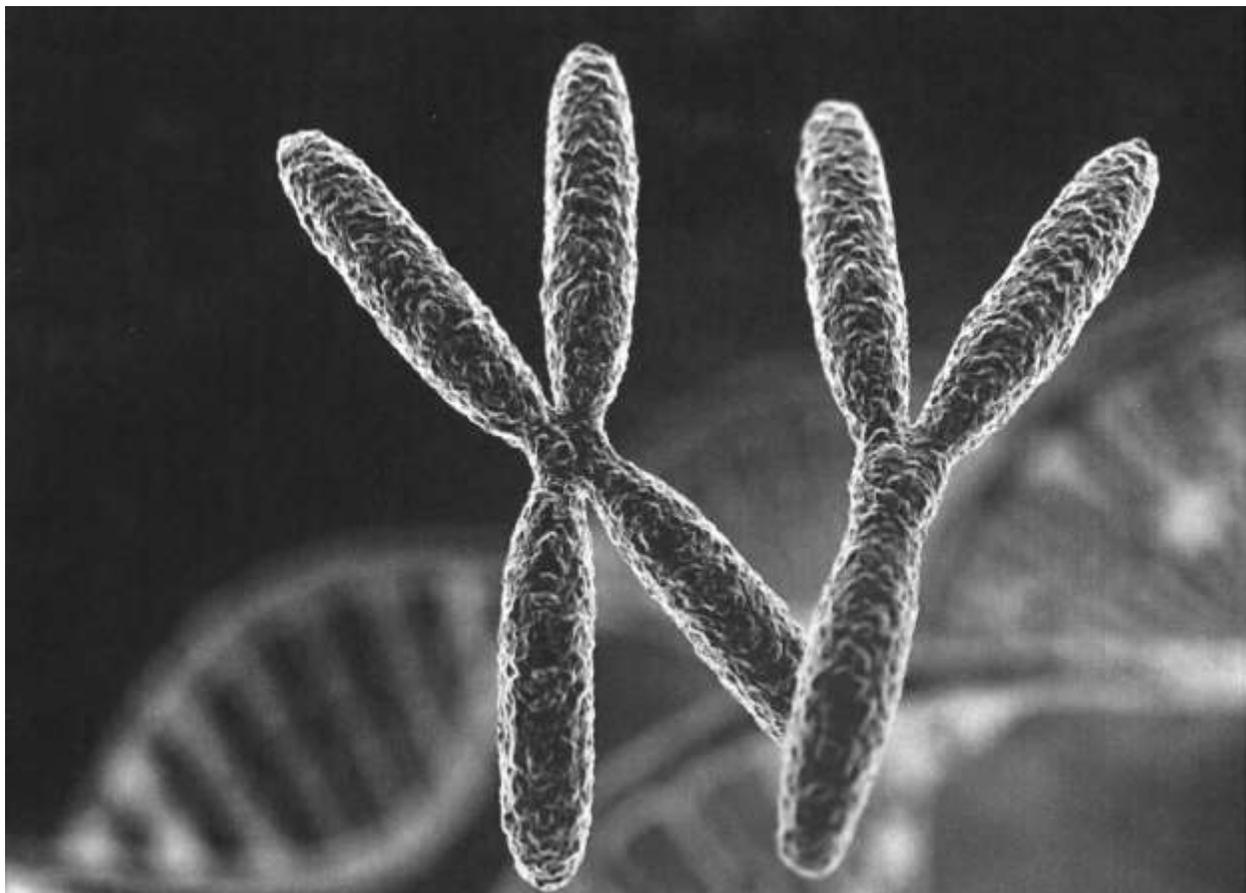
How does one prioritize the best use of this precious time, from 10 on a Friday morning until 10 on a Saturday night? How does one choose what is most important to reveal about oneself? It certainly was a different

twist to the lyrics of the song “Getting to Know You.”

As one gets older, time takes on greater value and each day that time races faster while its future shrinks a bit. But the love one can give another knows no such constraints.

So the meeting between Audrey and David and members of her family was a beautiful event of which more are hoped to follow.

As spoken in the final words in the film *Casablanca*, “...I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.”





Wallpaper

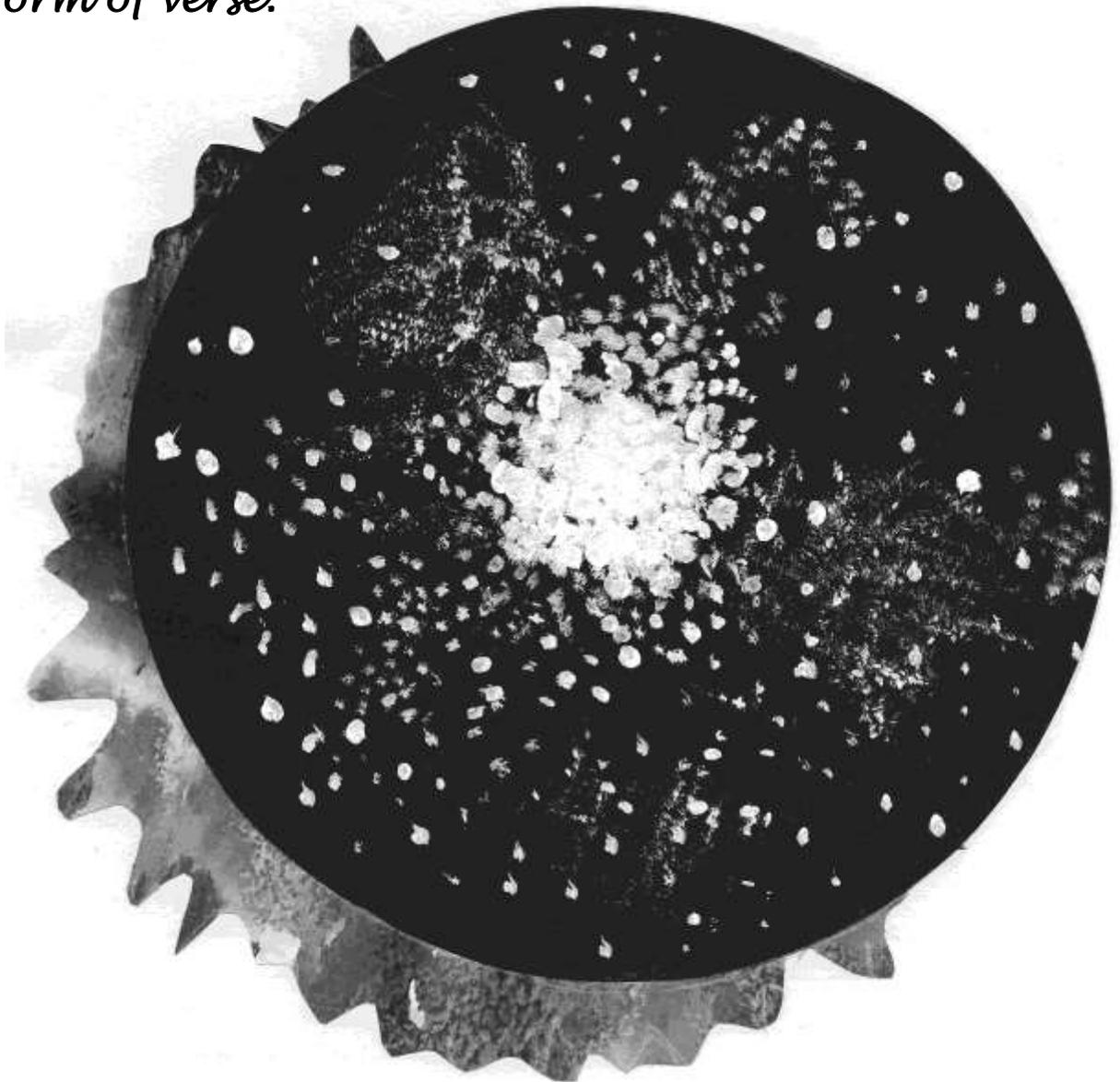


She picked out the wallpaper. He preferred to face away from it whenever he could.

Star Cluster

A large grouping of stars bound together by a mutual gravitational attraction

Poetry is featured by our next group of writers, each poem expressing thoughts and emotions in the form of verse.





Aftershock

Along the streets I drive to work
the landscape changes only with the season
or the risky venture of a hopeful entrepreneur.

Inside the solid concrete tower
My office fills with folders, letters,
urgents and can't wait
that look the same from day to day.
I sit at the desk I've had for five years,
typing down the paper pile,
when the gentlest of movements
stirs the curtains,
shakes my chair.

The secretaries come chattering down the hall
asking everyone if they felt the earthquake
that started in Cleveland,
of all places,
and radiated through nine states.

We talk compulsively of where we were
and what we were doing
and how long it's been
since there was an earthquake here
and what it measured on the Richter scale,
which none of us understands.

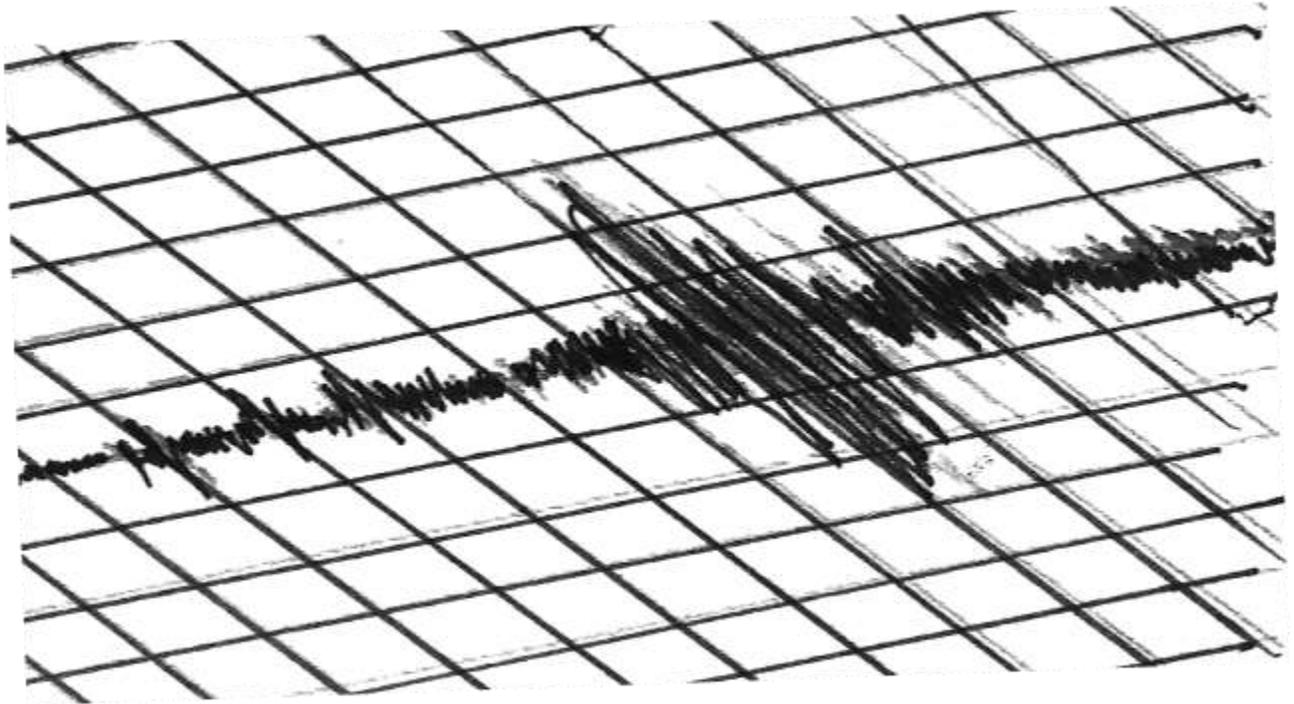
My well-read niece, who likes to know
just how things work,
says quakes are caused
when strains accumulated along hidden faults
relax,
creating waves that move up to the surface.
The energy can sway a building,
shatter pavement,
dissolve trustworthy granite

into strange fragility.

Long-married friends announce
they are divorcing—
amicably, they say, and civilly.

But tears
push through the cracks
that slice across their eyes.

I shiver as the tremors hit me
and think again about the Richter scale.





Then Comes the Dawn*

Then comes the Dawn.

Darkness descends.

The September night is clear and warm.

Sirius and Venus are dancing a circle around the Pleiades.

The frogs, not yet submerged in mud, continue an all-night argument.

The soon-to-migrate birds, especially the robins, begin to chatter.

Then comes the Dawn.

Darkness descends.

Entertainers, Doctors, and Politicians prey on innocent women.

Their cries are stifled and unheard.

Those in power diminish and discount.

But then the lonely cry of “me, too” begins to reverberate around the globe.

Then comes the Dawn.

Darkness descends.

The November night is cold and quiet, the leaves are gone.

Orion and hunting companions continue their nightly prowl.

There is a distant call of a Great Horned Owl.

At daybreak a Great Blue Heron goes croaking by.

Then comes the Dawn.

Darkness descends.

Climate change is a hoax.

Black tar oil flows over sacred lands and the country’s largest aquifer.

Icebergs are breaking off at alarming rates from Antarctica.

Presidents and Governors promise to continue adhering to the Paris Accord.

Then comes the Dawn.

Darkness descends.

The January morning is cold and still, lots of snow.
High overhead the two bears stretch and direct.
The hum of the distant power plant and occasional vehicle is all to be heard.
A gradual lightening of the sky is hardly discernable.

Then comes the Dawn.

Darkness descends.

Tired old men, seeking to preserve their ideological turf, shut it all down.
Dreamers are pawns in the political chess game.
Truth is called fake news.
Women who marched are beginning to run.

Then comes the Dawn.

Darkness descends.

The night is shorter in February and the snow is disappearing.
Jupiter and Mars have been doing a *pas de deux*.
Water is running up the tree trunks and around the edges of the pond.
Cardinals and Titmice have been singing to their valentines.

Then comes the Dawn.

*These ruminations are a product of reflections on monthly, early morning, three-hour vigils I have been having at a little pond in the Port Sheldon Natural Area of the Ottawa County Parks.



Illustration by Jan Gebben



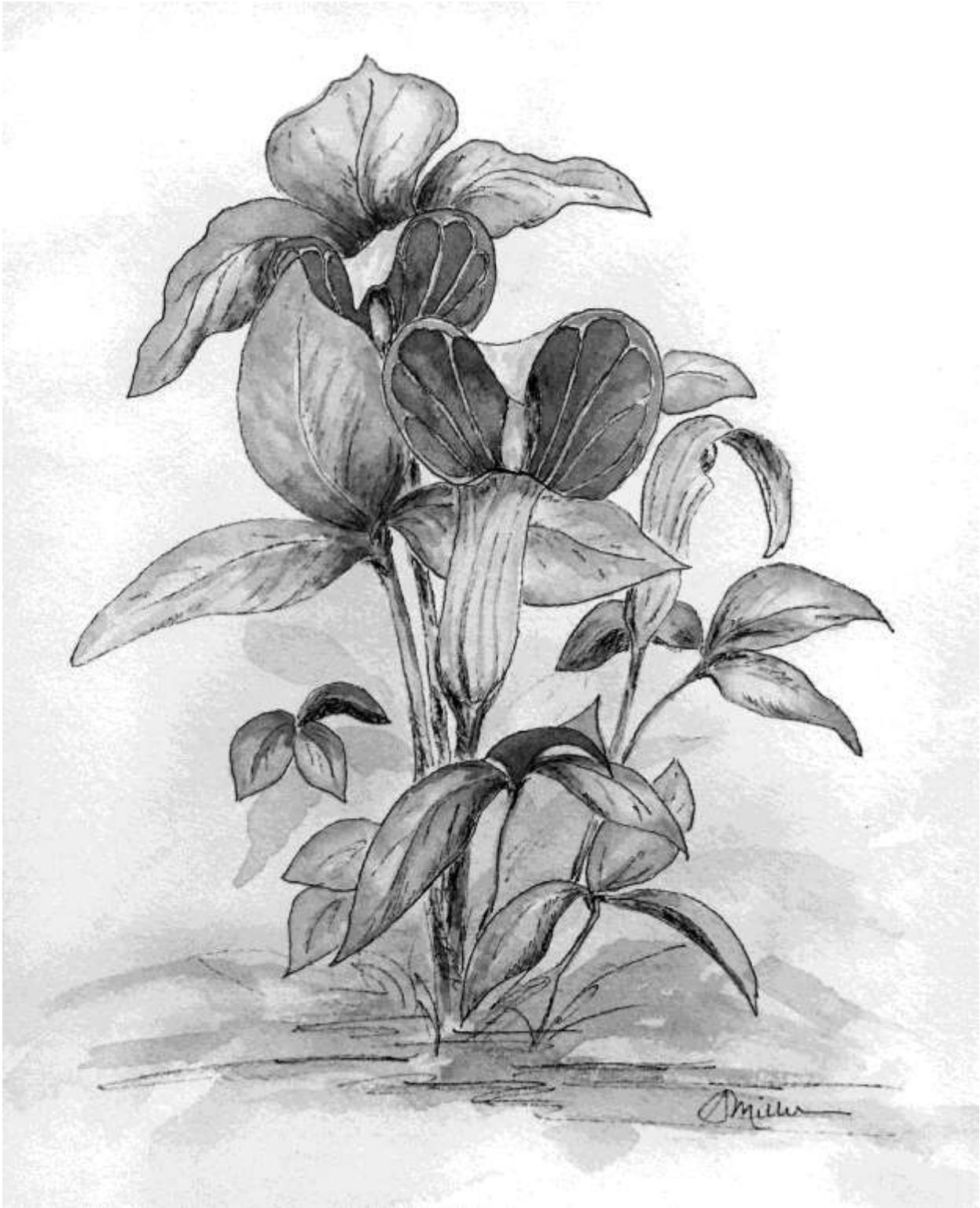
I Think I Am Praying . . .

I think I am praying
when my eyes catch onto a child
grasping the bar on a stroller,
or trundling along clutching an
adult's first finger, fumbling with
a page resisting being opened
to familiar wonders, or whacking
with flat palms on the surface of
tepid water, bursting with free laughter
at gangly antics of a puppy, gazing
solemnly at the mystery of soft fur,
wiggling to escape the confines
of an imposed new diaper,
or sweeping clear a highchair tray
only to inspect speckled linoleum.



Illustration by Jan Gebben

I am sure I am praying
from a yearning stirred up inside
over innocence incarnate,
being in chubby form
becoming stretching out,
belonging reaching out
believing beginning,
soul prints of God imaged.



A grayscale representation of an original work by Susan Miller



Words

Figures floating upon a sea of paper, but what are they? Only the vessels which carry the meaning of a feeling which must be felt rather than merely said.

The word without the feeling has as much meaning as any enciphered hieroglyph. To feel is to know, to say the word is just a gesture.

Words, words, so many formless objects drifting along with the tide which flows from the tongue.

Misleading, often deceiving, at times truthful and tender, but it's wise to remember that what trails from the tongue is mere folly and fun if it doesn't abide with the feelings inside.

How to express those words we possess which spring from the depths of our soul?
How then to defend what we ply with a pen, those unwritten words from within?

Speak with your eyes and they will hear every thought you hold so dear. Speak with your deeds and they shall find the truth of the matter that's on your mind.



To You – Death Comes

TO YOU

An Ides of March,

A Waterloo,

Last Stand?

DEATH COMES

To each and everyone

The simple

and

The grand.





The Greatest Gifts Come in Small Packages

Little arms stretched open wide to greet me
tiny legs running and slightly tripping over toys.
Faces full of big smiles and eyes glimmering with anticipation
shouts of “Grandma’s here!”

I stoop awkwardly to my knees and those arms clasp tightly around my neck
giving me the best love ever!
Tiny dimpled, but strong hands grasp older wrinkled and weaker hands
and pull me to get up and discover their world of make-believe.

Doll houses, fairy dolls, baby dolls and unicorns, colors of pink and purple
Tea-cups, bins brimming over with stuffed animals, books, so many books surround me. I
cherish this world!

Hopscotch, blowing bubbles in the wind, twirling, swirling and dancing with
abandon, running, skipping and singing, playing dress-up, swinging and
Teeter-tottering, sand boxes.

Enjoying every moment of being in their world and seeing it through their eyes

I then realize these two precious blessings were brought into my life for so many
Wonderful reasons ... one of which is when I am with them I get to be a
Little girl all over again and play, play, and play.

That’s why my greatest gifts come in small packages!





It's All in Your Mind

Turn within yourself and observe the mind and all its motions. Gaze upon the empty caverns which long to be filled with new knowledge of the life you live.

Thick, like a London fog, thoughts twist and tumble through the tunnels creating funnels, whirlwinds, and roaring storms as they wind through your mind.

Deeper down is found the mind's junkyard; a place filled with shattered hopes and dreams, broken hearts and punctured prides all rusting away in a massive heap, wet with the salty tears shed over them.

Behind bolted doors dwell a horde of ghosts and gnawing goblins which haunt the mind and howl for release to send sanity asunder, so insanity can thunder and plunder through the mind to sap all its gold.

Gaze into the maze of dreams. Around every corner comes delight or fright or even an insight into the future. Beware how you fare in the maze of dreams; remember the way that you may emerge from its tangle to reality.



Missing You

I miss you most at eventide.
The sky turning four shades of blue,
And three shades of pink and orange.
Now turning again to blue-gray,
Waiting for the fireflies to spark,
Lighting the darkening green holly and wild flower,
As they flash their graceful love songs through the cool misty air.
A single bat flies by, sensing our presence before I notice him –
Swooping, darting, diving, performing acrobatics for us.
The breeze is turning cool and damp on my face.
I should go in.

I miss you most at eventide.



Illustration by Mary Porter



Singles Group



The Christian Singles Group from Sixth Reformed prepare to leave on their annual pilgrimage to the *Gethsemane Biblical Gardens* in Uvula, Indiana. Of particular interest will be *GBG's* traditional rendition of *Handel's Messiah* performed by their famous cowbell choir and also the all-you-can-eat turkey dinner buffet. A hymn sing will entertain the pilgrims during their six-and-a-half-hour bus ride.



Song for Suzanne

When you excused yourself from this world
the telephone rang
and the day wilted
like the African violet I forgot
to water. In May
you slammed the door
of your summer
against a bicentennial oak.
Strangers sought reason
from wreckage.

Later I dream in your room.
You knock to come in, weave
violets in your hair, hug
the puppies, sing wind songs
to hush them. I listen
But the music drifts
out of tune
through the window
into the October sky, while the swans fly
to their winter sanctuary.

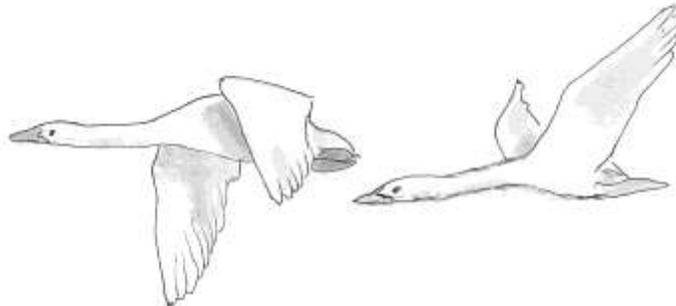


Illustration by Ruth Donaldson



The Cane Mutiny

We get about slowly,
That's certainly plain,
But it sure doesn't mean
We don't have a brain.

Don't put us in our rockers yet,
We'd rather be raising cane.

Sometimes our lives
Are a bit of a strain,
But we know how to laugh
And we stay in the game.

We don't need your pity, pal,
We're still out raising cane.

If you want to give us a hand,
We accept your good will;
We do okay in the valleys,
But you can help us over the hills.

We're doing fine, most of the time,
Especially raising cane.

Everyone's temporarily able-bodied
As we're sure you already know.

So try not to treat us differently,
Or a tantrum we might throw.

Remember what happened long ago

In the famous biblical fable,

When the brother who was known as Cain

Was riled by the one who was Abel.





The Loss of Summer

The summer left us.

Heavy black-gray clouds are moving in.

One maple tree turned red, just to warn us.

The bright yellow and orange of fall

cannot be exchanged for the warm sunbeams of summer.

It is time to grieve with the earthy call of the loons

and the sandhill cranes,

Calls that mourn the loss of summer breezes.

Oh, but when the morning sun

slaps the yellow, red, and orange leaves,

echoing the painted variegated colored trees

from the shore into the still river water,

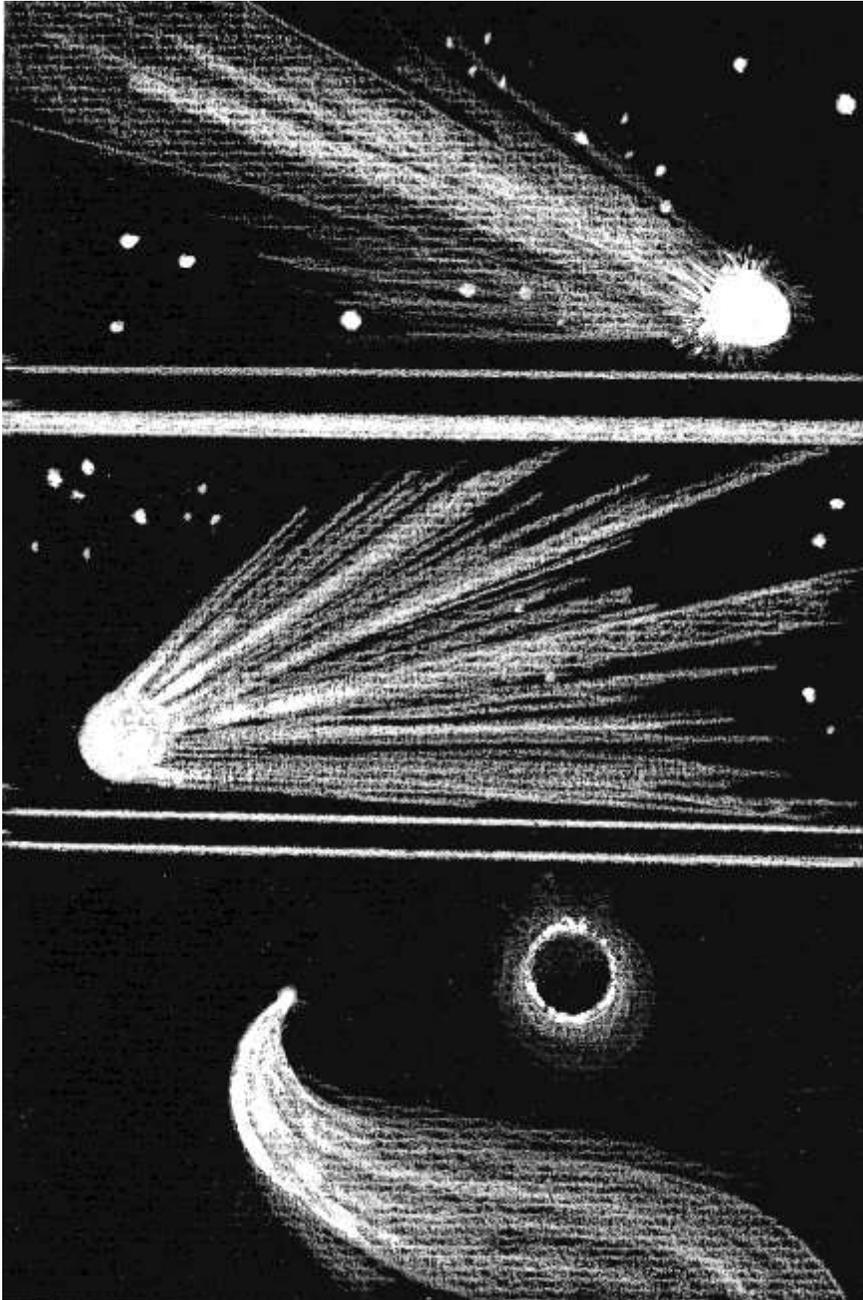
I will be forced to sing a joyous joyful song.



A grayscale representation of an original work by Susan Miller

Comets

Often called the “Dirty Snowballs” of outer space containing dust, ice, carbon dioxide, ammonia and more



Astronomers think that comets are “leftovers” from the material that formed the solar system 4.6 billion years ago. They may have brought some of the water and organic molecules to earth that make up life here.



Acronyms

Acronyms are useful tools to simplify communication. For example, one orders a sandwich and wants it fast: “A six-inch BLT on whole wheat ASAP.” That is simple and direct communication.

When I was a young man, I was interested in GPA, SAT, ACT and GRE so that I can get my B.S., M.S. and Ph.D. When I entered the working world, I realized acronyms were part of my new life and I began to use them. Here is one tongue-in-cheek example: ALITALIA= Always Late in Takeoff and Late in Arrival. Good luck and allow extra time if you book your flights on this Italian airline.

The FDA is notorious for A squared = Acronym Abuse. In a report the agency stated: During PAI (Pre-Approval Inspections) we did not find IPA (Iso Propyl Alcohol) in the API (Active Pharmaceutical

Ingredient). Give me a break. State and local government agencies are equally guilty. We have DNR = Department of Natural Resources in Michigan. So if you are from the DNR and get admitted to the hospital because of a life-threatening event, you most likely will die because the hospital's definition of DNR = Do Not Resuscitate. Big corporations even have dictionaries of acronyms on their websites. BHAG – Big Hairy Audacious Goal. Chemists are the acrobatic abusers of acronyms. So $C_{12}H_{22}O_{12}$ is sugar and C_3H_8O is Iso Propyl Alcohol, rubbing alcohol or IPA for the plebians. They like to torture others by doing it backwards and upside down. OMG, it's GMO. OSHA? Ah so, LOL.

I am now more interested in PSA, COPD and A1c. FYI, frankly, I don't give a damn. I will soon RIP. TTFN.

ASAP

GMO

OSHA

COPD

TTFN



Soaring Imagination

Susan was just an ordinary five-year-old until the day the dragon came. She was an only child, of lower middle class, living in a tiny house with her parents. They had what they needed, but nothing more. That's what made the arrival of the dragon even more amazing.

Dragons appeared in several of her story books, but Susan had never expected to meet one. Then, that Tuesday afternoon, there she was. She was a small dragon, probably not over a hundred years old, the way Susan figured, since dragons live a very long time. She was about three times Susan's height; her scales were a splendid shade of purple, and her wings! O, her wings were beyond belief. Susan asked her name several times, but the answer was incomprehensible to her, so she chose the name Violet – to go with the scales, of course. The dragon smiled when Susan called her that, so she was certain it was a good choice.

How can a young girl interact with a dragon? Flying seemed the only possibility, so Susan politely inquired if Violet would take her for a ride. The smile and nod she received reassured her, and then Violet knelt down so Susan could get on her back. Effortlessly, Violet took flight, so smoothly and quickly it nearly took away Susan's breath. It was beyond marvelous. They dipped and climbed, they turned in circles, they reached amazing heights, yet Susan was never afraid. When Violet landed, Susan slid down, and when she turned around, Violet was gone. Just then, Susan's mother came to the door and called her inside.



Illustration by Jan Gebben

Wednesday afternoon, Violet returned and the two of them again took to the skies. In fact, they flew together nearly every day after that. Susan never tired of the experience. She wished she could have conversations with Violet, but that seemed impossible since Susan couldn't understand when Violet spoke to her. Smiles and

laughter go a long way, though, so they did communicate. Sometimes Susan even made suggestions on the way she would like Violet to fly and that nearly always happened. Their relationship flourished.

A few weeks later, when Susan's father got home from work, Violet was still there. She landed immediately, and Susan quickly

hopped down and ran to greet her dad. When they walked into the house, her mother said, "You know, buying that swing set was the best possible gift we could have gotten Susan. She just loves it and spends hours out there swinging every afternoon." Her father smiled. So did Susan. Dragons are magical, after all, and only appear to very special people.



The Never-Ending Trip

For many years I worked in the headquarters of the General Electric Hermetic Motors department here in Holland, Michigan. For people newer to Holland, we were located where Menards is today.

My area was in Advanced Manufacturing Engineering with the responsibility of working on new manufacturing machinery in all five Hermetic Motors locations. Being in this department required us to visit all locations from time to time. Most trips were mostly just trips. The one I am writing about was not one of those.

My working companion and good friend for this trip was Gene Bair from our department, and we had traveled together many times. The trip plan was simple: fly to Singapore to work on manufacturing problems; fly to Turin, Italy, to try out two machines I had on order; fly to London and take a train to St Ives, England, for equipment reviews and then return home. At that time all travels were coach class.

We departed Grand Rapids on November 2 and headed to Singapore via Chicago, Tokyo and into Singapore. From my bed to a bed in Singapore was a 32-hour-long day, and I always planned to get to Singapore on Saturday morning for a day and a half to recover prior to going to work.

On Monday the first order of business was to have Avis bring our rental car to the factory for transportation during our stay. Now we were all set to get to work and that is what we did. Noon came, and Gene and I and two others got in the car, and I

proceeded to drive to lunch. About two miles down the road an Indian man in a big Mercedes ran a stop sign and “T-boned” us in the driver’s side. No one hurt, the car was drivable, and we exchanged license numbers and went to lunch.

Back at the plant a call was made to Avis to bring out an un-smashed car, and I reported the accident to Mrs. Lim, the human resources director who looked after us visitors. She told me to get my passport and go with her to the local police station and make a report. When I told her my passport was in the hotel safe, she was not real happy. So we went to the police station via the hotel. After the report was made, I was informed that I had to appear at the main station down town. If they found any problems, I would be detained in Singapore for a few weeks. After all was said and done, all was well. Both cars involved were rentals, and the police told me the rental agencies would take care of it.

The equipment I had on order in Italy was going to Singapore so when we finally were able to leave, we were joined by the mechanical engineering manager from the plant. John Fooyontphanich was born and raised in Bangkok. He also had his degree from Tri-State College in Indiana. We hired him when he was still in the States, and over several visits we were all friends with John.

The trip to Turin, Italy, was via Rome with a fuel stop in Bangkok. At that time there were no jet ways in Bangkok. During the layover we stood in the door of the Singapore Air Lines 747 and looked at the

lights of the town. John pointed in the direction of where his mother lived. When asked if he ever went to visit his mother, he said he did not because it was too dangerous for him to do so. We suspect John had been given education funding in return for coming back to Thailand for a stint in government services.

When we arrived in Rome for our connecting flight to Turin, the whole place seemed to be in turmoil. We all had green embarkation papers, but that day Rome immigration wanted pink papers. The 747 was full, and we all had to use whatever we could find to write on as we filled out the pink papers. When we finally got to the desk, we were greeted by some less than nice people and given more paperwork. When no one spoke English, we did not know what to do with the added paperwork so we went around the desk, entering the country.

Even with the delay, we were able to make our connection to our Alitalia flight to Turin. As we waited to be called, Gene and I noticed John was carrying a Singapore Airline blanket. When we confronted him about this, he assured us he would have need for it. We were not sure what to do about it, so we forgot it and went on.

The flight to Turin was on an old DC-9 commuter plane. No breakfast was served and the flight attendants were only there to be sure we behaved ourselves. All announcements were in Italian. After about 30 minutes out, the captain made an announcement that made everyone show signs of fear. Not knowing what he said, Gene grabbed the steward and asked for details of what was going on. He first apologized that they had not detected any American passengers since this was a commuter flight. The announcement had

stated that we could not land at Turin due to heavy snow and ice on the runway. We would be landing at Genoa by the Mediterranean Sea and taken by bus through the Alps to Turin. So there, no problem!

However, a problem did occur. This flight was not scheduled to stop at Genoa and baggage handlers were not kind about having to unload our plane. Since the three of us were the only ones with much luggage, they decided to tear our bags apart. As luck would have it, they found four packages of black Chinese tea I was taking to a friend. Now a problem surfaced because the tea was in plain wrappers with only the outline of a cockroach on one side. Again we were blessed with no English-speaking people who quickly determined I was carrying some sort of drugs. After my many gestures to convince them it was tea, they still kept their nice 30-caliber guns in our sides. Finally they woke up the drug-sniffing dog to further examine my bag. Good news: The dog spoke English and rejected the drug idea. With a gesture of apology, they closed our bags, and we boarded the bus. As we boarded, two men were debating the condition of one front tire that looked a little worn. With a shrug of their shoulders, they deemed the tire to be good enough, and we began the trek through the Alps.

The roads were crooked, the bus was cold, and the defrosters did not work. The driver drove with one hand and with the other used a rag to clear the windshield. When Gene and I looked over to John, he had his arm and the airline blanket around a cute little Thai girl headed to Turin to be a maid. With a big smile, he told us he knew he would find a use for the blanket.

As we approached Turin, there were a lot of conversations we could not understand. As it turned out, they were taking a vote to see

where the bus was going to drop us off. The decision was to drop us off in the center of the city and not at the airport where our host was waiting to pick us up. So there we were with no host standing on the sidewalk. Fortunately John had picked up some lira in Singapore. We found a cab to take us to the City Hotel where I had stayed before, and we checked in. The desk clerk knew me and soon our host, Ariano, arrived to take us to our machine trials.

By now it was afternoon, and we were running the machines. I started to feel funny and asked Gene how long it had been since we slept. Using his new watch from Singapore, he determined we had been awake for 42 hours. At that point, I asked Ariano to take us back to the City Hotel. That evening Gene found the strength to go to dinner with Ariano, and John and I caught up on sleep.

The next morning we were back at work doing our machine qualification runs, a little more bright eyed. Being more alert, I showed Ariano the papers we were given at the Rome airport. After a brief review, he said the words we did not want to hear. "We have a problem here!" Our problem was that the Italian government considered Singapore to be very dirty, and as a result we were given 24 hours to report to the Italian Health

Department or be quarantined for two weeks. So we did indeed have a problem! What to do now?

Ariano then went to the owner of the company and asked for advice. When he reappeared, he asked for our paperwork, passports and health certificates and asked us to trust him. We had little choice! We gave him what he asked for and continued our work.

Very late that afternoon he returned and gave us our passports and health certificates and these words, "There, it's been fixed. You are good to go and the Italian government will never bother you again." Oh, boy, what a relief. We had a the feeling there was an exchange of money somewhere, but we asked no questions.

From here on, the trip went well. John flew back to Singapore, and Gene and I went on to London. We arrived in London on Thanksgiving Day, checked into our hotel and went to the dining room for a full Thanksgiving meal with all the trimmings. The next day we made a one-day train trip to St Ives in Cambridgeshire where all went well. We were ready to go home. The trip back to Holland went well, and needless to say, we were very happy to be home.

Notes

1. Some years later my wife and I spent a week in Bangkok with John and his family, and it is now safe for him to return.
2. A year after our never-ending trip, I returned to Turin for business. When I arrived, the person at Passport Control looked at my passport, checked a file in front of him and said, "Welcome to Italy, Mr. Kindig." Yes, it had been fixed!



Cell Phones?



A \$5 million grant from Apple Corporation has discovered the only thing that cannot be done with a cell phone.



The Purple Suit

“I’m goin’ downtown to smoke my pipe and I won’t be back ‘til Saturday night.”

That’s pretty much the way my sister and I felt when Mom announced that we were going to embark on her Easter outfit shopping trip. Realistically it would have taken the better part of a day, but to us it felt like we truly wouldn’t be back until Saturday night. UGH!

Going downtown in Detroit was really a lot of fun, so don’t take me wrong. We would start out early in the day to walk four blocks to catch the Trolleybus that ran from Indiana and Warren Avenues all the way downtown to Woodward Avenue. The buses drew power from trolley poles and aerial cables that crisscrossed the city like an endless maze. Every time we came to an intersection, sparks would snap and dance like lightning bolts doing battle in the dreary Detroit sky. The ride became even more exciting as the dark grey skyscrapers began to take shape on the horizon and turn into the unforgettable skyline that I remember so well.

The ride ended abruptly when my mom pulled the cord to signal the driver that our stop was approaching. The crackling, spark-spitting bus came to a stop right in front of the J. L. Hudson Company. What a sight it was to behold – all 15 floors of glorious shopping.

The Trolleybus doors opened. We descended three steps to the sidewalk and approached the giant, highly polished, rotating brass and glass doors that took us from the noisy cacophony of the street to the hushed atmosphere of the hosiery department. Oh, how we hated the hosiery department with glass cases full of stockings and unattached legs wearing nylons. Case after case of nothing but stockings. With salesladies putting their well-manicured hands into the stockings, demonstrating their color and sheerness, it seemed as though Mother spent hours trying to decide which ones to buy. Funny – they all looked the same to me.

We left hosiery, sniffed our way through cosmetics and headed for the elevator. Our bellies were beginning to growl. We had had a very busy morning, and lunch was certainly on the agenda. Hudson’s had several restaurants. Our favorite was the “Tea Room.” Mom asked if we had remembered to bring our manners with us. My sister always seemed to have her manners with her. Mine, however, had sometimes fallen by the wayside. Manners or not, we had a lovely lunch.

We could feel that the time for “Easter Outfit” shopping was getting closer. We did everything in our power to avoid that part of the day. We even talked Mom into letting us go to the 12th floor – the *wonderful* 12th floor, home of the Easter Bunny. This was the floor that every kid in “kid-dom”

dreamed about and begged to visit for just an hour, or maybe two – THEE TOY DEPARTMENT! We squeezed out every second we could, even threw in a little temper tantrum. But Mother responded with her own little tantrum and the three of us headed quietly toward the elevator. We stepped inside. The elevator operator closed the doors and began to recite the litany of merchandise to be found on each upcoming floor. “**First floor:** hosiery, cosmetics, perfume, gloves; **Second floor:** handbags, belts, shoes, etc., etc., etc.; **Third floor:** that was it - the floor of doom for us. We knew what was coming, we knew the hours, yes, hours of waiting ahead of us were going to be long and boring as Mother picked out one outfit after another, tried one outfit after another, not liking any of them. The fit wasn’t right or the color was all wrong. This one was too long, that one was too short. The poor clerk tried so hard to please Mom, but she just couldn’t. We followed Mother around the ladies department like puppy dogs – in and out of the clothes racks and fitting rooms. Off with her clothes, on with her clothes: it was a vicious circle. But wait! Mother paused. She spied something out of the corner of her eye. Could it be? Maybe, just maybe this would be THEE Easter outfit, this beautiful purple and lavender linen suit. As she took it off the rack, it began to glow with a warm unearthly glow that only her daughters would recognize.



Illustration by Jan Gebben

The three of us and the suit made a beeline for the nearest fitting room. Mother once again removed her clothes with a most determined look in her eyes. Then methodically she tried on the suit. First the skirt – not too long, not too short – it fit just fine. Next the vest, then the jacket: perfect, just perfect. Fit? Good. Color? Good. Will she buy it? Yes! Please, yes!

The saleslady breathed a sigh of relief, took out her sales pad and wrote it up. She carefully folded the suit, putting crisp white tissue paper in the folds so as not to wrinkle it. She placed it in a big white Hudson’s box and then in a large bag with wooden handles.

All that was left now were shoes and a hat. The hat part was fun. With purchases in hand, we left and walked down Woodward Avenue. Where were we going? Not to the Trolleybus, but into SANDERS! Oh boy! SANDERS. Could it be? Could there be wonderful Hot Fudge Crème Puffs waiting for us? I could smell the intoxicating aroma of the fudge. I could see it slowly dripping down the sides of the freshly baked cream puff filled with vanilla ice cream – topped with whipped cream and, yes, a cherry on top. WOW! What a way to end the day! I’ll always remember shopping trips with my mom. She had a way of smoothing over the bad parts with the good. Thanks, Mom.



How to Make a Marine Corps General Laugh

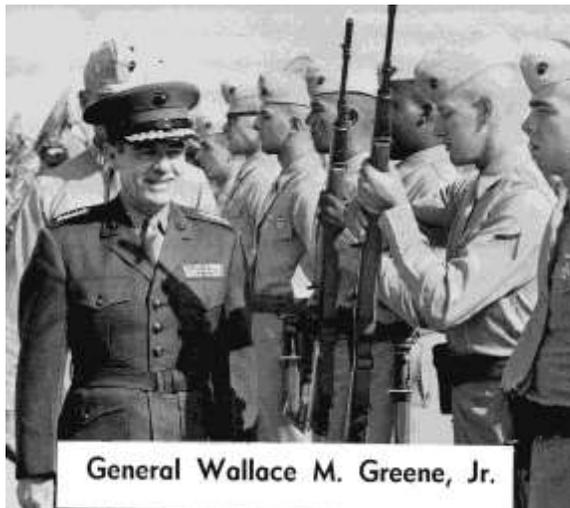
It was 1965, and I was two months short of receiving an honorable discharge from the U.S Marine Corps. I had enlisted in 1962 for a three-year program after dropping out of the University of Michigan earlier that year. My father had died in the fall of 1960, and I never quite got into the swing of things in Ann Arbor after that. After struggling through pre-engineering curriculum for 18 months, I decided that a spell in the military might be good for me. Of course Viet Nam was barely on my radar screen at that time, so I picked the Marines. I wanted a challenge, and I got a good one.

By 1965 I was in the best shape of my life (32" waistline and could run forever) and felt I was ready to return to college with a fresh outlook. I had received two meritorious promotions and shot "Expert" with a .45 pistol and an M-14 rifle (three times with the rifle, a pretty rare feat).

I had to withstand one last major event before I got out. The Commandant of the Marine Corps was coming to Camp Pendleton (about 40 miles north of San Diego) for a regimental visit and inspection. The total preparation for such an event takes about a month as multiple inspections occur before the "CEO of the Marine Corps" is to arrive. Clothes are dry cleaned, shoes and boots are spit-shined, wall and foot lockers

are cleaned, rifles and all other armaments are cleaned, and the grounds are spotless. It is a rigorous exercise. By the Commandant's visit, everything was checked and rechecked and then checked again.

It was a warm March day in southern California, and the entire regiment was standing in ranks on the parade field, which we called the "grinder." The Commandant would be inspecting several hundred Marines this day. He walked up and down the ranks, rarely stopping to chat with anyone. He knew what we had gone through in preparation so he never even inspected one rifle. The bore of each was spotless, having not been fired in a couple of months.



I was as ready as the two privates in my fire team – the basic infantry unit which, with two other teams, forms a squad. Several squads form a platoon, several platoons a company, they form a battalion, regiment and so on. I was a corporal with two recently assigned privates in my team. Both young men had been demoted recently. You'll soon find out why.

The Commandant went up and down the ranks, making quick work of his task. Finally he arrived in front of our company, and we snapped to attention. (The quotes are paraphrased, but they capture what happened.) He came down each row, passed me with hardly a glance, and stopped in

front of Private Barker to my left. I had no idea why. He said, “Good afternoon, Marine.”

Barker answered, “Good afternoon, sir.”

He went on, “I see you are a private, and this is a pretty salty (experienced) unit. I’d expect you’d have at least one stripe by now. Did you lose your stripe?”

Barker paused and finally answered, “Yes, sir.” Then the Commandant got curious.

“What did you do that got you busted, private?”

I thought this was going on too long, but finally Barker blurted out, “I bought a false I.D. card, sir, so I could go to bars and drink. I’m not 21 yet.”

The Commandant said, “I see. Well, I bet you’ve learned your lesson and will work hard to get a private first class (with a stripe) once again.” Barker assured him, “I will, sir.”

Then we heard, “Good,” and the Commandant moved on.

Then he stopped in front of Private Pryor, who also stood out as he too had no stripe. The same questioning occurred with Pryor. I dreaded where this was headed, but I could only stare ahead at the golden hills of Camp Pendleton as the Commandant finally asked Pryor what he had done to lose his stripe. Pryor hesitated, then said, “I sold a false I.D. card, sir.” Now I must point out these inspections are serious business, and laughter is not permitted.

But the Commandant had stumbled on the two culprits involved in a plot whereby company clerk PFC Pryor had falsified the Marine I.D. card of PFC Barker by changing his date of birth – and both got caught. The

Commandant was a bit surprised, but he started to laugh. And then others within earshot began to shake with laughter. Perhaps only three people did not laugh – Barker, Pryor and me. I was embarrassed by what these two had done and maybe more so because they were now in my team. I wondered what the odds were that: (1), these two were both assigned to my fire team, and (2), the top ranking person in the Marine Corps would stop to chat with two of the lowest ranked Marines in “M” Company of the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, on that warm March day.

Finally, the Commandant turned and moved along, not stopping again for quite awhile. The laughter subsided quickly as he moved down the next row, and things returned to normal.

I wish I had space to describe other humorous events while in the Corps. We had two guys who were constantly arguing, a tall college dropout named Abbott and his short, chubby high school dropout friend, Castillo. Naturally we always referred to them as Abbott and Castillo. After the big inspection, the days crept by and I was discharged on April 29, 1965. The guys I trained with were sent into combat in November 1965. Barker and Pryor were both wounded in battle with North Vietnamese army troops, but both survived. Other very close friends of mine did not survive. I’ve been to the Vietnam War Memorial wall in Washington, D.C., and I’ve run my fingers over the engraved names of those I drank with, joked with and so admired. I miss them. And then I also dwell for a moment remembering the happy times like the day my fellow Marines were able to make the Commandant of the Marine Corps get a chuckle while inspecting “M” company of 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment.



The Coincidental Meeting

Coincidence . . .

Two independent lines of life intersect,
creating a surprising, unlikely event,
producing new possibilities.

This is a story about such an unlikely meeting occurring and the new possibilities that happened as a result. It is also a story of happy outcomes.

It had been a good day for Don and Lois O'Neill. The view from the narrow mountain path overlooking Lake Atitlán in the highlands of Guatemala was magnificent. The giant lake below was tranquil and provided a sense of a soothing, blue calm that permeated as far as the mountain trail on which they were hiking. Three volcanoes loomed above, standing guard like silent sentries overlooking the lake with a protective presence. A few fishing boats and dugout canoes could be seen, quietly adding to the picture-perfect day.

Lois and Don were no strangers to mountain hiking paths. For the jaunt they had hired a local guide who selected a trail that led from the shore of the lake going up through a coffee plantation and ending at a tiny Mayan village. They had just finished an intense two weeks with a U.S. medical team brought in by Helps International. They were ready to unwind for a day.

The O'Neills were so taken by the scenery that they almost missed the tiny, frail, elderly Mayan lady who had stepped out on the trail seemingly from nowhere. Her hair was silver and her skin was weathered by

years of sun and a mountain life full of struggle. But most noticeable was a smile almost as big as the tiny woman's face and eyes that shone with life. Her clothing was an outstanding array of colors. Mayan women have been weaving cloth for centuries, and the displays of color that appear on their blouses and wrap-around skirts are dazzling. She was barefooted.

Her name was Petrona, and she appeared to have lived through 80-something years. She was warm and friendly and immediately at ease with Don and Lois. As it turned out, they were not far from Petrona's village, and she invited them to walk with her and see her home.

The small village consisted of homes ranging from ones made of cement blocks to ones made of sticks. Petrona led Don and Lois inside hers and began heating water over a rustic smoky wood fire to make tea.

As an engineer Don could not stop himself from looking around the closet-sized dwelling and making assessments. It was built out of sticks, with a dirt floor and gaping holes in its thatched roof. Don guessed that the rainy season must be an ordeal for her. As he sipped his tea, he noticed a crude piece of tarp that lay nearby and imagined Petrona huddled under it as the rain turned the dirt floor to a muddy mess around her.

As Don quietly ruminated, Petrona proudly showed Lois some of the niceties in her home, such as a five-year-old calendar on the wall and a photo of her husband, who had died in the Guatemalan civil war. She also brought out her prize items: pots and pans given to her by a missionary. There was little room for furniture except for the tiny table they sat around. Petrona slept on a mat on the dirt floor. The kitchen, as with most homes in the village, was under a lean-to, outside.

As they sipped tea and talked about family, Don and Lois became concerned about a large growth on one of Petrona's eyes. They asked her if it affected her vision. She said it did; she could barely see out of the eye and it was painful. They knew it would be futile to ask if she had seen a doctor. In this part of Guatemala, health care did not exist.

After more chat time they needed to say good bye to Petrona and give hugs. In just three hours, Don and Lois had developed an affection for Petrona, and she for them. They began their hike back down the trail to the boat, both feeling a deep sense of melancholy.

Back home in Texas, Don was having trouble sleeping one night. There had been storm damage to their home and the roof needed to be repaired. But that was not what was troubling him. As he thought about his roof and how easily he made calls and got work started on it, he could not get rid of the vision of Petrona sitting on the sparse mat on the floor with rain falling around her. Don shared with us that he was nearly tearful as he woke Lois one night and said, "Can we do something to make Petrona's life a little easier?" He didn't know that Lois had already been making calls to the Helps International office in Dallas to ask if an eye

surgeon would be among the members of a medical team from Jackson, Michigan, that would be going to Guatemala in about a month. The answer was yes. Almost immediately the couple began collecting funding and making dozens of calls to get a building team and an eye surgery team willing to hike up the side of a volcano to build a little house and perform surgery on Petrona's eye.

Getting a building team to climb a mountain trail with cinderblocks and bags of cement was no small feat. Blocks had to be carried on backs, one by one. Bags of cement were carried on the backs of burros. Someone needed to obtain permission from the town mayor to build, and workers had to be hired. But the Helps International staff in Guatemala pulled it off. A new structure was built with funds raised in Texas by the O'Neills and work done by men who lived in the village. Don flew back to Guatemala to personally supervise the construction of Petrona's wonderful new home that would be safe and dry.

After the building was well under way, the O'Neills and the Helps Office turned their attention to the other project. Dr. Art Wierenga, an eye surgeon from Jackson, Michigan, had been to Guatemala and Honduras on medical teams 40 or 50 times. He had set up clinics in the Honduran jungles and in the worst parts of Central American cities. Hearing that he might be hiking up a volcano to provide treatment and maybe surgery for an eye patient didn't faze Art in the least. One could almost imagine his feet tapping as he spoke of it. My wife, Kathi, an RN, had been assigned to work as Art's scrub nurse on that trip. She could hardly contain her glee when she heard about the side trip they were going to take.

When the day came, a large entourage went up the volcano: Art, Kathi, Ron (a translator and Art's long-time friend), and Jack, the team leader and team anesthesiologist who said he was "not going to miss this." Two others were Jim, the team maintenance guy who was invited because he could fix or build anything at a moment's notice, and finally the prime mover of the adventure, Don O'Neill.

The group chatted excitedly when they climbed into the van to start the 50-mile trip along the bumpy Pan American Highway to Lake Atitlán. The van part of the trip was followed by a one-hour boat ride to the little trail that led up to Petrona's village. No one in the group had seen Lake Atitlán before. When Kathi returned to the larger medical team that night, she declared that it is one of the most beautiful spots on earth.

Petrona's village is very small – only a few dozen people, so the medical team did not expect many people to be on hand when the medical team arrived. But as the team hiked up to the village, they saw more and more people along the trail. When they reached the village, dozens of Mayans had gathered. People had walked across the mountain or come from nearby villages in boats. Some were curious, but most just wanted to be part of the most exciting event of the year.

Petrona was expectantly waiting. Her family was there, including her children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. When the entourage appeared, Don and the rest of the group were surrounded by handshaking, laughing Mayans excitedly chattering in their regional dialect: this was to be the day Petrona would get her eye fixed!

The team began to survey where to set up a surgery suite in the middle of a very

primitive Mayan village and to figure out how to deal with crowd control, which was sure to be an issue. Art decided he wanted to do the operation out of doors because that would provide the best light. He found a tree stump he could sit on while operating, and Kathi was given a child's chair for her seat. She found a flat, round tortilla pan that was just the right size to serve as a surgery tray table.

Kathi had considered the importance of keeping Petrona comfortable during surgery. Before the team left, she had acquired from the team pharmacist a handful of codeine tablets for pain, some valium to calm her during the procedure, and some syringes of local anesthetic that Art could use to do a nerve block around Petrona's eye. Kathi also had gathered up a big supply of sterile gloves, bandages, surgical towels and post-op antibiotic tablets, for all of which Art was very grateful.

Petrona, it turned out, had a pterygium on her eye. It is a non cancerous growth that forms on the sclera as a result of constant exposure to smoke from a lifetime of cooking over a woodfire. It is common among the Mayan people who work in the fields and have to walk everywhere. This pterygium was an especially large one, covering the pupil and causing blindness. And it was painful. But as Art examined her, he said, "Yep, this is going to take a while but it will be an easy fix." When the translator said this to Petrona, she and her family, almost all at the same time, displayed grateful smiles. It was no coincidence that the entire family smiled broadly in much the same way.

Crowd control was going to be a challenge. The villagers could not resist moving closer and closer to where the action was going to be. Curious faces leaned in; there was

nonstop chattering, smiling and pointing. Finally the team leaders had to put up a rope, similar to a police line, with stern orders not to cross the rope. It worked. The villagers stayed back, but they didn't like it.

With Petrona on a cot, Art seated on his tree stump, scalpel in hand, Kathi with the tortilla pan full of surgical instruments on her lap, and Ron, the translator, holding an umbrella over Art and Kathi to block the hot sun, they were ready, at last, to begin the surgery.

While Art injected Petrona's face with anesthesia, Kathi glanced at Don O'Neill's face, looking down and watching intently. Kathi remarked later that she had never seen a more pleased, satisfied and grateful expression on a human face than that one. This was indeed a very special moment.

Petrona, for her part, was awake, but with the help of the facial nerve block, lay quiet, stiff and stoic throughout the procedure. While Art, with his scalpel, scraped away at

the pterygium, the crowd watching would react noisily to any unusual or new movement by anyone on the team. Whenever Art applied his scalpel to her eye, there was a gasp and frightened laughter from the audience.

The operation took only an hour. The growth was removed with no damage to the eye. Petrona was bandaged and given pills and instructions. The tiny Mayan lady seemed overwhelmed by what had just happened. After what seemed to be hundreds of hugs, handshakes and back slaps, the team began their hike back down the mountain. The last view they had, as they turned to wave, was Petrona, wearing a bulky eye patch, smiling, and hugging her great-granddaughter, also named Petrona, as they stood in front of her new and very dry home.

For the Helps International eye surgery team, and for Don O'Neill, it was just another day at work.



Oscar (A True Story)

My heart fell as I sized up the man that the bartender in the roadhouse indicated with a nod was Oscar LaValley. For you to understand my reaction I must give some history. In 1971, after a couple of years of looking throughout western New York and Canada for a piece of waterfront property on which to build a family cabin, we fell in love with a wooded point on Eagle Island in Sodus Bay, 40 miles from home. So on a cold, rainy day in April, in the real estate lady's aluminum outboard, we decided to buy it. It was not with buyer's remorse but with fear and trepidation that we then confronted the realities of building a home on an island. We didn't even own a boat! What is more, I had never built a structure of any kind. I desperately needed help! We ordered the components of a gothic A-frame cabin to be shipped to the bay; I bought a used Starcraft and then headed for the aforementioned roadhouse to consult the locals on people available to assist in my project. No one signed up, but all said, "You need Oscar LaValley. He's your man."

So now I was to meet my man. He sat there, a scruffy, overweight, bleary-eyed, coughing old man finishing off a Coors with two empties and a cigarette nearby. My first impulse was to run, to slip out the door and reconsider all options. But he appeared to be the only show in town, and shipment of the cabin parts was just a month away. Anyway, could unanimous local opinion be wrong? (Unless, of course, the locals were putting this hick from Rochester on; maybe I was the butt of a well-orchestrated, Sodus

Bay joke.) I approached Oscar (they affectionately and honorifically called him a Bay Rat), and he at first waved me off in order to assure his bar-mate that he would indeed that afternoon catch him a snapping turtle for his soup. Then he turned to me, and as we talked through a haze of smoke and beer, I realized that he wheezed with emphysema; how would he ever manage heavy construction? But, yes, he could build the cabin I sketched. No, he didn't need a contract or any kind of paperwork, not even a handshake. He named a reasonable hourly fee, I accepted it, and that was that. I never felt so insecure about anything in all my life.

On the way out he told me where he lived in case I wanted to contact him. (I never did learn if he owned a phone.) I drove by his place and was even less assured. The lawn was like a junkyard and the house looked half-finished, with tar paper all around, and of helter-skelter design as if it had been built extemporaneously. Someone later told me it had chipmunks running through the living room. (As an aside, I might point out that Oscar was not only a Bay Rat, but also *paterfamilias* of a tribe consisting of a common-law wife and three grown kids, two of whom had built unfinished helter-skelter houses similar to and near his. I later hired the elder son, Larry, to build me a breakwall against rising water levels. His method was to wait for winter and then drive his truck loaded with railroad ties across the ice. Once, when I came out to check on progress, he was working at retrieving his truck, which had fallen through the ice. The truck

was somehow retrieved, and the breakwall was built.)

Now back to Oscar who, it turns out, gave me a life's lesson and major comeuppance on pre-judging people. It began on the day the semi loaded with my cabin parts arrived at the bay. I had hired a barge and gotten a co-worker from the Kodak Labs to help with things. The truck driver proceeded to back one set of rear trailer wheels into a four-foot-deep roadside culvert. There was my cabin, still held by chains but listing at 45 degrees toward the water. The driver looked sheepishly and helplessly at me, and I looked desperately and helplessly at Oscar. And Oscar calmly said, "No problem." (I would hear this phrase often over the next few months.) He went to his junky yard and brought back a humongous jack used to lift derailed freight cars back onto the tracks. In half an hour he had the trailer out and we were unloading.

In all my years I have never known a worker like Oscar. He never drank a drop on the job, although some mornings after a night in the bar his sidekick had to haul him out of bed and get him revved up. Oscar carefully accounted for every minute of work in a little notebook he kept. He worked as hard and tirelessly as an ox, occasionally pausing to catch a raspy breath. He worked creatively: The gothic A-frame structure required that 300- to 400-pound curved laminated beams had to be positioned carefully and then bolted together at the top. Oscar built a tower to hoist the beams and then clambered to the top to do the bolting. This tower he struggled to move from station to station until all the beams were up. He looked like Michelangelo working on the Sistine ceiling. When it came to applying the tongue-and-groove decking and then the

shingles to the beams, he built a unique scaffold, curved and braced so he could access the arc in the structure. His capacity for grunt work was prodigious. He dug by hand, through clay, 12 footing holes four feet deep ("We gotta get below that frost line!"), filled them with concrete mixed by hand and then topped them with blocks filled with rebar and more concrete. Our cabin did not move a millimeter through decades of wind and gales. To build a septic tank most islanders floated a fiberglass container to their lot. Oscar dismissed that with a wave, and dug a huge hole (again by hand, through clay), erected forms, and lined the walls and floor with five inches of reinforced, hand-mixed concrete. That tank (which could also have served as a bomb shelter) was so large I never had to deal with it during our 30-plus years on the island. Finally, unlike on his house, his work for me was accurate and level to a fraction of an inch: the bolts slipped easily through the beam shoes and connecting plates.

When he was done and had collected his last check, he gave a grunt of satisfaction, got into his beat-up boat, and went home. I rarely saw him after that, but I will never forget him. He taught me so many things – especially never, never to judge a book by its cover. We all keep doing that, and I wonder how much we thereby miss in life. He taught me that there is joy, honor and a sort of redemption in really hard work. And he modeled unhedged honesty in his dealings with others. Thank you, Oscar. I'm sorry I doubted you at first, for you proved to be a blessing in disguise, a true diamond in the rough. You are forever dear to my memory, you bewhiskered old Bay Rat. I'm glad I didn't run out that roadhouse door those many years ago.



Fingers

My dad's full name was Aloysius Alva O'Connor, but he always went by Al. He was born in 1906 and surrendered to the ravages of ALS on January 20, 2000, five months shy of his 94th birthday. He never liked his middle name so he adopted his Catholic confirmation name, Richard, and became A.R. (Al) O'Connor. As far back as I can remember, this is always how he signed his name.

He liked to give people nicknames, usually based on their appearance or their behavior. Mine was "Fingers." This was not a term of endearment as much as it was a functional description of the havoc my young fingers could create merely by fussing and fiddling with things. My curiosity would lead me to take things apart and then not be able to put them back together. If something was breakable, I'd break it. If a screw head could be stripped, I'd strip it. If a tire could be overinflated and burst, I'd burst it. If a drawer could be broken by slamming, I'd slam it. It seemed that I could tear, break, explode or disintegrate an object by simply putting my hands on it. And I don't mean occasionally. Every blessed time I'd try to fix, operate or investigate a thing, it would cease to function as it was designed. This happened with such destructive regularity my dad tagged me with the "Fingers" moniker and it stuck. He'd come home from work to find some partially

disassembled object on the kitchen table or a crack in a window that was slammed shut too hard and know immediately that I was in the house somewhere.

He never seemed angry about any of this, and I think it amused him to call me Fingers. While a source of fun for him and an opportunity for ridicule from my siblings, being called Fingers only served to reinforce my insecurity and total lack of confidence about mastering anything more complicated than passing the potatoes at supper. The formidable compilation of broken stuff and damaged items in our house, while impressive, would pale in comparison to the colossal damage that occurred one summer.

The summer of 1959 I was ten years old and skinny as a flagpole. Without my shirt I looked like one of those fund-raising posters for starving kids in Ethiopia. Older brother Joe would pin me down, pull off my shirt and count my ribs while laughing hysterically. This was not a self-esteem enhancing experience. By every measure in my prepubescent mind I was pathetic: physically unsubstantial, consistently destructive and wholly inadequate. I desperately needed to accomplish something good, if only once. Anything: It didn't matter. But what? The answer pulled into our driveway that warm August day.

Dad was home from work early. That was odd as he rarely came home early. “Kids, come outside. I’ve got something to show you,” he announced. The six of us tumbled out the back door and into the driveway, perplexed but excited. As we came through the gate, we all stopped abruptly, the way you jerk to a stop when you come to the edge of a cliff. There it was: a brand-new 1960 Ford Falcon station wagon. Yowzers! This was a dramatic head-turner with its blunt, square styling and round head and tail lights. It was a nine-passenger station wagon with a flip-down tailgate and a window retractor crank handle mounted on the exterior. “Man-O-Manischewitz,” he said. “Isn’t she a beauty?” Painted a brilliant, blinding white that looked like freshly fallen powder snow with a shiny coat of ice reflecting the sun, that car was the most beautiful thing I’d ever seen.

We sat in all the seats, inhaled the new car smell, perched behind the steering wheel and asked Dad multiple questions about this beautiful beast. When the clan slowly filed back into the house, I stayed back. I wanted to be alone with this elegant machine. It looked as long as a football field and as wide as a hay wagon and was the first really new thing I could remember my parents buying. I ran my fingertips over the new upholstery and gripped the steering wheel, feeling exhilarated. My excitement waned as I remembered how pathetic and inadequate I’d felt only minutes before. If only I could do something right.

Then it hit me like a cold slap. I ran inside. “Hey, Dad, can I wash the new car?” I begged.

“Fingers, it’s a brand new car. It’s not dirty,” he explained.”

Ya, but, a car can get plenty dusty on those delivery trucks and sitting on a lot. Come on, Dad,” I pleaded.

He gave me a look of bemused resignation and said, “OK, go ahead, but be careful not to scratch the body.”

With a garden hose and bucket of hot sudsy 20 Mule Team Borax water, I went to work. First, wash the top, then the sides and hood. Next, open all five doors, including the tailgate and wash the dashboard, all interior windows and rear-view mirrors. As I stood back and admired my work, the car with its doors open looked like a majestic white swan making its landing approach for touchdown on the glass surface of an inland lake. Deciding I was finished, I slammed each of the doors. One last thing to do and then it’s time to show Dad what a good job I’d done. Grasping the tailgate with both hands and steadying myself for the upward thrust required to close it, I failed to notice that I had not retracted the window completely. With a full inch of window glass protruding out of the top, I pulled with as much strength as I could muster and slammed the gate into place. Crack! Boom! Things went into slow motion as I watched some broken glass fly onto the rear seat while more of it imploded into the interior of the trunk. I froze. My eyes were dinner

plates and the breath I sucked into my lungs would not exhale. I don't know how long I stood there, but it seemed like days. I wanted to run, but I lived here. Besides, he'd know it was me. I had to tell him.

My legs were sandbags as I walked into the house. It took courage to enter the room where he was holding court explaining the mysteries of high-finance automobile purchasing to the other kids. As I came into the circle and looked up at him, my face said it all. I couldn't speak a word. Without saying a word, he walked out to the driveway, followed by me and the other kids

marching slowly behind while a funeral dirge played in my head. Surveying the damage, he said nothing for a long time. He turned back toward the house, slowly shaking his head. In a hushed tone of exasperation, all he said was, "Fingers."

I felt horrible. I wanted him to be angry. Somehow that would have been better. Instead, my incompetence was confirmed. I had, once again, lived up to my nickname, like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Maybe that was the problem.



Illustration by Mary Porter



Cupid's Difficult Assignment

When you just sit and think about life, you might wonder who or what brings couples together. Somehow we feel that there is a sort of Providence involved. Quite complicated, if you consider that the chance of meeting the right person might often hang by a thread.

Let us imagine, just for fun, that names are pulled out of a big barrel. Then Cupid gets the order to bring the couple together. With Karola and Peter it was especially difficult because they lived on different continents. He was in Ivory Coast, she was in Germany, and since they were not teens any more, Cupid had to act soon.

Peter was transferred from Abidjan to Cape Town, but had anybody moved a girl to the other end of the world before? It was not difficult to make Karola want to discover South Africa. Since she had not found real love so far, she had decided marriage was not for her. Instead she wanted to travel and see the world. After contemplating different countries, Karola and her friend Tulle decided to go to South Africa. A friend who had travelled extensively all over Africa raved about the beauty of Cape Town and the whole Cape area, so they decided to go there. Unfortunately, after months of planning, Cupid found that Tulle was meant for a man in Germany, so she fell in love right then and there and stayed. Cupid was alarmed, but then relieved, because Karola stubbornly said, "Then, I will just go by myself."

Cupid started planning how they would meet. Karola read an ad in the paper that a German company was looking for people to work for their newly established branch offices in South Africa. She was not interested because this job would probably be in Johannesburg, and she had already signed up for a job with a South African company in Cape Town. Cupid was worried because they probably would never meet that way. Then Karola came to realize the trip from Hamburg, where she lived, to the interview in Ludwigshafen would be worthwhile, since she could interrupt her trip to visit her family. The fare was paid for; that's how she had to calculate.

At the interview with Mr. Schwartz, the future general manager of BASF South Africa, Karola made it clear she was only interested in going to Cape Town. Mr. Schwartz pointed out that with her qualifications she should really work for him at the head office in Johannesburg. There would be more responsibilities and better pay. But something made her stick to her original plan. It was agreed she could go by ship, as planned, and work at the branch office in Cape Town. The security of working for a German company was the best thing that could have happened to her, so the contract was signed. Cupid was relieved because things were going in the right direction.

But then something unexpected happened. Karola was still in Germany when a letter from Mr. Schwartz told her that due to

unforeseen circumstances he needed her to work for him in Johannesburg and asked her to fly out as soon as possible. What could she do? She was responsible and wanted to do the right thing, so she felt she had to say yes. She immediately started to prepare for her flight. Cupid was beside himself. Karola in Johannesburg and Peter in Cape Town. That certainly would not work! But miraculously, somebody with the right qualifications was found locally so Karola could proceed as previously planned. To show his appreciation for her willingness to change her plans, Mr. Schwartz gave her a salary increase even before she started to work. Who had ever heard of something like that? She looked into the future with confidence, and Cupid was relieved once more.

After four weeks at sea, the ship entered Cape Town harbor. Karola will never forget this beautiful, sunny day and the breathtaking view of Table Mountain and the city. As the passengers were leaving the ship, somebody asked, “Are you Miss Janning?” It was Peter, her future boss. But Cupid was upset! Had no one looked at the personality profiles? Did they not know that her former boy friends were at least as tall as she? And now this – he was shorter! It might never work, but Cupid was set to do everything in his power.

Something had already happened to Peter. He was so excited to meet Karola that he talked nonstop on the drive to the hotel. The stars were favorable for Cupid because the company had arranged for Peter, Karola and Dietmar, also newly arrived from Germany, to stay at the same hotel for the first few months. Within a few weeks the business had to be transferred from the agent who had been representing BASF to the new branch

office. They worked hard seven days a week, but the evenings were mostly spent in the hotel with other residential guests in front of the fireplace. Peter was always right next to Karola. What was the matter with him? All the guests saw that Peter was in love, but she was not interested. After all, he was her boss. What was he thinking? But she did like him, and they worked together well. The more she got to know him, the more she admired the way he handled his job as branch manager.

Finally, Peter, Dietmar and Karola took a weekend off and went with Alexander from Scotland to the mountains. They were all amazed at the gigantic beauty. They had BBQ in a dried-out river bed, hiked and had a really good time together. Karola liked Peter's charm, and his heart warmed up to her even more. But the situation did not change. For her, the relationship was purely professional.

Cupid was perplexed and did not understand why the spark between them had not been ignited, but he was determined to fulfill his order. So the only solution was to act as a sharpshooter.

On a quiet Sunday afternoon, the two were sitting together, and Peter told her the story of his life. Cupid saw his chance. He aimed and his arrow went straight into her heart – she even felt the pain! She looked at him – and she was in love! There was even another miracle. The difference in their height did not matter to her at all. Cupid was proud. His work was done, and since the shot was a direct hit, there was no doubt that their love would last for the rest of their lives.



Let's Make a Deal

Liars Can Figure and Figures Can Lie

He was known as “Monty Hall Mike.” When anyone tried to fight a traffic ticket that Officer Mike Gallagher had written, Mike would talk to the defendant outside the courtroom prior to the trial. His objective was “let’s make a deal.” Depending on the attitude of the defendant, Mike would plead the case down to impeding traffic. Same fine, no points, and it helped clear the judge’s cases. Everyone leaves happy. This is the negotiation of one of those cases between Officer Gallagher and John Engineer.

The case involves running a red light, and this conversation takes place outside the courtroom.

Officer Gallagher: I am 100% certain that you ran a red light, but I am here to offer you a plea.

John Engineer: I am 100% certain that I did not run a red light, and I can prove it.

Officer Gallagher: I don’t know how you can prove it because I clearly saw you enter the intersection on red. I was parked 25 yards south of Forrest on Main where I observed you traveling south and entering the intersection after the light turned red.

John Engineer: Just as I thought. [*presents two 6’ x 6’ charts*] You would have had to see me through your rear-view mirror and/or side mirror. The first chart shows a formula for the refraction of light as it passes through a curved rear window or a side mirror. The next chart shows the actual position, not where you observed it through distorted images. There is a 97% chance I was not in the intersection.

Officer Gallagher: Yes, but that means there is an 80% chance you were speeding.

John Engineer: Because of the heavy traffic, there is only a 10% chance I was speeding.

Officer Gallagher: Because of all your previous speeding tickets, there is an 80% chance you were speeding.

John Engineer: With only a 10% chance of speeding and a 3% chance of entering the intersection on red, it gives me a 96% chance that I am innocent.

Office Gallagher: Did you know 90% of statistics are made up on the spot?

John Engineer: But only used 40% of the time.

No plea was reached.

Judge Sheen's Courtroom

Judge Sheen: This case involves Mr. Engineer running a red light. Officer Gallagher, please present your case.

Officer Gallagher: Parked on Lafayette south of Forrest, looking through my mirrors, with 100% certainty I clearly observed Mr. Engineer enter into the intersection prior to the light turning red.

Judge Sheen: Thank you, Officer. Mr. Engineer, do you have defense?

Mr. Engineer: Yes, Your Honor. [*places his two charts on tripods*] The side mirror clearly states, "OBJECTS IN MIRROR MAY APPEAR CLOSER." This is also true of the refraction of light from the rear window. Using the formula on the first chart and placing the position of my car on the second chart, you can clearly see with 100% certainty I was not in the intersection.

Judge Sheen: Officer Gallagher, do you accept his theory?

Officer Gallagher: Yes, Your Honor.

Judge Sheen: Do you believe he is innocent?

Officer Gallagher: No, Your Honor. Using his formula to accept the differences in our stated positions in the intersection, he had to be traveling 6,487 miles per hour.

Judge Sheen: Mr. Engineer, were you traveling 6,487 miles per hour?

Mr. Engineer: No, Your Honor.

Judge Sheen: Would you like to change your plea?

With 100% certainty the government gets its way.





Mountain Rescue

My father did something special for me when I was 13, an adventure that I will never forget. In August 1941 we went to Catalina Island in California on a deep sea fishing trip, and I caught a blue marlin nine feet six inches long, weighing 138 pounds. My father had the fish mounted, and I still have it in my house today. I wanted to share an adventure with my son, Rudy, that would be as special for him as what my father did was for me: In 1984 we decided to climb the 14,496 feet to the top of Mt. Whitney in California, the highest mountain in the lower 48 states.

Mountaineering is a very dangerous and unforgiving sport. If you are not prepared and you make a mistake, you will pay dearly for it. We had to backpack 32 miles round trip from the trailhead to the summit, a distance that would take a week. We had to carry a tent, equipment and all of our food with us. We knew it would be a tough trip for Rudy, so we took it slow and easy for a few days to get to the base camp at the foot of the big mountain, where we camped for the night. We looked up at a vertical ascent of over 5,000 feet, which normally would be a fairly easy climb on a switchback trail to the summit. What a surprise it was to find that the trail was covered with two feet of snow! But we were prepared and had all the equipment we needed for safe snow travel: ice axes, crampons, climbing rope and climbing boots, plus clothing for cold weather. I was proud of the way Rudy handled the adventure of a very challenging and difficult climb.

But an even bigger adventure awaited us on the way down. Two men, Morton Moskowitz and Allen Zimmerman, were making the descent with us after they too had reached the summit. The temperature dropped rapidly from 50° F to 30° F as a hailstorm passed by. Leaving Trail Crest Pass at 13,777 feet and the John Muir Trail Junction, we arrived at a very extensive snow and ice field that we had to traverse. Even though it was treacherous, Rudy and I were well prepared. The only safe way to travel on ice is to rope up. Since this was Rudy's first real mountaineering experience, we wanted him to get used to doing things the right, safe way, so we were roped up. Rudy gave Morton his axe to help him in crossing the snow. We crossed the ice, trying to cut soft footholds for Morton and Allen. Allen crossed to where we were standing on safe rocks that were protruding out of the snow. Morton started to cross the ice but lost his footing, dropped the ice axe and started sliding down the mountain. He and Allen were not roped up (they didn't have a climbing rope or other equipment for dealing with ice and didn't have clothing needed for the 30° F temperatures). The mountain was steep here, approximately a 35° to 40° pitch. Morton slid 50 feet or more, hoping to catch onto a rock outcropping. Rudy and I yelled to him that we would come down to help him and everything would be okay.

First, Rudy and I retrieved the ice axe Morton had dropped. Then we climbed

down to Morton and administered first aid. He had minor cuts and bruises but no broken bones. He was shaking like a leaf, so we were concerned about hypothermia and shock. He needed liquids and warm clothing. Rudy gave him the last half-quart of water we had left, and we insisted he drink all of it. We gave him gloves and a coat to help get him warm. Rudy and I carved footholds in the ice with the ice axe to give Morton better footing. Then we roped Morton between us and, with Rudy in the lead, we began to move carefully across the ice. When Rudy reached safe rocks he stopped to guide Morton, but Morton again lost his footing and started sliding. This time Rudy and I had belayed the rope around an ice axe, which stopped him from sliding farther. By this time Morton's confidence was drained, and he could not get back on his feet. Rudy and I gradually lowered him down the slope with the rope. After Morton regained his composure, he continued the descent, keeping the rope on until we reached a safer part of the trail.

The four of us finally reached camp about dark, after 8 p.m. We had been on the mountain more than 12 hours and had no water or food the last four hours. When we reached the camp, Morton got into Rudy's polyester sleeping bag to get warm, and we cooked a warm meal. Looking back on the day, it seems clear that without our help it is doubtful that Morton

could have survived. Allen did not have the equipment needed to help him. The best he could have done would be to try to go for help at the camp two or three hours down the mountain. No one else was on the mountain at the time. No one at camp had a climbing rope or other equipment. And without warm clothes, Morton would not have survived the extreme cold for very long.

Very few people ever have the chance to save someone's life. It was an awesome experience that Rudy will never forget. In 1985 we received the wonderful news that the Boy Scout Life Saving Award would be presented to Rudy by President Gerald Ford at a luncheon during the grand jubilee celebration for the 75th anniversary of the Boy Scouts. My wife, my daughter, Rudy and I were invited to a private reception with President Ford, Richard DeVos and a congressman from Grand Rapids before the luncheon. Morton and Allen flew to Grand Rapids and joined us for the luncheon and presentation. Rudy walked in with President Ford and the congressman during the playing of "Hail to the Chief," and he sat next to President Ford for the luncheon. As I watched him receive the Life Saving Award, I realized that my hope to share an adventure

with Rudy, one that would be as special for him as what my father did was for me, had succeeded beyond my greatest expectations.

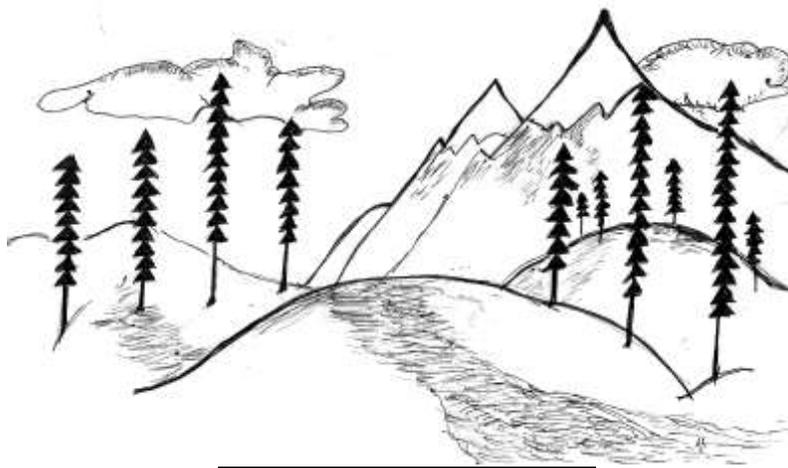


Illustration by Julie Sanders



My Time in San Quentin State Prison

Sometimes in life we take on challenges motivated by the very best of intentions. Sometimes these efforts pay off, and sometimes they don't. For lots of reasons this story falls in the latter category, but it still had a good ending.

In 1975 I lived in San Jose, California, and I worshipped at a United Methodist Church in nearby Saratoga. One Sunday a man visited the church and gave a talk on the "Match-Two Mentoring Outreach Program." The prison inmate candidates for "Match-Two" volunteered as professed Christians who received very few visits from family and wanted to form a friendship with someone from a local church community. The civilian volunteer would have to commit to monthly visits to the prisoner and be willing to invest time in establishing a Christian friendship. The "Match-Two" slogan was "One Less Offender—One Less Victim." Their representative stated, "Our program fulfills Matthew 25 by visiting prisoners, befriending them, giving moral guidelines and helping to convert them from offenders to non-offenders." This seemed like a very worthwhile program so I signed up. I thought I might be able to make a difference in one person's life and maybe my own as well.

A few weeks later I was contacted with a time and place to meet Mr. Ron Valentine, who was serving time for armed robbery at San Quentin State Prison located in San Quentin, California. I lived about 80 miles south of San Quentin, which was located north of the Golden Gate Bridge in Marin County.

San Quentin is a maximum security prison and a very scary place. It is the oldest prison in California, having opened in 1852. It was designed to house 3,082 inmates but often had over 4,200 inmates at 137 percent of capacity. The death row area of San Quentin has been described as the largest in the Western Hemisphere with just under 700 inmates. The last execution in that prison was in 2006. The late Charles Manson was there for a time.

The entry process into San Quentin is pretty simple. I presented identification and filled out some paperwork. I had to pass through a metal detector and then was ushered into a waiting area which had hard curved wooden benches that looked like they had come from an old bus or train station. Several women seated there were nicely dressed and made up like they were going out on the town. I realized that they wanted to look good for their men (boyfriend, husband). But they seemed to be incredibly sad, as sad as any

people I had ever seen outside of a funeral setting. We were forced to wait about two hours before we could visit our inmates.

We were led into a large cafeteria. There I met my “Match-Two” partner, Ron Valentine. Ron was about 20 years old, pleasant looking and very friendly. We exchanged pleasantries. Almost immediately he informed me that his incarceration was “all a big mistake.” Yes, he did have a loaded gun in his hand, and yes, he was in the process of taking a TV set from his neighbor, but “it was all a big mix-up,” and he didn’t deserve to be there.

At that point I didn’t know what to think. I looked around at all the family reunions taking place around me. Kids were hugging their dads, and the well-dressed women were chatting with their men. That part of San Quentin was warm, alive and friendly, at least during visiting hours. Ron and I chatted for about an hour, and Ron pledged to call me on occasion. I told him I’d like that. As I walked to the exit, I wondered how I might be able to help Ron. I walked to my car and felt safe and happy to be on my way home. I didn’t know that I’d never step back into San Quentin.

Perhaps Ron’s incarceration was a big mix-up. Before I ever got a chance for a second visit at San Quentin, Ron called to tell me he had been transferred to a medium/minimum security prison in San Luis Obispo, about 250 miles south. So this was good news for Ron, not so good news for our visitation program. We spoke frequently on the phone over a two-year period. I did see him at his

new “home” once while I was on vacation in southern California. He was taking classes and doing better away from the maximum security environment at San Quentin. The only similarity I noticed between the two facilities was that the guards were rude and unfriendly at both places. I was not a convicted felon, but my dealings with guards at both places were decidedly unpleasant. They behaved toward me like I had done something wrong. Maybe the attitudes of the guards contributed to the sadness I had observed among the San Quentin waiting room visitors.

Over a two-year period I was able to help Ron a bit. Ron’s mother passed away (at age 36), and his parole officer and I were able to get Ron released to attend the funeral. And then he was released altogether in late 1977. Within ten days he was arrested on an old traffic violation which his parole officer said should have been expunged from his records when he was incarcerated. But he lamented that those details are often overlooked. So Ron was back behind bars for a day or two. He called me, and with his parole officer’s help we were able to get him released once again.

I arranged to get Ron a job interview at Hewlett-Packard where I worked. The personnel manager who scheduled the interview had dealt with ex-felons before, so I figured this might work out for Ron. But, alas, Ron and his new girlfriend slept in that morning and that opportunity was lost. But I tried to help him where I could.

In early 1978 I landed a position with Herman Miller in Zeeland. My wife and I wanted to raise our kids in the Midwest and closer to family. So I said goodbye to Ron as we traveled across the country back to Michigan.

About three months later I got a phone call from Ron at 3:30 a.m. He said he had called just to “catch up.” When I asked him why he had called in the middle of the night, he was confused. He said that it was just after midnight in California so with a three-hour time difference he figured it was a little after 9:00 p.m. in Michigan. Ron had subtracted three hours instead of adding three hours. In addition, he was first given the number of the other Tom Urbaniak who lived in Holland. So that poor guy got a phone call

in the middle of the night from the guy saying, “Tom, this is Ron, your friend from San Quentin. How ya doing?”

Perhaps due to embarrassment over the middle-of-the-night phone call, Ron never called again. I don’t know how he made out in life or whether he is still alive. The “Match-Two” program seems to have folded. I tried some phone numbers for Match-Two that I found on the Internet, but they were no longer in service.

Did I make a difference in Ron’s life? I’ll never know, but I tried. I offered a few acts of kindness during Ron’s venture through the California prison system, and for a time I was his friend.



Bowling across State Lines

Chester and Bert had been good friends since the third grade in South Chicago. Their parents all worked and lived in or near the blue-collar part of town. In 1967 Chester's father took a job with an oil refinery in Whiting, Indiana. To make financial sense the family also relocated to Whiting. Chester, a skinny fifteen-year old, adjusted to the move quickly.

He managed to find an odd job at a local country club. He started out cleaning the bathrooms, the locker rooms and shining golf shoes. The money was good. Most people would tip him fifty cents for his shoeshine. His clients liked him, and he occasionally was getting a dollar a pair from the richer golfers. By the summer he began to caddy. The money was much better. He could earn five dollars of tips. At first he struggled to carry one bag of clubs. The load was heavier than he could manage. As he grew, he built up strength and stamina. By the end of summer he was able to carry two bags. Although he never played golf, he was good at reading the contours and the tips kept coming in. He poured his steady income toward his passion: bowling. As soon as he was licensed to drive, he bought a 1956 Chevy and spent almost all of his income on a used bowling ball. He began to dress cool. Girls were attracted to him because he had a car. He had thick dark

brown hair, deep eye sockets, a straight nose and walked like James Dean. He frequently wore a V-necked tee shirt and tucked his Pall Mall cigarettes in the short right sleeve. In his jean back pocket was a switchblade-like comb. He would pull that out to slick his hair back like a Mandarin duck tail. He had two identical 1952 (his birth year) Lincoln pennies in his suede penny loafers. He looked cool like Stanley Kowalski in *Streetcar Named Desire*.

He was working five weekday evenings and full time on weekends at the golf course! He would skip school often when he was too tired to get up in the morning. Bert and Chester stayed in touch throughout high school. Chester's passion for bowling was costly to him. He was good but.... He would go to the bowling alleys to compete against the best. He would lose most of the time. He would contact Bert to have coffee and sob about his bowling misadventures. At first Bert felt sorry for him and eagerly picked up the tabs at the coffee shop. It soon began to bother Bert, but he still valued their friendship and kept in touch with Chester.

One August night in 1969 Chester lost his weekly paycheck and his watch to another bowler. He called Bert late in the evening, wanting to talk. To avoid paying for coffee Bert suggested they drive around and talk.

After driving aimlessly for an hour, Bert convinced Chester that he should get rid of his bowling ball. They agreed to toss it into the Calumet River. Bert was to help Chester heave this miserable no-good round object over the Calumet Skyway bridge (today's Skyway Bridge). It was almost four in the morning when they approached the toll booth. After Chester paid the toll, he told Bert to crank his window down, grab the ball, hang his arm outside the window and wait for Chester's command to heave the evil bowling ball down the Calumet River. They were comfortable with this act in the stealthy darkness. As they approached the crown of the bridge, Chester said, "Let the SOB go!" Bert tossed it with all his might, extending his three fingers. The black ball flew off Bert's hand. The force of his throwing arm and the momentum of

the car caused the ball to stay ahead of the car. Chester slowed down enough to stay a few paces behind the flying object. It bounced on the pavement, curved slightly right as it was bouncing high enough to clear the parapet. Both Bert and Chester were anticipating the projectile to clear the barrier and fall harmlessly into the Calumet. They slowed to almost a stop in anticipation of hearing the splash of the round object

impacting the water. To their dismay, the bowling ball bounced higher than the parapet but encountered the metal bar and the angle bar. These metal bars were placed every 30 to 40 yards apart to give structural strength to the bridge. The projectile was redirected back onto the bridge. Bert and Chester looked at each other in shock. They kept on driving and tracking the fate of this out-of-control missile. The projectile accelerated as the bridge was descending toward the Illinois side. It bounced higher and moved faster from center to left and eventually came to rest harmlessly. Just when that thought was crossing their minds,

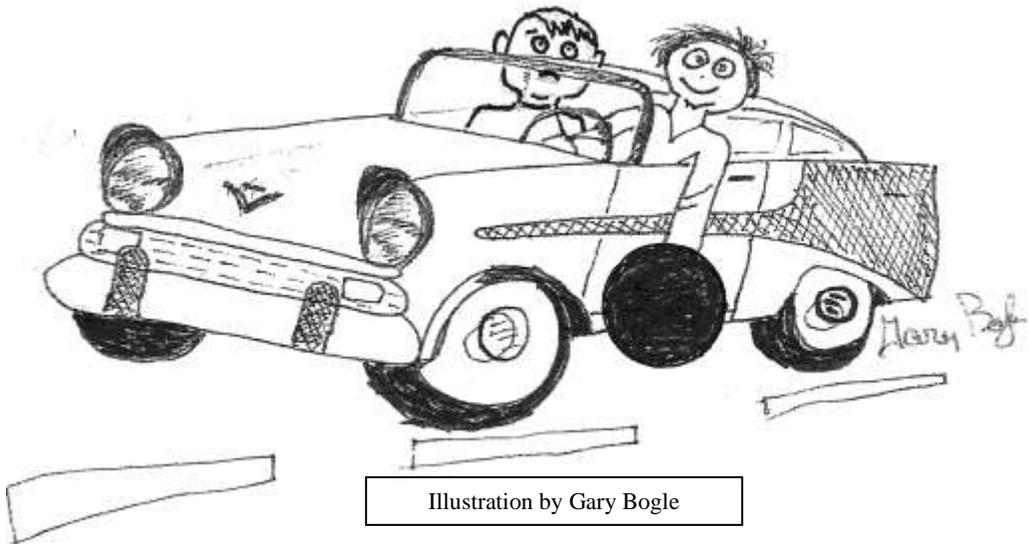


Illustration by Gary Bogle

they saw oncoming lights. Then "ping, pang, bonk" and a dusty cloud of smoke drifted across the bridge. As they drove by, they could smell burning plastic as if a hairdryer had just burnt out. They heard a male voice uttering uncontrollable expletives as they drove past slowly and steadily. The next day Bert and Chester spoke on the phone to promise to alert each other if they heard of any injuries on the

Calumet bridge. Fortunately, nothing showed up in the news.

Ten years later, Bert was visiting his aging parents in South Chicago and was at the barber shop. He heard an elderly man at the next chair telling a story. This man was driving to work early one morning, and out of nowhere a bowling ball landed right in

front of his car and ripped his radiator, engine, transmission and exhaust from his domestic car. He said it was a good thing. He was having trouble with the dealer and the car manufacturer because of quality issues. His insurance paid for the damage, and he bought a more dependable Japanese car. He never regretted that move. Bert paid the barber and quietly walked out.



Sleepless in Saugatuck

The dawn is pitch. How can this be morning when it's still night out? Quiet is an understatement. The audible click-click-click is the tattoo of his too-long toenails as he trots along on the wet-covered cement and asphalt surfaces. Out the front door, down the drive, across the street, along the sidewalk. His chosen route. He's on "AP" now, just gliding along, with frequent stops to pursue whatever the smells signify. It's his walk so he gets to choose. That's the rule.

Some lights burn, in a few houses and in the streets. Absent the darkness, there's really no need for them; there's no one about and no traffic. A light mist, almost a fog, pervades the air, making distant objects seem dim. A shadow interrupts the reverie and startles, causing a quick sidestep. It's all right. No cause for alarm. Just a shadow and brief fright.

It's easy to misstep going down the stairs of the Hill to the streets below. No lights here. You easily could lose your balance and take a serious fall. Nothing there to stop or slow you. You could literally roll down a couple of flights of cement steps and end up in the middle of the street below, directly in the path of oncoming traffic.

There's a stop sign there, but nobody really observes it, especially now when it's dark and presumably no one the wiser, not least the local gendarmes.

Heading toward the river, it's the same story: black, still, only a few lights of a minority of shops still doggedly in business opening up, and peacefulness. The one exception: a splash with the sound only a jumping fish can make. There are ripples to prove it.

The sidewalk at this point draws a line of demarcation between the street on one side and a progression of several shops on the other. Several No Parking signs mark the way. Their message unambiguous: nothing

doing until May. It is only late March. Proprietors' front doors say the same thing, but include a thank-you for the season past. Each of these is slightly different and yet the intent is the same.

The occasional banging sound is of garbage containers being unceremoniously hoisted and dumped into the trucks, powerful, loud, their drivers half asleep at the wheel enclosed in



Illustration by Gary Bogle

their glass boxes, exhibiting hardly any movement at all yet sounding like beasts from hell. They war with street sweepers like rival gangs struggling for supremacy of the neighborhood turf.

Not the best place to linger. Escape being the watchword, a turn at the next corner toward home seems advisable. Almost immediately now the stillness returns. Here is a road characterized by small shops with doors shuttered, and leading to a park. Even though the hour grows later, the dark remains with the slightest of light appearing in the east. Most of the street lamps now go out.

It is possible to walk across the Main Street in town without thinking to stop and look, a habit that is at any other time useful for avoiding being hit by some clueless tourist. In a few months it will be impossible to cross during the day. Despite the emerging light, it is still possible to continue voyeuring. Here is somebody folding laundry upstairs in one home; there is somebody else already busily working in a home office.

We're in the backstretch now, and he senses this is the right direction. There are certain houses along this route whose interiors are easily perceived now, their various lamps illuminating occupied rooms. While my

friend explores the grass and assorted detritus on the ground, the stop provides an ideal opportunity to gaze and wonder. What is the family like who lives in this house on the corner? It's obvious from the miscellaneous paraphernalia strewn in the driveway that kids live here. Do they attend Saugatuck High School? Do both parents live at home? What do they do for a living?

The next house tells a different story. It's completely dark. No lights are on. It's impossible to look inside. The house is on a corner lot made especially dangerous by the ice topped with snow on the sidewalk that never gets shoveled. Is no one ever home? Is this rental property with no ownership responsibility? Who are the owners and where are they now?

There is a sense of homecoming. Now the pace quickens as the street slopes gently almost imperceptibly downward. It's hard to tell whether all these homeowners are sleeping in or are just itinerant landlords. Saugatuck in the premature spring is a curious mix of harsh reality and alluring promise. The sun is beginning to be visible just clearing the southwest end of the high school looking east. Students are rising all along the Michigan coast. My partner's hunger is a powerful motivator to head home for breakfast. Everyone's sleepless now.



Tank, Sally and the Roller Dome

The Roller Dome opened November 10, 1950. When the Dome was designed, it would have been referred to as “futuristic” by ordinary people who know nothing about architecture. It was, and still is, a sort of foolish looking building, all 1950s modern, yellowish big bricks and redwood trim with a big dome-shaped roof. It was plunked down on one of the corners where three highways intersected in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The Roller Dome was part of the new blurring taking place at the edge of town, separating the older settled urban areas from the newer burgeoning suburbs. As post-war tri-levels sprang up beyond the Dome, a clutter of gas stations, hamburger drive-ins and discount stores erupted, shoulder to shoulder, up and down the highways. The Roller Dome was an orphan marooned at a distant outpost. Most of the time, kids went there to actually roller skate, as they still do today. But when I was in high school, on Thursday night, the Dome was transformed into a rock and roll sanctuary, a basilica for those of us who were on the hunt for dances. This did not include the hoity-toity crowd who thought it was far too cheesy for them. It included bunches of us who were not particularly good students, who were not college bound, who were somewhere on the fringes and were destined to remain townies. That's probably why we were out dancing on Thursday nights instead of doing something like algebra. We loved those nights of music, of moonlight and of '49 Mercurys.

Sally Wagner

Sally hung out with a group of menacing girls who loitered around the jukebox at Johnny's, a little sandwich joint next to North Side High School. The girls had hair dyed black as a crow's wings and sprayed sticky with Aqua Net. Their Cleopatra eyes were made dramatic with Maybelline pencil lines slashed upward toward their temples. A chorus of swear words rose from their midst as they took proficient and deliberate drags on Viceroy's. Sally seemed to be around these girls who looked like they were headed for serious trouble, but she also seemed apart from them in that she could be almost shy. When I think back, maybe Sally just didn't have a place to be when she wasn't dancing.

Sally turned herself into the Roller Dome goddess. It was her calling in life. Sally bleached her brunette hair to a toxic level. On hot summer Roller Dome nights Sally wore crisp blouses with the tails tied neatly under her breasts, exposing her midriff. And in the days before latex or even polyester, she wore pants that were lacquered on in appliance white. Her presentation was startling. That was even before you saw her dance. Sally must have had trick hips. They could be moved in any direction. They could swivel, they could bump, they could grind. Her feet were everywhere, clicking like castanets in perfect combination with the rest of her and with the music. She usually danced with Andy Richardson, her wiry and equally movable counterpart. Many times she danced with Tank.

Tank Geradot

Tank showed up at the Roller Dome dances every Thursday night. He was a little older than the regular high schoolers, about 19 or 20. He was always decked out in a white tee shirt under a leather jacket, jeans and black motorcycle boots. Tank rode a big Harley. It was completely against convention that a person with a body like Tank Geradot's could be a prized and sought-after dance partner. Tank carried around 300 pounds packed onto a six-foot frame. He was a dance wizard born with two right feet. Tank could negotiate the Dome's dance floor as if the roller rink's wooden boards were slathered with melted butter or as if he were a graceful armoire delicately moving around on casters.

It was a foregone conclusion that when Sally Wagner and Tank Geradot danced together, especially to "La Bamba," they would dazzle everyone. It wasn't so much that Tank could fling Sally around the Dome's dance floor as it was that he could actually manipulate her movements with his skillful wrist action. He was like one of those Duncan YoYo experts from the Philippines who traveled around the country demonstrating "walk the dog" or "rock the cradle." Linked by arms and hands, Sally was the YoYo at the end of Tank's string.

Tank and Me

When Tank wasn't dancing with Sally, he would glide around the perimeter of the large round rink, shopping for other partners (always for a slow dance). Girls leaned against or draped themselves over the four-

foot wall surrounding the floor while waiting to dance fast again with their girl friends. There were times when Tank would walk up to me and just silently nudge me on the elbow, for he never spoke before, during or after dancing. It was as if dancing and riding his Harley were the two main things Tank knew how to do. I always felt helpless to refuse him even if I wanted to, which I never did. To be in his arms was like being rolled up in a king-sized mattress. I felt so tiny and protected. Tank's revolutions were a carnival ride, the Tilt-a-Whirl. They covered a great expanse, were quick and dizzying. But it was his dips that got me. To be dipped by Tank produced sheer bliss. I didn't even think of the usual sight of Tank from the back as he dipped his partners. It was the view that revealed low riding greaser jeans strained too far south of his waist, exposing Tank's qualification for automatic membership in the plumber's union. When I was in the midst of being dipped, I only felt that heavenly drift inches above the Roller Dome floor. My legs outstretched with a sense of perfect security, my hair dangling down sweeping across the wood. I loved being held in suspension by a large steady palm and five meaty but gentle fingers. That feeling of weightlessness, or floating to the slow beat of the Platters' "Twilight Time" or Sam Cook's "You Send Me," that moment, looking up at the revolving mirrored ball, at the colored lights flickering from somewhere out of the deep and mysterious darkness under the big dome was the best. Tank Geradot's long, meaningful and thrilling dips at the Roller Dome, swooping me down, were as close to low-level flying as I've ever come.



Bay City Beauties

A blinding flash of light illuminated the nighttime sky. As the smoke cleared, my eyes began to focus and I could make out the letters – THE BAY CITY BEAUTIES – yes, The Bay City Beauties, my personal recollection of my mother’s mother and her five sisters, brought to you in dazzling Technicolor, directed and produced by me, Janet Ann Gebben. But first a little background. The mother of these beguiling beauties, Mary, was deserted by her no-good, violin-playing barber of a husband, my grandfather, who grabbed his fiddle, his mustache wax and probably some little hussy, and ran to places unknown sometime in 1925, leaving innocent, *unprepared-for-the-single-life* Mary and his six daughters to fend for themselves. UGH! What kind of man does this? What kind of man puts aside his responsibilities and joyfully leaps through life carefree while his wife and daughters take in laundry to put food on the table.

Mother Mary: petite, yet strong. Uneducated, yet resourceful. Artistic, clever and determined to raise her daughters to be strong, respectful Catholic women – well, she tried. Five out of six ain’t bad.

Sweet Agnes: Firstborn, loving, caring, responsible – always carried her share. All Agnes ever wanted was a family of her own, a little house with white curtains and a husband who would love her forever. Oh, she always wore a hat with a little veil and a pocketbook over her arm. Her coat was always too short, or she was too tall. Sweet Agnes.

Risqué Rose: A gal with a pose – fashionable clothes, silver fox fur that tickled her nose. She had many beaus that she stacked in rows, and then knocked them all down, like black dominoes. They fell one by one till they got to the end, leaving just one. But Risqué Rose was the lucky one. The last one

standing was Kelly, the pharmacist. He had a big, bushy mustache and owned a drugstore with a marble soda fountain. He counted and packaged the pills, powders and potions, while she drove around town in a big white Cadillac with fins on the back, like the fish in the ocean.

Fancy Francie: I named her Fancy – because she was fancy, that is. She lived in a fancy house with frilly lamp shades and doilies everywhere. Francie had a back yard that had a stream running through it. A little



Illustration by Jan Gebben

bridge crossed the stream. I always thought she was raising a colony of gnomes under that bridge. But wait! Here's the showstopper: Fancy Francie owned a fish and poultry market. You should have seen her cleaning and plucking chickens, dressed in a suit, jewelry, a hat, big rubber boots and a butcher apron strapped over it all. I swear those fish had sequin scales.

Snappy Gladdy: Gladdy lived in Texas where everything is bigger (so they say). Gladdy was a business woman. Gladdy was a designer. Gladdy was the proud owner of Cedar Crest Hats with showrooms in New York, Chicago and, of course, Texas (where things are bigger). My mother, sister and I wore the best hats in Dearborn. We had small hats, large hats, fur hats and flowered hats, hats with veils and hats with sequins, straw hats, wool hats and pillbox hats. We were the Mad Hatters of Dearborn, Michigan. You see, every season a big box came in the mail, and it was filled with seasonal samples that had been shown in New York, Chicago and, of course, Texas (where things are bigger). Snappy Gladdy distributed those hats among her siblings and their children. What a sweet thing to do. Thank you, Gladdy.

Marie Cherie: What can we say about Marie, except that she was a bit of a black sheep. We never spent time with her, never had her over for Thanksgiving dinner. We spoke of her in hushed tones. It was always "Marie...you know...she never married." Marie Cherie had done just about everything from working at the perfume counter in Woolworth's to dancing in the burlesque shows. She rode the high road and low road. She spent some time in a TB sanitarium battling tuberculosis. She was a call girl and a dance hall girl who lived in a small hotel in Chicago and fed the pigeons that came to her window. We always knew she loved us.

Magdaline: The youngest, the baby, the last child, or as she referred to herself, "the leavings." The last of the Bay City Beauties. Most special about Magdaline was that she was my mother. She was beautiful, talented, creative and quirky. Her ideas on child rearing were different, maybe even bizarre. But we turned out all right with only a few scratches and bruises. Thanks, Magdaline, or Madge, as her friends called her. I wouldn't have had you any other way.



Veni, Vidi, Vici

Veni (I Came): The Journey

An early start's important. The projected Mapquest route seems simple and clear enough. Traffic is lighter than it will be later. Just one less thing to think about. Some others: Where exactly do I have to go? What if this person's image is all wrong? What do I really need to find out? When will I be able to get back to the client? Will there be chargeable expenses? Not having familiarized myself yet with the car's GPS, I resort to keeping the MapQuest docs close at hand, right beside the front seat. I occasionally have to pick up the paper, hold it directly in front of me with both hands gripping the steering wheel, and furtively glance at the written directions in small type. Potentially dangerous and not recommended but in this instance, necessary. So with the visor down to block the morning sun and squinting through sunglasses to read the itinerary as the road signs flash by, I proceed trepiditiously.

I arrive at the hotel, the agreed-upon meeting location, early as usual by design. Real early. There's an hour to spare. This is all part of my plan. I need to case the joint and get set up, but first I park and extricate myself from the car. A tense, stressful 45-minute drive, albeit under practically ideal conditions, still leaves me with the need to stretch mightily before a two-hour sit-down with my candidate. An interview I will control, from the very beginning to the end, all the while making it appear casual and relaxed.

Just inside the revolving door I take a few steps toward the main lobby and stop just standing there for a few minutes. I need to get the lay of the land before proceeding further. Is my quarry anywhere in sight? It's now about a quarter to the hour; I've purposely added a few minutes to spot the candidate first and to gauge my very first impressions. Get the drop, so to speak, the first of many advantages I will employ throughout our meeting. I want to be in complete control. I purposefully scan the lobby, not missing any corners or chairs. My person should be standing alert, searching for me as well. Points will be deducted if I spot somebody slouching in a chair or relaxing on a couch engrossed in an iPad. Never a good sign or beginning. Seeing no one matching the photo from LinkedIn, I begin strolling and ambling about. Nobody returns my gaze. I'm early, I remind myself.

I locate a chair with an adjoining table in the vicinity of the registration area where we'd agreed to meet. I prefer a corner of the room, looking out into the main reception area. There I can function as a catcher on a baseball team, squatting behind home plate as it were, able to view the entire diamond, both infield and outfield simultaneously.

On the table beside me are the tools of my trade, arrayed like dental instruments on the hygienist's tray in preparation for a routine cleaning: cell phone, leather notebook, expensive pen, coffee, water. If we have breakfast there, I will apply the time-worn tactics of the past. Then you ate as fast as

possible, sufficiently ahead of the candidate to ask questions and record responses. Nobody had resumes. The Internet hadn't been born, Curriculum vitae, with verbal input from the candidate, had to be constructed from scratch by the consultant, retyped in a consistent format by the admin back at the office, and then shipped to the client. Today, of course, that step is no longer required. But managing the interview, conducting the assessment, observing the nonverbal, asking legal (of course!) yet incisive questions and creating the environment all remain integral to a comprehensive analysis.

As I continue to scan the surroundings, I notice a new arrival. My sixth sense prevails; I know this is the one. She looks around, obviously trying to pick me out of the crowd. I sit back and observe her momentary confusion. It's revealing how candidates behave when they believe they are unobserved. Just another criterion to consider, and unimportant in the general scheme of things, but I'm being paid to assess, and so I do.

Medium height. Corporately and tastefully well dressed: black short-sleeve, knee-length career dress, wedge pumps, satchel, gold necklace, hoop earrings. She's had her back to me and now she turns slightly so that first her profile and then her face come into view. Good image. Executive presence.

Vidi (I Saw): The Interview

So confident am I that she's the one, I dispense with a phone or text greeting and walk over to personally introduce myself. Her handshake is ideal; firm yet not too manly. And dry palms, no hint of nervousness or apprehension. I press ahead and gesture in the direction of my pre-

requisitioned table-and-chair set-up. We sit and make respective preliminary moves and chat a bit. She adjusts purse and removes portfolio. I sit still and study her every move, on the alert for any telltale behaviors that might offer clues to her qualifications and fit or lack thereof for the job. I record my impressions as unobtrusively as possible, preferably when she might not be looking. If she is, I take notes while making direct facial contact, avoiding looking down at my hieroglyphics. I will transpose them later, and they will prove useful in the report write-up stage. For now they're just scribbles critical for me, unintelligible for anyone else.

We finish prepping; I begin to lob some wide-open-ended softball queries her way: What do you think of this position? What is your take on the company? How would you describe its vision? How do you see yourself fitting into it? Not exactly provocative questions necessarily, but penetrating enough to require some level of knowledgeable response. Has she done any homework here? But also questions designed to establish the interview format I prefer, of me asking questions designed to elicit more than a few sentences of response and of her having to calculate an answer and then to articulate it. This is all a precursor to even more probing questions I will ask as we proceed throughout the remainder of the interview.

Vici: (I Conquered): The Finding

"Well," I ask myself as we part ways after we conclude our discussion, "what do you think?" And that will be the question du jour over the next week or so. What this and every candidate can't know is how remote their chances are of being hired for this position. The reason is competition. Back at the office, sometimes even before the

search officially begins, my support staff is poring over literally hundreds of potential prospects to fill this position. Years ago this process was unimaginably difficult; there was no readily available intelligence. You had to laboriously discover, through referrals and directories, to locate even vague citations of relevant sources. Then these had to be followed up and documented. A process meant only for the most dedicated and perseverant souls, thus explaining why so many former executives accustomed to managing, not doing, routinely tried – and failed – at the profession. This of course is no longer necessary, but the winnowing-out phase can still be arduous and time-consuming. What we searchers get paid for. The seasoned, reasoned, judgmental matching between candidate and position remains what it has always been: more art than science. And where practiced intuition and inference pay huge dividends. If it were merely robotic, the machines could do the work. And perhaps automation someday will be the

case. It doesn't appear that will happen in the near term.

The point is that no one candidate has a good chance of being successful in any given search. The competition comprises internal candidates, client referrals, respondents to social media, blind external resumes and of course those individuals mined by the search firm accessing, again, social media. In the end, while I may be explaining to the interviewee that things went well, she made a perfectly good impression, her qualifications are exemplary, and she should be hearing back shortly and on and on, the reality is that of perhaps two hundred or even more (rarely fewer) prospects in the “pool,” her probability of surfacing to the top ten or twelve for presentation is minimal. There are others out there, just as or better qualified than she.

And I will find them. My client insists on it. As a recruiter, that's what I do.



Our Artists



Donna Bogle



Jane Lindemuth



Ruth Donaldson



Cindy Bender



Mary Porter



Karen VanDam Michmerhuizen



Susan Miller



Jan Gebben



Gary Bogle



Julie Sanders

Note: Illustrations without attribution is at the request of the artist.

Submission Index by Author/Artist

<u>B</u>	
Beiswenger, Bill	56, 112
Bender, Cindy	21, 33, 76
Bogle, Donna.....	2
Bouwman, Grace	37
Brower, David	85
Brown, Harley	22
Buttrey, John	8, 49
Buttrey, Mary	49
<u>C</u>	
Carolyn, Joe	39, 63, 123
<u>D</u>	
DeRidder, Dean	89, 90, 92
DeWitt, Dennis J.	34
Dykstra, Tom	116
<u>F</u>	
Fu, Wally	101, 130
<u>G</u>	
Gebben, Jan	74, 108, 137
Getchell, Bud	26
Godfrey, Bob	3, 133, 139
<u>H</u>	
Hoffmann, Judy	16, 40, 51
Holden, Terri	59
Hoskin, Carolyn	135
Hyde, Jack	36, 77, 81, 94, 107
<u>K</u>	
Kindig, Al	104
Kline, Navyne	72
Komejan, Sally	91
Kortman, Joyce	20, 93, 98
<u>L</u>	
Laman, Earl	53, 87
Laman, Gordon	13, 24
Lindemuth, Jane	1, 61
<u>M</u>	
Miller, Chanda	70, 102
Miller, Susan	47, 88, 99
<u>N</u>	
Nordstrom, Eileen	95
<u>O</u>	
O'Connor, Steve	118
<u>P</u>	
Parr, Judy	42, 54
Ploegstra, Henry	31
<u>R</u>	
Rickey, Carol	67
<u>S</u>	
Schaich, Karola	18, 121
Strebel, Leroy	64
<u>T</u>	
Torborg, Marilyn	28, 68
<u>U</u>	
Urbaniak, Tom	110, 127
<u>V</u>	
VanHaitsma, Dennis	10
Vedovell, Rudy	125
<u>W</u>	
Walton, Kathy	14, 45
Weller, Ann	83, 96

Your Communications Committee at Work



