On Spirit of America:
This is the America that speaks in many voices: colloquial and professional, religious and secular, fictional and reminiscent, verse and prose, all of them heartfelt, direct. It is the America that counts its blessings and shoulders its burdens, struggling and dying in far places, stretching out a hand at home to needy neighbors or eccentric visitors. It is the America that its countless friends abroad remember and love.
— JOHN H. WHALE,
AUTHOR OF THE HALF-CLOSED EYE AND PUT IT IN WRITING
FORMER TEACHER AND JOURNALIST (FORMER CORRESPONDENT OF THE LONDON SUNDAY TIMES, HEAD OF BBC RELIGION TV, EDITOR OF THE CHURCH TIMES)

The images in Spirit of America communicate on two significant levels. As individual images, they emerge from wonderfully diverse circumstances. Some are lovingly made by a parent or child, documenting a family milestone; many are captured by student photographers equipped to observe their world with new techniques and enthusiasm. Other images provide a profound glimpse of American history and America’s involvement in the world order. As a collection, in the context of the accompanying essays, they paint an image of America that is introspective and revealing of its character.
— ROGER GRANT, Ph.D.
ART DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN AND PROFESSOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—LA CROSSE

From religion to bordellos, it is a fascinating book for anyone who wants a concise look at this interesting town. Important, too, is the fact that it is edited... and written by all local people... your friends and neighbors.
— BETTY HYDE, REVIEWER
LA CROSSE TRIBUNE, IN “NIE WEEK: A GOOD READ”

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The WWTC Writing for Publication and Photography classes taught by David J. Marcou comprise people of diverse backgrounds and ages. Spirit of America is their sixth book project, the last one being Spirit of La Crosse, the most complete history of that city produced since 1881. In addition to brick-and-mortar residents and students of the Coulee Region, there have been several other contributors to both Spirit books. But while the names of famous people appear, from time to time, in key places, there is also much attention paid here to “ordinary” people, the “common cloth” that makes up the American fabric.

And all kinds of people—from Native American to immigrant, from Christian to agnostic, and from Black and White to Red and Yellow, of both genders and all ages—are proper subjects for Spirit of America. It is hoped that these people, and their environments, suggest the breadth and depth of the American spirit—a spirit that is indomitable, yet compassionate, more often than not—one that springs from the Heartland.
Rose Lake, on the route of the voyageurs, on the U.S.-Canadian border, 1999. Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (By Robert J. Hurt).
Editor's Note: Because this book went to press around September 11, 2001, the only place in the text that we've directly addressed the tragic events that occurred on that day in America, albeit briefly, is in this book's conclusion.

To the American people and our families and friends everywhere—especially John Hansen, Charles Gelatt, and Ron Wanek . . . As a famous movie director has said, “Make a noise!”

“While the [Twin] Towers may be gone, the Spirit of America is not gone.”
— RICHARD IN PENNSYLVANIA

“To observe the character of a particular people we must examine the objects of its love.”
— ST. AUGUSTINE

“God shed His grace on thee . . . from sea to shining sea.”
— FROM “AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL”
SPIRIT of AMERICA

Heartland Voices, World Views

Edited by David J. Marcou and LuAnn Gerber

Produced by the WWTC
Writing for Publication and Photography Classes
Taught by David J. Marcou, With the Help of Family and Friends
### Preface ......................................................... ix
### Introduction ............................................... x
### Section 1 Living with Nature
- Our National Emblem ........................................ 1
  - Anene Ristow
- Feathered King ................................................ 2
  - Doris Kirkeeng
- Prairie Perspective ............................................ 2
  - Orval Lund
- Kayaking the Wilderness Inside the City ..................... 3
  - Steven Fisher
- In the Spring .................................................. 4
  - Robert A. Floyd
- River Stories .................................................. 5
  - Bridget Flood
- A Cricket's Call ............................................... 6
  - Marjorie Walters
- Mark Twain's Western Wisconsin Impressions ............... 7
  - Father Bernard McGarty
- The Fit Survive ............................................... 8
  - Robert A. Floyd
- Trempealeau River, Rich in Beauty and History .......... 10
  - Father Bernard McGarty
- A Blufflands Design Story ................................... 11
  - Robert J. Hurt
### Section 2 The American Mosaic
- Ray Lowe is High on His Indian Heritage .................. 16
  - Steve Kiedrowski
- The Old Indian ................................................ 16
  - Yvonne Klinkenberg
- The Responsibility of Understanding ....................... 17
  - Daniel Green
- The Old Indian Woman ....................................... 17
  - Yvonne Klinkenberg
- Citizenship .................................................... 18
  - Helen Bolterman
- Remembering Jack Soo ....................................... 19
  - Daniel Green
- Memoir Excerpt from Anna's Story                      20
  - "New Continent—New Life"
  - Anna Muktepavel-Motivans
- American Immigrants: The Asian Indians ................. 24
  - Pamela Shipstone
- The Tablecloth ............................................... 26
  - Courtesy of Charles and Christine Freiberg
  - from Pastor Rob Reid
### Section 3 Taking Another Look at the Past
- Sacajawea and the Corps of Discovery ..................... 28
  - Nancy L. Kaminski
- The Kiedrowski Corner ....................................... 31
  - Steve Kiedrowski
- The Red Clay of "My Hill" ................................ 33
  - Anna Muktepavel-Motivans
- The Librarian ................................................. 33
  - Mary Claire Fehring
- My Grandparents' Homestead ................................ 34
  - Nelda Johnson Liebig
- From Pencil to Computer ................................... 34
  - Marjorie Davison
- Viewing a Quilt .............................................. 35
  - Alicia Burgmeier
- True Memories ................................................ 36
  - Marjorie Davison
- Interlude ..................................................... 38
  - Betty Hoyel
- Writing Pioneer ............................................. 39
  - Doris Kirkeeng
- Marcou's Market ............................................. 40
  - Matt Marcou
- Entries from My Great-Grandfather's Civil War Diary .. 41
  - Joyce Crothers
- Racing the Wind: An Ozark Memory ........................ 43
  - Betty Hoyel
- Elkhart Lake: A Sailor's Sailing .......................... 44
  - Gordon H. Hampel
- Theatres and Popcorn ....................................... 45
  - Helen Bolterman
- Yesterday's Treasures ...................................... 46
  - Evelyn Wilhelm
- The Jail Break ............................................... 48
  - Daniel J. Marcou, LCPD
- The Healing Ointment ...................................... 49
  - Nelda Johnson Liebig
- Reminiscences of Visits to Family Farms ................. 50
  - Mary Lou Ryan
- An Incident from the Simpler Times of the Fifties .... 52
  - Samuel M. Kay
- Two Great Men .............................................. 54
  - Doris Kirkeeng
### Section 4 The American Dream
- The Time I Saw JFK ......................................... 55
  - Dona Popovic
- Living in America—An African American Perspective .... 56
  - Roberta H. Stevens
- Iowa: The Birthplace of 4-H ................................ 57
  - Nelda Johnson Liebig
- Heart of a Wildcat: Centerville's Dream Team .......... 58
  - Steve Kiedrowski
- Curly and David ............................................. 59
  - Dinah Nord
- Early Signs of Promise ..................................... 60
  - Ross A. Phelps
- Martin Luther King Jr. ..................................... 60
  - Doris Kirkeeng
- The Simple Life: Amish Style .............................. 61
  - Helen Bolterman
- Believing in Myself and the American Dream ............ 62
  - The Mayor of La Crosse, Wisconsin
  - The Honorable John Medinger
Section 5 New American Short Stories
Armageddon ........................................ 65
Betty Holey
The Geode ............................................ 67
Michael R. Vande Zande
The Greatest Generation: A Vignette .......... 68
Ann Morrison
Art Imitates Fiction ............................... 69
Mel Loftus
The Last Run ....................................... 70
Don Dean Bennett
Simply Ketchup ..................................... 72
Rose Marie Schaper
Mrs. Bissett and the Insistent Present ........ 73
David W. Johns
Retirement Party ................................... 75
Mel Loftus
An Explosion in the Land of the Morning Calm ... 77
David W. Johns
Just Horton ........................................ 78
Doris Kirkeeng
The Orchard ........................................ 79
Kent K. Hibel
Three Big Game Hunters and Three Tribesmen ... 88
Deborah L. Ringdahl
What I Was Doing New Year's Eve .......... 88
Orval Lund
The Parents of Poets ......................... 89
Orval Lund
For Mary O ........................................ 89
Barbara Tatzel
Recent Visit to the Johnson Farm .......... 89
Barbara Tatzel
Poetry Paints a Picture ....................... 90
Yvonne Klinkenberg
Just Before Fall ................................ 90
Orval Lund
My Grandparents .............................. 90
David J. Marcou
One Very Special Day ....................... 90
Rose Marie Schaper
Jennie .............................................. 90
Rose Marie Schaper
Country Doctor ................................ 90
Yvonne Klinkenberg
Liberty Enlightening the World .......... 91
Doris Kirkeeng
A Poem for Sara ............................ 91
Mary Lou Ryan
Night Sledding .................................. 91
Margie Walters
Dancing in the Dark .......................... 92
Orval Lund
For John, Who Did Not Choose Baseball .... 92
Orval Lund
Forever Home ................................ 92
Yvonne Klinkenberg
Section 6 New American Poetry
Poetry .................................................. 81
Rose Marie Schaper
Sportsmanship .................................... 82
Yvonne Klinkenberg
Why Do I Write? ................................. 82
Rose Marie Schaper
Blues in Her Bones ......................... 82
Judy Fox
The Editor ......................................... 82
Yvonne Klinkenberg
Mother Teresa's Hands ...................... 83
Yvonne Klinkenberg
Understanding .................................. 83
Yvonne Klinkenberg
In Praise ......................................... 83
Orval Lund
War to Peace .................................... 84
Doris Kirkeeng
Retired Farmer .................................. 84
Margie Walters
The Million Dollar Smile .................. 84
Judy Fox
Two Children .................................... 85
Margie Walters
Mom Cares Too Much? ..................... 85
Judy Fox
Columbine ....................................... 85
Deborah L. Ringdahl
The Blossom Days ......................... 86
Mary Lou Ryan
Wild Goose ..................................... 86
Margie Walters
Who Is That Lady? ......................... 86
Aggie Tippery
Harmony .......................................... 87
Rose Marie Schaper
Saving America ................................ 87
Orval Lund
Contrasting Oneness ....................... 87
Barbara Tatzel
Section 7 New American Humor
Honey, I'm in Trouble ..................... 93
Duane Bennett
Need Help in Losing Weight? Be Inefficient .... 94
Mary Claire Fehring
Filling out Forms ......................... 94
Mary Claire Fehring
Keep off the Grass? ...................... 95
Duane Bennett
Christmas Letter ........................... 95
Joyce Clason
Why I Hide My Honey's Honey .......... 96
Aggie Tippery
Wool Underwear ............................ 96
Margie Walters
Must the Mail Go Through? ............ 97
Ross A. Phelps
A Father's Clinic .......................... 97
Father Robert Cook
Confessions of a Shower Singer ........ 98
Alicia Burgmeier
The Nature of Romance .................. 98
Joyce Clason
An Excellent Entry in "The Best of Bad Hemingway" Contest ... 98
Mel Loftus
Section 8 Human Interest Stories
John F. Mainz, Music Teacher ........................................ 99
La Vonnie Mainz
Cars ................................................................. 101
Mel Loftus
Doc West: Trempealeau's Medical Mystery Man ................. 102
Steve Kiedrowski
Slip of the Tongue ..................................................... 103
Ross A. Phelps
Rocky Mountain High
Father Robert Cook
The "Perfect" Crime .................................................. 104
Ross A. Phelps
Take Time for Heroes ................................................. 105
Mel Loftus
The Struggle ............................................................. 106
Barbara Tatzel
There Are Good Excuses—and There Are Bad Excuses ..... 107
Ross A. Phelps
Winter on an Island in Lake Superior .............................. 108
Nelda Johnson Liebig
A Note of Dissent ....................................................... 108
Mary Cary
"Red" Died Then, Too .................................................. 109
La Vonnie Mainz
My Love Affair ........................................................ 110
Mary Claire Fehring
When Did I First Know? .............................................. 110
Betty Holey

Section 9 Spirit of Wisconsin: A Representative State
At 87, Cameron Embodies Strength, Grace ...................... 111
Eugene Kane
Badger State Games 2000 Basketball Champs .................. 113
Sue Hildahl
A Fan Reflects on Al McGuire, Ron Dayne ......................... 113
And Other Wisconsin Sports Legends
David J. Marcou
An American Unionist in the Heartland ............................ 115
Bridget Flood
My Second Chance ..................................................... 116
Bob Smith
Fog and Idealism ....................................................... 117
Father Robert Cook
Spirit of Arcadia: A Small City with Big-Time Values ...... 118
By Steve Kiedrowski and David J. Marcou,
with assistance from the La Crosse Tribune
Regis Takes the Trophy .............................................. 120
Virgene Nix Oldenburg

Section 10 Reflections
Think on These Things .............................................. 121
Robert A. Floyd
The First of Fifty Chosen Persons: ................................. 123
Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy Onassis
Gordon H. Hampel
Memorable Hymns ...................................................... 124
Betty Holey
Encounter with Mother Teresa ...................................... 125
Led to Letter Exchange, Return to Faith
David J. Marcou
A Peasant's Prayer ..................................................... 126
Carolyn Solverson
Through an Artist's Eyes ............................................. 127
Joyce Crothers
Dylan Thomas in America ............................................. 128
by John Malcolm Brinnin, 2000
Reviewed by David J. Marcou
Vince Lombardi: Always a Packer, Never a Saint ......... 128
David J. Marcou
The Greatest of Saints.
Father Robert Cook
Jesus Christ in the Neighborhood
Father Robert Cook
Ever Wonder About a Picture? ................................. 131
Or, Journalism as Inspiration
David J. Marcou

Section 11 New American Color Photographs

Section 12 New American Book Excerpts
Novel Excerpt from Heirs to the Guardians ........................ 149
Dale Barady
Novel Excerpt from The Strongest Man in the World ......... 152
Steve Terry
Excerpt from Military Novel—
Chapter Two, Part Two
Samuel M. Kay
Hidden Away, but Not Alone ....................................... 156
Ursula Chiu
Book Excerpt: Chapter 1 of My Life ......................... 158
Joyce Crothers
Novel Excerpt from Carrie and the Crazy Quilt .............. 161
Nelda Johnson Liebig
Novel Excerpt from The Dance:
Prologue and Chapter 1
LaAnn Gerber
Novel Excerpt from The Dummy .................................... 165
"Adam Playing at Soldier"
Mary Lou Ryan
German Girls' Catholic School Capers ........................... 167
Ursula Chiu
Book Excerpt from Rosena ......................................... 169
Dance (Stanton) Taylor

Section 13 Innocents, at Home and Abroad
My Kind of Town .................................................... 171
Dona Popovic
The Great Trip—1948, Part Fourteen .............................. 172
Samuel M. Kay
Excerpt from Vital Washington ................................. 174
David J. Marcou
Travel Poems ......................................................... 176
Ty F. Webster
The Experiences of an American Nurse-Midwife ............. 177
During the Kosovo Winter of 2000
Barbara A. Hammes
Mardi Gras Time ...................................................... 181
Marita Mace Honge Orton
Los Angeles: From Village to Metropolis ....................... 182
Carl Liebig
Street Cred: An American Woman's Britain .................... 183
Ann Morrison
Scenic Memories of the South ..................................... 185
Anene Ristow
Escape from Dublin ................................................ 187
Ty F. Webster
Section 14 Holidays and Seasons

Dad's Garden ..................................................... 189
Carolyn Solverson
Cookies in Coffee Cans ................................. 191
Kent K. Hebel
Christmas 1941 .................................................. 193
La Vonne Mainz
Easter Memories .................................................. 194
La Vonne Mainz
An Early Christmas Morning from Long Ago .......... 195
Samuel M. Kay
Dad's Apple Tree .................................................. 196
LuAnn Geber
The Big Flood ...................................................... 198
Donna Harris
Thanksgiving and the Dugout Family .................... 199
Nelda Johnson Liebig
In Anticipation of Fun Day ......................... 200
Ann Morrison
A Happy Valentine .............................................. 200
Yvonne Klinkenberg
Just for a Little While ................................. 201
Yvonne Klinkenberg
Christmas Eves Remembered ..................... 202
James R. Millin

Section 15 Family and Friends

Tribute to Mom ................................................... 203
Doris Kirkeeng
Sisters ................................................................. 205
Dinah Nord
The Story of My Shillelagh ................................ 206
Aggie Tippery
Family Reunion ..................................................... 207
Donna Harris
My Friend Dorothy ............................................. 208
Dinah Nord
Miriam ................................................................. 210
Robert A. Floyd
This Couple Exemplifies Real Family Values ......... 211
David J. Marcou
Jewels from Georgia ........................................ 212
Roberta H. Stevens
Visiting Brooklyn ............................................. 215
Joyce Crothers
Mother and Child Speak .................................... 216
Yvonne Klinkenberg

Section 16 New American Writings for Children

Stella Story, the Storyteller ................................. 217
LuAnn Geber
Lessons I Learned from Aunt Ollie ...................... 218
Father Robert Cook
Superboy ............................................................. 219
Steve Kiedrowski
Whose Birthday? .............................................. 220
Doris Kirkeeng
Snowman ............................................................. 221
Matt Marcou
A Story for Ellie ............................................. 222
Ursula Chiu
Humble, but Famous ...................................... 224
Doris Kirkeeng
Rainbows and Beyond .................................... 225
Nelda Johnson Liebig

Section 17 Life Cycles and Renewal

Afraid of a Miracle ............................................. 231
Roberta H. Stevens
Born on the Fourth of July ............................... 232
Rose Marie Schaper
A Eulogy for Matt Merfeld, a Great Human Being .... 233
By Jerry Severson, husband of Lorraine,
Matt Merfeld's Daughter
Craig Brommerich Remembered ..................... 234
Steve Kiedrowski
Struggling Through a Chemo Day .................... 235
Ursula Chiu
Spirit of La Crosse: Remembering Three Men ....... 236
In Blue Who Gave Their Lives for Us
Daniel J. Marcou, LCPD
Gone but Not Forgotten: A Hero at Inchon .......... 238
Seoul, Chosum Reservoir, and Back at Home
David J. Marcou
Women Who Have Helped Define
the Spirit of America ........................................ 240
Denice Moen
Dealing with Crisis .......................................... 241
Joyce Crothers
Farewell to Dad .................................................. 243
Belinda Weinberg
D-Day ................................................................. 244
Samuel M. Kay
A Noted Military Man: Corporal Mitchell Red Cloud ... 245
Jerry Severson
Steve's Song ....................................................... 246
Deborah L. Ringdahl
Tears Shed by Men ........................................... 247
Father Robert Cook
Seasons of My Mother's Life ............................. 248
In Honor of Verna Voegel
Belinda Weinberg
The Best Valentine Ever ..................................... 250
Danice (Stanton) Taylor

Conclusion: American Unity

The Melting Pot Is Working Again ...................... 251
David J. Marcou

Contributors ......................................................... 254
This book is from the hearts and minds of people who are compelled to write and photograph because they have stories to tell. These stories are not produced for any particular market; they are written and photographed for grandchildren, for friends, and just for the fun of it. *Spirit of America: Heartland Voices, World Views* was not produced from above, by those who have studied the subject extensively; rather, it is produced from within the Heartland by those who have lived productive lives and who are for the most part known only within their communities and their fields of work. I don’t know why there are not more works such as this work.

Anyone who reads this book, any part of this book, is in for a treat. It is a picture of America viewed from as many perspectives as there are contributors to the book. The authors vary in their life experiences as well as in their success as published authors. They are mainly lifelong members of small communities, they are immigrants, they are world travelers, they are professionals and laborers, and they are our local politicians and priests.

This effort has its roots in the ambitions of a writing class held in a senior citizen center in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The class decided, in 1993, to produce a collection of stories, essays, and poems in book form, primarily for the joy of seeing a work in print. They did it because no one told them that they could not. That first book, *Shelley’s Golden Blooms*, sold out in a few days; all one hundred copies! Subsequent classes’ five additional efforts* have steadily improved in quality of writing, design and production. In other words, they have grown to encompass and represent more and more of life. The introduction of photography, and with this book, color photography, has added a texture to the classes’ efforts that demonstrates both the word and picture images that are important to the people who inhabit this part of Heartland America.

The book, seen as one unit, is not so much a story as it is a unified mosaic, pieced together by people who enjoy life and have learned a few lessons. They want to pass on just a little of their joy, and, perhaps, a grain or two of wisdom, to their readers. However, when the mosaic is viewed from a distance, without attempting to analyze each part, it forms a clear picture, regardless of what draws your attention first. Start at the beginning, or begin by looking at the pictures, or choose a topic of interest. Some of the titles will strike you well, others may not—but the book would not be complete without all of the contributions we gladly present for you, the reader, to enjoy.

Come with us now, and explore the *Spirit of America*, in writing and photography.

Being an American begins with the soil—earth, dirt, and clay. In fact, the Book of Genesis says, “The Lord God formed man out of the clay of the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life.” Clay has been an essential ingredient in the making of pottery for thousands of years. The quality of the pottery depends on many things: the wheel, the water, the kiln, the heat—and, of course, the clay and the potter. If one of them fails, they all fail. If they unite and succeed, great beauty and utility are born.

I come from the clay deposited by the glacier that carved the Mississippi River Valley. My parents were formed from Wisconsin clay—my mother, from Ontario, my father, from Mauston. My grandparents were formed from the agricultural clay of Vernon and Juneau counties. When it was my turn to have life breathed into me, I made my life debut in 1925 and automatically achieved U.S. citizenship. Consciousness took root sometime in my third or fourth year. I soon located myself in the context of a family—a unit of five people. As the youngest child, I slowly made sense of the world outside my home. Each American has a parallel experience.

The framework of houses, sidewalks, lawns, streets, stores, automobiles, money, streetlights and people defined my city. Then there was open land, for growing crops and herding animals, i.e., the farm. Being an American means you are from either farm or city.

Etched into my memory, as deeply as acid into glass, was an economic phrase: “The Depression.” Everyone talked about it. The word “Hooverville,” with its connotation of tarpaper shacks for the homeless, was once a key part of the American vocabulary. There are still rich, poor, and people in-between in this country.

I learned that Washington is a person, a city, and a state. Being an American means having a connection to George and Martha, our first presidential couple. The District of Columbia is where each “first family” lives. Two singular buildings there are the Capitol and the White House, to which we are mystically connected. Herbert Hoover was the first president I remember. His wife, Lou Henry Hoover, seemed practically anonymous then. The state of Washington is in the Northwest, touching the Pacific Ocean.

At breakfast in 1932, my father announced with sadness, “Knute Rockne, Notre Dame’s football coach, died in a plane crash in the Rocky Mountains.” Being an American also means having a connection to celebrities, as well as mountain ranges, western deserts, the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, John Dillinger,
the Gulf of Mexico, New York City, the Mississippi River, and periodic tragedy and triumph.

Public and parochial schools, and Congregational, Methodist, Lutheran, and Catholic churches, are part of the American checkerboard; so, also, are Jewish synagogues and Muslim mosques as well as the places of worship of many other denominations and religions. The year you graduated from high school and the church where you were confirmed are tattooed into your skin.

Technical schools, colleges and universities are facts of educational life, just as grade, middle, and high schools are. Every American relates to a state capital. Mine was, and is, Madison. “Fighting Bob” La Follette and the Progressive Party challenged both Republicans and Democrats.

A river is a place to swim, to fish, to boat. A canoe or a bicycle brings adventure. We remember where we learned to swim, the first fish we caught, our first bicycle, ... when we got our driver’s license. An automobile offers liberating transportation. Today you may be a fan of Ford, General Motors, or Chrysler. Earlier generations pledged loyalty to Packard, Studebaker, Hudson, or Kissel. Obtaining a driver’s license brings with it both new freedom and the soaring cost of insurance.

Movies have long been the mechanism of escape, tears, and laughter. Jean Harlow, Clark Gable, John Wayne, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, the Marx Brothers, Marilyn Monroe, Gene Kelly, Paul Newman, Clint Eastwood, Meryl Streep, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Julia Roberts, and Brad Pitt bridge more than sixty years of Hollywood memories and magic. Octogenarians recall vaudeville. Meanwhile, radio has meant Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Burns and Allen, Bing Crosby, Ma Perkins, Frank Sinatra and Britney Spears. Baby Boomers saw the advent of television and I Love Lucy. “I Like Ike” buttons vaulted Dwight D. Eisenhower and Mamie into the White House. November 22, 1963, is the day a young president perished. Oswald and Ruby dominated headlines, and America’s adolescence died with the burial of John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Vietnam is a memory we wish to forget, but cannot. Kent State, flower children, “Burn Your Bra,” and “Smoke Pot,” were part of the 1960s. Martin Luther King Jr. pricked our collective conscience as he proclaimed, “I have a dream.” The blind spot in our examination of conscience is the sin of racism. Black and white really need each other; we should have learned that from Abraham Lincoln 140 years ago. To be a legitimate American is to confess racism.

The revelation of the Watergate scandal and the resignation of Richard Nixon were days of American embarrassment. Vince Lombardi symbolized the desire for excellence and the joy of victory. Every American wants to own his or her own home, but now the desire for “a cabin on a lake” emerges.

The 1980s and ’90s saw an explosion of computers, the Internet and wireless phones. No American is untouched by electronic impulses, and satellites are still important, though less visible than they once were. The miracle of the light bulb has been multiplied exponentially into instant intimacy with anyone anywhere in the world. The global economy is self-explanatory. The interface is computer-ese.

The World Series is the culmination of the baseball season. One can be a National League or an American League fan. If you were raised in Wisconsin more years ago than I’d like to admit, the legendary radio voice of Bob Elsen brought you the romance of the Chicago White Sox or Cubs, and Blaine Walsh brought you the Milwaukee Braves. Later generations have shifted their loyalty to the Milwaukee Brewers or Minnesota Twins.

Auto racing draws more fans than any other spectator sport. The Indy 500, the Firecracker Four Hundred, Winston Salem stock car and drag strip, and the Daytona 500 are the lexicon of that industry. Darryl Petty, Bobby LaBonte and Dale Earnhart are the saints of the oval track.

Autumn is football season. High school, college, university and professional teams dominate the sports pages from September to January. At age ten, I saw the Green Bay Packers play the Detroit Lions. Today, many Americans attend some kind of party on Super Bowl Sunday.

Remember the Hindenburg? It burned and crashed in Lakehurst, New Jersey, in 1937, and Americans in the forty-eight states relived the inferno during a newsreel at a cinema. And Americans age seventy and older remember where they were on December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor Day. President Franklin D. Roosevelt called it “a day that will live in infamy.” He asked a joint session of Congress for a declaration of war against Germany and Japan. Every American was represented in FDR.

Twenty million men and women served in the armed services then, and an equal number worked in war plants, endured rationing with a smile, and won World War II. Victory in Europe and V-J Day were reasons to celebrate, celebrate, celebrate—and visit churches for prayers of thanksgiving. A gold star in a window said that an American was not coming home.

“Give ‘em hell, Harry” was a mantra during a railroad tour of the nation. My first presidential ballot was cast for Harry S. Truman. Americans relish an upset and laughed at the Chicago Tribune headline, “Dewey Defeats Truman.” The GI Bill sent Americans to college by the millions. Postwar glee gave way to the somber, harsh, bitter cold reality of Korea. “The Forgotten War.”

At a hotel, a complimentary copy of USA Today greets patrons today. Sophisticated people read The New York Times, while investors scan the Wall Street Journal. Supermarket headlines say Elvis is alive in Utah and Hitler lives in Argentina. I read the La Crosse Tribune and Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. We all wonder what historians in the year 2050 will make of Bill Clinton’s presidency.
Being an American in my lifetime has meant seeing Alaska and Hawaii added to the family. We advanced from the Monroe Doctrine to world police power. The common denominator is that we all pay some form of tax: sales, real estate, or income.

Gloria Steinem stimulated awareness that women are regularly mistreated. Male machismo is demeaning to the other sex. Equal pay for equal work has not been true for nurses and teachers compared to CEOs. And the glass ceiling does exist. Patriarchy is a sin, but we American men never confess it. An egalitarian society is a hope more than a reality. Yet if Americans can change their attitude on smoking, they may mature regarding the equality of women.

Life in the U.S.A. is a mixture of agony and ecstasy, tears and laughter, joy and sorrow. The warp and woof of all our lives is the tapestry of our common experience. Some Americans live in a Sears Tower penthouse, while others live in a hobo jungle. Still, we are all sailing on a boat together. Some days it's The Good Ship Lollipop; some days, it's the Lusitania; some days the Titanic; and some days, the Queen Mary. We are both a salad and a soup, sometimes even a steak, and, from time to time, we are heated in a melting pot.

We Americans are girls and boys, women and men, who dream dreams and then fall on our faces. We rise again and go to the mountaintop, slip to mid-mountain, or sink into the valley. We are always optimists who think—Tomorrow will be a better day. We even mean it when we say to one another, “Have a good day.” All these things suggest what it means to be an American. All these things contribute to the true Spirit of America.
I’ve enjoyed my apartment overlooking the Black River. It’s a summertime of fun for the boaters, the water skiers, jet skiers, and fishermen, and a pleasurable view for me, as I watch the white gulls soaring and swooping for food in the water, or congregating on the boat docks and sand. I’ve enjoyed watching the mother ducks cater to their ducklings and the little ones’ endless antics as they grow up, as well as each duck family’s evening swim to this side of the river just about dusk. Of course, the bald eagles add to the picturesque scene, as they soar and show off their stately white head and tail feathers.

But winter comes. The boat docks are empty; no sounds of motor boats or jet skis; the previous oft-heard quacking of the ducks is absent; the river has turned to ice, covered with a blanket of white from the fallen snow, quiet and serene. Some days, when the sun shines on the snow, it makes a reflection so bright it makes your eyes squint. Across the river, houses line both sides of Nakomis Avenue, more visible now with the trees barren; beyond them loom the hills of Minnesota, specked with an occasional house along the ridge. The season is changing. The ice is thawing in spots. I wonder if it’s thawed clear through; then I see ripples and I know it has. Oh, there are the ducks waddling around the edges, dipping in the water and parading around on the ice. In a day or so, a few gulls appear, soaring and swooping in the water for food. The edge of the ice resembles a sandbar, now strewn with the debris of dead fish that the gulls feast on. A few days pass and the number of gulls increases; one afternoon I look out and see what must be a hundred or more congregated on the white snow, quiet and still except for an occasional stretching or other movement that...
So large, black and weathered, Hooked bill and taloned feet
Feathered King

The sky it soars and swoops
His wings ride their loops.
Oh King of the feathered.

Dorris Kirkeeng

Awesome bird of prey! The sky it soars and swoops Quenching hunger and thirst, His wings ride their loops.

Majestically, he bows.

High in top branches, Stony cliffs and bricks He lives in large nests Of tangled up sticks.

Magnificent bald eagle So large, black and weathered, Thrilling, wise and regal. Oh King of the feathered.

Folks up here settle for what they get. They have their poetry, of sorts, in names of places—Northcote, Poppleton, Greenbush, Caribou; of people—Ole Olson, Isaac Isaason, Odd Farbo, Eric Ericson, and Casimir Olsonoski. Their fathers farmed this land, and so shall they, though fewer sons remain each year—not even homely daughters stay. Else things up here stay pretty much the same. In the long run, perhaps, the sky alone endures.

Unless it is a dog that trots a field edging town. Up here's easy remembrance: his days before he bore this body in this place. Still running wild, he waits, without knowing it, for the turn, the return, and howls his frozen breath with the ten o’clock siren, at the blank, bald eye of empty sky.
Kayaking or canoeing can take you places where foot trails do not. A river trip requires neither a ticket to buy nor a fee to pay. Paddling is a primitive means of transportation, but it is the best way to get to the wilderness these days.

The outfitter I consulted claims that the kayak model I am considering is “a good choice,” the way choosing good wine earns praise. He is happy to sell it in mid-October, when the season is winding down. The sale is evidence that their business plan is working in downtown La Crosse. The salesman’s enthusiasm, when he learns of my plans to kayak the Mississippi River, seems to represent interest beyond the sale, that is, enthusiasm for a priceless quality—nature’s beauty.

After leaving with my newly purchased kayak, good judgment urges me to stay away from waves caused by high winds and the motorboats common on the Mississippi. Kayaks have low drafts (they’re close to the water), and a spray skirt is needed for a dry trip.

Kayaking the Black River, a fairly large Mississippi tributary, would mean an overnight trip. The La Crosse River is best suited for making a good afternoon trip, and judging from places I’ve spotted from roads and on the bridge going out to the mall, it appears tame enough. The city bus will provide a way back to the car.

A good starting point seems to be the La Crosse River Bike Trail parking lot on Highway B, off Highway 16, but it has no official kayak or canoe access. A wooden bridge that was built over the river and railroad tracks could make for a legal put-in someday.

A well-worn path made by paddlers and fishermen leads to the south bank, but requires walking over train tracks. A residential street on the north side of the river could be a place to park and gain access.

The La Crosse River has high, steep banks, which makes getting a kayak into the water a challenge. I lower it toward the water by a rope tied to its bow. It tilts once the stern reaches the base of the bank, where there is a narrow strip of land. The water's depth does not provide a shallow place for the bottom of the kayak to rest, like a flat sandbar or boat landing, which would help to launch it. The current moves swiftly—at least three miles per hour. The river is really a stream, with the other bank only a stone's throw away.

Getting into the kayak requires as smooth a motion as possible. Once I’m inside, it is stable, and would not tip easily. This afternoon, the river is cool from frosty overnight temperatures. Cool air will pull my body heat away faster when water lands on me, which is inevitable when paddling. To stay warm, I wear gloves, several layers of clothing—including a windbreaker—and especially make sure to wear a hat.

I get the kayak underway, and a little way downstream, the Doppler effect of the traffic over the bridge blends and mingles with the stillness of the tall trees and flood plain. As I round the first bend, I have to stop and get out of the boat—a fallen tree blocks even a kayak from continuing downstream.

On the right side of the channel there is a narrow space where the dead tree is submerged, causing ripples. It seems possible to go over this part, but I could get stuck on the submerged wood, and then the bow would tip into the deep water on the other side and take on a lot of water. Staying in the kayak is unlikely. I J-stroke, C-stroke and draw-stroke up to the riverbank. I stick the paddle into the ground to keep the kayak from going farther.

As I get out, my right foot slips into the water, getting wet up to the ankle. The bank is not only steep; it is slippery. The paddle almost tumbles out of the kayak, but sticks, twigs, and decaying leaves caught on the downed tree keep it near enough to reach. The paddle helps me to climb the bank and stand on the dry forest floor. I pull the kayak to the other side with the bow rope. With one foot wet already, I hope that there will be no more surprises.

Soon the river takes a southerly course. Bluffs provide scenery that is hard to ignore and a joy to view. Floating on the river provides new perspectives of familiar ridges and bluffs, and forested hillsides of oak, maple, cedar, and birch. In the foreground, animal tracks, likely from a raccoon’s nighttime activity, are imprinted on some sand the river has piled up. A weathered lawn chair on top of the bank faces the water. Perhaps there is good fishing along this stretch. On parts of the river, there is some still-green foliage.

As I head south along Highway 16, the sky becomes dramatic. There is a quirky transition between seasons. A few snowflakes fall from gray clouds overhead; those landing on the water vanish. Clouds of different altitudes float in opposite directions. The sun breaks through, lighting the hills and shading the flood plain. To the north, at a great distance, there is blue sky.

As I round a bend in the direction of the Mississippi, I see that the river has pinned a fallen tree against a couple of railroad trestles, and the current has formed a narrow whitewater chute under the bridge. There is little time to react. Going straight ahead and down the chute is the only thing I can do. Rudderling the kayak to the middle is the safest course. Once I’m through, the river swirls and widens. At another bend, it actually flows downhill. It reeds me in a different direction, reorienting the views of bluffs, sky, and river.

Each minute, as I move toward the Mississippi, the bluffs become more distant and less visible, hidden behind trees and the riverbanks. Great blue herons remain river denizens in the post-summer temperatures. Throughout the trip, I spot the creatures a half dozen times. They take to the air, sometimes landing around the next bend or flying out of sight.
Movement on the water’s surface shows a leopard frog, floating, not yet having dug down into the mud to hibernate. It sluggishly dives. I encounter another tree that has fallen into the river. A maze of branches and limbs exit and re-enter the river—a great place for turtles, but I see none today. Getting by requires going from one side of the river to the other. This time, to my relief, it is possible for me to remain in the boat.

Up until this point, the La Crosse River has not been tame. Now it begins to be surrounded by forests and trees instead of marsh. Exquisite stands of vibrant-looking silver maples grow directly ahead on steep hillsides. Leaves that have dropped from them float on the water. The park named for Korean War hero Mitchell Red Cloud is located on one of the hills. In the vicinity of the Causeway and Monitor Street, the impact of civilization on the environment is evident. A tire and an old metal casing of some sort are half buried in the riverbank. With intelligent ecological management, this part of the river could be returned to its natural appearance. Cars pass on the bridges of Lang Drive and Highway 53.

At the north end of Riverside Park, the La Crosse River ends at the Mississippi River. I can get out or go farther. I decide to get out and tie up the kayak until I can retrieve my car. A bus driver permits me to ride the city bus, paddle in hand. Someone asks what the paddle is for. Finally, the bus passes over the La Crosse River, over the alternate reality of nature and wilderness.

**In the Spring**

Robert A. Floyd

**Editor’s Note:** Bob’s unexpected death in May 2001 transformed his love of the growing seasons. In key ways, then, he has transcended all storms, finding eternal spring.

It’s one of those magical summer days when the air is full of the electricity of an approaching thunderstorm. As I sit on the bench at the edge of my garden, I can see the clouds churning in the western sky and faintly hear the rumbling of thunder, still miles away.

I turn back to my garden. The four long, raised beds are exploding with vegetables—radishes, several kinds of lettuce, turnips, kohlrabis, spinach, corn, tomatoes, and many more. Around the edge is a pretty border of marigolds, to hopefully keep the bugs away. Within the beds, there is an occasional patch of bright flowers, just for the heck of it. I don’t even know what they all are, and don’t care, either. The bright colors are just for me, to brighten my spirit and to make me smile as I work in the garden.

I get up and walk through the garden, just enjoying all the life and freshness there is in growing things. I bend down to pull up a weed or two and run my fingers through the dirt while I’m there. Just feeling the dirt in my hands is therapeutic for me. It keeps me in touch with the source of life and makes me feel like I have at least some control over my future.

The thunder is getting louder now as the storm approaches. The clouds are swirling in the sky, and I can see the flashes of lightning off in the distance. The power of the storm is awesome, and I love to watch it, as I did as a boy growing up in Kansas.

I turn back to the garden, and am aware of the gurgling of the small stream that meanders through the garden. The water moves gently through the beds and then down a small waterfall before returning to its source, at the far corner of the garden, to start its journey all over again. The sound of the water is calming to me, even in the face of the approaching storm. It is pleasant to sit and relax by the stream as I read, or just think, or meditate, throughout the warm months. It is soothing, as I work in the garden. It is my therapy.

The clouds swirl more violently now. The thunder is louder, the lightning brighter. I return to the bench at the edge of the garden to watch its final approach and try to predict when the first raindrops will fall. I stay as long as I can, enjoying the storm’s approach, enjoying the power.
of nature, which is now so obvious. And then, even before I thought it would happen, the first drops fall, then more and more, and I have to retreat indoors. But I still turn and watch the storm through the sliding doors as it gathers all its fury and shares a good summer rainfall with us, helping my garden to grow. Here's what I'll do next spring—rebuild my raised beds, add to the stream, complete with waterfall and pool, and plant the whole thing full of vegetables and flowers. Then I'll add another bench to sit on to watch the approaching storms next summer. And I'll smile while I'm working on it, and I'll smile when I'm enjoying it next summer and all the summers to come. And I'll get my hands into the dirt a lot! 

River Stories
Bridget Flood

Tom Benson Sr., of McGregor, Iowa, loves the Mississippi River, and he loves to fish. Benson didn't grow up on the Mississippi, but his father, Leo Benson, kept a boat on the river and fished every weekend. One of Tom Sr.'s earliest memories is of his father telling five-year-old Tom that they were going to the Mississippi to fish the next day. Young Tom was so excited that he dressed for his fishing trip before going to bed and dreamed of fishing all night long.

That excitement for the river life never wore off. Tom Sr., now fifty-four years old, spends most of his free time on the river. “It’s in my blood—my Norwegian heritage. My ancestors were fishermen.” Although Tom Sr. only fishes for pleasure these days, there was a time when he fished commercially, as did his dad, Leo, and his son, Tom Benson Jr.

Recently, Tom Sr. and Tom Jr. recounted some of their river stories. Tom Sr. recalled a harrowing muskrat trapping trip he took with his wife’s brother, Eugene, in 1979. “It was around the eighteenth of November,” said Tom Sr. “We went to the duck reserve by the Guttenberg, Iowa, dam. The channel was partially iced over. Eugene had a homemade wooden airboat with an old sawed-off-ax-handle steering system. This was my first airboat ride.” Going across a slough to get to the main channel, the airboat broke through the ice, and Eugene had to run it wide open to get back up on the ice. Once across the channel, they found the duck reserve iced over. After unloading on an island, Tom Sr. and Eugene each took forty traps and went in different directions. Eugene took the airboat and Tom Sr. went on foot. At one point, while crossing a narrow slough, Tom Sr. broke through the ice. “I felt real fortunate that I didn’t fill my boots full of icy water,” he said. The water came to within half an inch of the top of his hip boots as he pushed through the thin ice to land.

When Tom Sr. was done setting traps, he returned to the appointed meeting place to wait for Eugene. It wasn’t long before he heard the airboat. “It had just come in sight when it shut off. On and off again. I could see him about a quarter mile away, but he wasn’t within shouting distance,” said Tom Sr. The boat seemed to have stalled. Somehow, Tom Sr. had to make it across the thin ice to get to Eugene. He used a spud, an iron bar used to make holes in the ice, to check the depth of the ice at every step. If the spud went through the ice, he changed direction until he found thicker ice. “I spudded all the way across, my knees knocking,” he recalled. When he reached the airboat, he saw that the prop was broken. They were stranded!

Tom Sr. and Eugene spudded another hundred yards across thin ice to the island where they had unloaded their equipment, and where they now had to camp for the night. Tom Sr. smiled as he said, “I decided it was a good night to try a muskrat for dinner. I chose a small one. I skinned him and gutted him, and put him on a stick and roasted him. A little gamey, but tender.”

Just before full dark, an airboat approached. Eugene saw that it was the son of his most hated enemy, and picked up his rifle. The airboat sped by as Tom Sr. shouted to the driver, “At least call Eugene’s (L to R) Tom Benson Jr. and Tom Benson Sr. on Iowa’s Pike’s Peak, 2001. At confluence of Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers, McGregor, IA (By Bridget Flood).
wife and tell her where we're at!’ The man never made the call. The next morning, the same airboat went by. This time Eugene's enemy was sitting up front with a rifle across his knees. "I thought it was gonna be a shoot-out. I yelled at Eugene, 'Don't you dare pick up that damned rifle!'" said Tom Sr. "Why, I was afraid to so much as pick my nose!" He then explained that Eugene and his enemy had argued over trap lines, and, in the not-too-distant past, shooting someone who messed with your trap lines was considered justifiable homicide.

Eventually, Tom Sr. and Eugene were able to push their airboat over the ice until they hit open water. The wind and current were such that they thought they could pole the airboat to the dam, provided they could keep it from hitting the ice on either side. The boat was top-heavy and could have tipped easily if it hit the ice sideways. Tom Sr. poled and Eugene broke ice where necessary. Soon the pole couldn't touch the bottom, and the boat was taking on water. Tom Sr. whittled furiously to make plugs for the holes from the branch he was using to pole. Finally, they reached the dam, without tipping or sinking. Eugene picked up the broken prop, and they climbed over the fence and walked across the dam to land. "Now that was an adventure," concluded Tom Sr.

When Tom Sr. was a teenager, Leo took the family camping on the Mississippi River almost every summer weekend. The tradition continued with Tom Sr.'s family. Now, the extended family holds two or three Benson Family Camping Weekends each year. Tom Sr., his brother, Mark Benson, their wives, friends, children, and their children's spouses and friends are all invited. Usually fifteen to twenty people with several boats, tents, and dogs, spend the weekend on an island or sandbar.

Tom Jr. and his wife, Julie Benson, proudly display a white rag on a small branch planted in their front yard. It's the Benson fishing contest flag and it declares that they are the reigning champs. The campout fishing contest is another family tradition. The campers arrange themselves in teams. The teams plan fishing strategy, and then fish from 6 A.M. until 4 P.M. The competition for the five-dollar prize is fierce. The family has devised a point system for different fish, ranging from five points for the biggest fish to half a point for a sheephead. There are even fish-off rules, in case of a tie.

Tom Jr. explained how they won the last contest of the season. "We went to Grass Lake, across from the Kwik Star in McGregor. It's great for ice fishing, but there are too many lily pads to fish there in the summer." However, they thought the wind might be just right to create some open spots, so Tom Jr. and Julie pulled up their motor and drifted until they started catching fish. Then they dropped anchor and threw their lines into open areas. Twice, Julie insisted on going to the Kwik Star to use the bathroom—and Tom Jr. resented it mightily! Still, by 3:30 P.M., they had a bucketful of fish. "We were afraid it wouldn't be enough," said Tom Jr., "but we had fished as hard as we could, and it was time to head in." When they met back at the sandbar, Mark and Tom Sr. seemed pretty confident, as both had caught some big fish. Tom Jr. and Julie let them brag until they opened their own bucket of fish. Tom Jr. said, "Then everyone else just moaned. They didn't even bother to count fish—we won."

The Bensons tell their river stories, good and bad, with relish. The river plainly has a hold on them. Three generations have attempted to make their living by fishing, trapping, or clamming. All of the extended family still takes great pleasure in Mississippi River recreation. The river shapes their lives. Perhaps it's as Tom Sr. supposes: Generations of Bensons made their lives by the seas or on the fjords of Norway. Perhaps, after all, life on the water is in their blood.

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A Cricket's Call

Marjorie Walters

A cricket called tonight,
Inviting winter's sheets so cool;
He seemed to call the end of autumn,
From somewhere down by the crystal pool.

It was a sad and whimsical call,
Lonely without the bullfrog's song,
Or even the hooting of the owl.
It was the promise of winter, coming on.

It seemed even the trickle of the brook
Sounded, somehow, somewhat colder,
That in the pass of the nights,
The year, and I, was growing older.

Then he paused, listening for a brother,
When again the cricket lent his cry,
Into the black deserted night,
Calling out for a kindred soul.

So he called, and called again,
From behind some log or stone,
A single call into the silence,
After the rest of fall had flown.

Such a sad and lonely call,
Of a wandering spirit lost;
Calling out for a kindred soul,
Who was left after the killing frost.

So, I listened to the cricket
As he sang his one last song;
I knew he would be remembered
When winter days grew cold and long.

And when the nights go on forever,
Then into my mind will creep—
Somehow, I'll hear the cricket's call,
From somewhere in my sleep.
Life on the Mississippi, by Mark Twain, published in 1874, is a treasury of information on the great river. “It discharges three times as much water as the St. Lawrence,” Twain wrote, “twenty-five times as much as the Rhine, and three hundred and thirty-eight times as much as the Thames.

“No other river has so vast a drainage basin; it draws its water supply from twenty-eight states and territories, from Delaware, on the Atlantic seaboard, and from all the country between that and Idaho on the Pacific slope—a spread of forty-five degrees of longitude.”

The Mississippi River forms the western border of the Diocese of La Crosse, running 108.6 miles from Prescott to Prairie du Chien, from the St. Croix to the Wisconsin. Fifty years ago, a series of dams was constructed on the Mississippi to ensure a nine-foot navigation channel.

Father Tom Garthwaite, Steve Kiedrowski and I enter the Mississippi at 1:30 P.M. at Alma on July 5. We plan to canoe to Fountain City. The Alma Dam is 753 miles north of the Ohio River. Last year, three thousand towboats with barges and twenty-five hundred sports boats locked through the dam.

Alma has a Swiss flavor, increasingly attractive to artists and tourists. The dam is a mighty colossus. Below us, Dairyland Power has a giant energy plant. Two seven hundred-foot smokestacks soar skyward. The height allows mechanical scrubbers to purify emissions.

A strong south wind confronts us as we turn downstream toward buoys marking the channel. Heading toward us is a menacing barge. To avoid a collision, we must decide if it carries coal for Dairyland or will correct course and continue upstream. It heads for the dock. We pass on the left and note the towboat name, Bernard F.

Hernando de Soto, accompanied by Spanish priests and soldiers, was the first European to see the Mississippi, in 1542. La Salle explored the river for France in 1679. La Salle commissioned Father Hennepin to explore north, from where the Missouri enters the Mississippi, and La Salle went south. Hennepin was the first European to sight these magnificent bluffs, on his way to St. Anthony Falls, fifty miles upriver. Louis Joliet and Father Marquette entered the Mississippi from the Wisconsin River in 1673 and named it “The River of the Immaculate Conception.”

Numerous pleasure craft, luxurious cruisers, sleek speedboats, fishing scows, and slow houseboats carry sailors seeking sun, wind, and sand this July 4th weekend. With Steve in the stern, Tom in the middle and me in the bow, we stroke hard to make headway. Progress is slow because of the wind and minimal current. Waves of six to eight inches are constant. To avoid capsizing, we turn directly into twelve-inch
wakes created by large boats. Our gunnels ride close to
the water. There is excitement in experiencing the
danger of a small canoe in large waters.

In 1853, Father Lucian Galtier, pastor of St.
Gabriel's in Prairie du Chien, traveled these waters to
serve Catholics in western Wisconsin. The east side of
the river was his parish. Mark Twain described the
scenery in 1870: "And next we glide through silver
waters, amid lovely and stupendous aspects of nature
that attune our hearts to adoring admiration, about
twelve miles, and strike Mount Vernon, six hundred
feet high . . . You'll find scenery between here and St.
Paul that can give the Hudson points."

At 3 P.M., we take a break on a sandbar. Five boats, six
tents and twenty people are celebrating an annual
rendezvous. They are from Hudson, Mondovi,
Stillwater, and Menomonie. The soda from our cooler is
delicious. We realize we are averaging two, rather than
four, miles per hour. This island is three miles long.

Pushing downstream, we sight a graceful blue
heron. A hawk soars a hundred feet above us. Power
boats pull passengers in inner tubes. A mile marker
reads 749.4. We are behind schedule. Every tenth of a
mile is measured so navigators know their exact
position north from Cairo, Illinois.

Buffalo City is a mile east, separated by islands and
shallow water. In Mark Twain's day, the channel ran
in front of Buffalo City. The adjacent prairie was ideal for
a sizeable city, but the river has a mind of its own, and
changed course. We sight the superstructure of a large
dredge and high beach. By 5 P.M., we dock, swim, and
share a last Pepsi.

Huge iron pipes pull sand from the bottom and
create a clean, high island with a quiet interior lagoon
perfect for swimming. The diesel engines on the
dredges are silent. A couple who are camping share a
map. We are eight miles from Dam 5, far behind
schedule. Wind in our face and no current are the
problem.

We thrill at a colony of long-legged snowy white
egrets in shallow water. Seagulls mingle with the
egrets, soar and fish. The channel swings sharply
toward Minnesota and Minneiska. We stroke hard
through shallow water and weeds. The river widens
into a huge lake. The waves are treacherous. By 6:30,
we are below Minneiska, three miles from the dam
and four hours from Fountain City. The sky is
darkening. We are tired from five hours of steady
paddling. It is time to hitch a ride.

A thirty-foot cabin cruiser picks us up. Mr. and Mrs.
Don Wallace, from Madison, wonder at our judgment.
Trailing our canoe, they cut speed and radio to the
dam. The lockmaster says nine thousand cubic feet of
water per second is going through the spillways. A year
ago, it was thirty thousand cubic feet, and some years
as much as eighty thousand cubic feet flow on July 5.
We had planned on nineteen miles in six hours, but
have paddled only twelve. Sparse rain up north means
sparse current.

The lock drops us nine feet. Beaching our canoe at
Bass Camp, we speed toward Fountain City. Mark Twain
wrote, "Ten miles above Winona we come to Fountain
City, nestling sweetly at the feet of cliffs that lift their
awful fronts, Jove-like, toward the blue depths of
heaven, bathing them in virgin atmosphere that have
known no other contact save that of angels' wings."

The Fit Survive
Robert A. Floyd

We had just moved to our seven-acre "farm" in
Reno, Minnesota, in November of 1998, when I
saw an ad in the newspaper for stewing hens in La
Crescent for fifty cents apiece. Thinking we could
certainly make use of a few hens, we checked out the
ad that weekend.

I was surprised to discover that there is an egg-
house at the edge of La Crescent, and every fall, they
sell off their hens and replace them with new hens. It
seems that the hens lay best during their first year of
life, so the egg-house keeps getting new ones every
year. They sell as many as they can to local citizens;
then, the rest are wholesaled to Campbell's to use in
their soups. Since we also had a henhouse and run at
our place in the country, we decided to get a dozen or
so hens so we could have a few fresh eggs as well as an
occasional stewing hen for dinner.

The egg factory gave us a couple of gunny sacks,
and I think we ended up buying eighteen hens for $9.
They were the mangiest looking birds I'd ever seen—
missing most of the feathers around their necks, their
beaks cut off, living six hens to a wire cage about two
feet by three feet, which was not even tall enough for
them to stand upright. They were fed by a trough
along one side of the cage, and the wire floor sloped
slightly to the other side so the eggs would roll down
into a wire catch-basket on the other side. They had a
look of fear—or surprise, or insanity—in their eyes. It
was hard to describe.

We took our newly purchased farm animals home
(nine to a sack) and introduced them to their new
home in the henhouse. They wandered around, acting
as if they didn't know what they were supposed to do
next. Wanting to give them a real taste of freedom, I
opened a little door that led to the outdoor run, but
had to push them outside since they didn't know about
outdoor runs. It was late afternoon, so I left them some
food and went inside to do some other chores.

When I went outside the next morning, I was
surprised to find that it had snowed during the night,
and the temperature was in the teens. I went out to the
henhouse, and there were all the hens, huddled
together outside, in the run! Most of them had
managed to keep warm, but five of them had frozen to
death during the night. I climbed into the run and
pushed all of them back up the ramp into the
henhouse, closed the door to the run, and removed
the dead chickens for burial.

At first, I thought Boy, these are the dumbest chickens
I’ve ever seen! But as I thought more about it, I realized
that all they had ever known in their lives were wire
cages. They didn’t know about nests with straw, or a
henhouse to run around in, or ramps to go out and
back in, or how to scratch in the dirt or the straw, or
how to cope with cold weather—in short, they didn’t
know how to be chickens!

Not knowing anything about training chickens, I
decided to just keep the door to the outdoor run
closed for a while and let them get accustomed to the
henhouse. I wasn’t sure how I was going to teach them
to sleep on the roosts and lay eggs in the nests, but
amazingly, they figured it out for themselves very
quickly. I also left a little extra straw on the floor and
sprinkled some food on the straw, in addition to what
I put in their feed trough. In just a day or so, they were
scratching around in the straw to get the extra food,
and were laying eggs in the nests and sleeping on the
roosts, clucking contentedly!

A few days later, I threw some straw into the
outside run, threw some food on the straw, and
opened the door to the run. I let them figure out for
themselves how to get down the ramp and out into
the run, hoping they would also remember to go back
inside in the evening. Well, I don’t know how they
accomplished all this learning so quickly, but they
came out, scratched around in the straw, and went
back inside to lay their eggs and to sleep. It was plenty
warm in the henhouse, and we didn’t lose any more
hens all winter.

We had thirteen hens, and while we didn’t get
thirteen eggs a day, we did get eight to ten eggs a day,
which gave us some to sell to neighbors so we could
buy more food for the hens. For very little labor, then,
we essentially got free eggs for another year and a half.
The second spring, we decided to get some new chicks,
and gradually put the mature hens into the freezer.

People call them “dumb clucks,” but actually our
hens turned out to be quite smart after they were given
a chance to be real chickens rather than slave labor in
an overcrowded wire cage! If more people saw how
laying hens were treated, I predict the sale of eggs
would fall off drastically in protest, as well it should.
When you raise them with a little love and care, you
don’t need to keep them in cages, or cut their beaks, or
feed them antibiotics, or get rid of them after their
peak laying year. But maybe that’s just nostalgia for
another time and way of life. But at least, go to your
local county fair next summer and look at the chickens
on display. Majestic birds, of all colors, with beautiful
plumage, strutting around like they owned the place—
and certainly not dumb clucks! (Rhode Island Reds are
my favorite!)
Trempealeau River, Rich in Beauty and History
Father Bernard M. McGarty

Reprinted from Biking and Canoeing in Western Wisconsin, by Father Bernard M. McGarty, Powers Press, 1993, with the author’s permission.

In the rich treasure trove of Wisconsin waterways, the Trempealeau River is an underpublicized and underutilized gem. Even local champions of the outdoors are little acquainted with the stream named for “the mountain with its feet in the water.” Steve Kiedrowski, a Times Review cartoonist, accompanied me on this voyage. We launch our canoe at the park at Dodge, a town with a population of 399, which is famous for its dance hall and taverns. It is 3 P.M. Mud oozes over our shoe-tops, a result of last night’s overabundant rain.

The Trempealeau River is ten yards wide, hidden by a web of trees and thick grass. We judge the current at three to four miles per hour, accelerated and colored brown by upstream water. The temperature is in the humid seventies, and the sun is screened by leaden clouds—an ideal situation for mosquitoes, who will discover us gradually.

Steve grew up in Centerville and now lives in Trempealeau, but this is his maiden voyage on this river. I feel therapeutic ambiance in the secluded stream, verdant woods, and darting bluebirds. As we move in rhythm with nature, I feel embraced by elm, oak and spruce, bending toward us. A redheaded woodpecker sends a message in dot-dash staccato.

It is a wonder that pristine wilderness is so proximate to mechanized society. The stillness is broken by the purr of a motor as a native of Dodge glides upstream in a shallow-draft duck boat. Steve and I discuss curling, a sport he pursued during high school. Rinks at Galesville and Centerville were started by Scottish highlanders. We review Wisconsin rinks, particularly Summerville of Superior, which won the Silver Broom World Championship twice.

A few drops of rain fall, and horseflies sample my blood. Into our second hour, we sight a brood of wood ducks. The mother crosses the stream to draw attention away from her young. A bird with a five-foot wingspan rises slowly ahead of us—and then disappears. Was it an eagle? No, we decide, probably a dark-feathered crane. Toward the end of our second hour, we see County Trunk P on our east bank, in Buffalo County. We duck to pass under a primitive bridge not shown on any map. On the west bank, the Green Bay and Western tracks run parallel to us, then cross our waterway. A fisherman tells us we are not far from the Highway 34-54 bridge. The riverbanks flatten at an area appropriately named Marshland.

Our immediate goal is the National Wildlife Refuge. We paddle fast on a half-mile straightaway marked by a ribbon of reflecting light. A white sign with black letters and a mallard logo informs us that we are in the wildlife sanctuary. The mallard resembles the blue goose of Republic Airlines. The National Wildlife Refuge comprises more than six thousand acres of marsh, pools and islands. In the last century, the Delta Fish and Fur Farm formed the nucleus of this paradise. When hard times occurred in the 1920s and ’30s, the Delta sold private memberships to duck hunters. The position on the Mississippi flyway was a vantage point for fantastic shooting.

An iron bridge provides automobile access to the refuge ecosystems. Walking and driving trails offer opportunities to sight birds and animals. Twenty-three percent of the refuge is open water, forty-five percent is marsh and aquatic vegetation, six percent is upland shrubs and forest, six percent is grassland, nine percent is wetland meadows, and eleven percent is bottomland forest.

An earthen dike prevents the Trempealeau River from mingling with backwaters of the Mississippi. Who built this long canal—the Corps of Engineers, the Delta Company, or a railroad? The answer is elusive. We get out of our canoe near a newly-built lock. A large, placid lake, called Pool A, stretches before us. A crane stands in shallow water.

As we return to our canoe, boaters and fisherfolk indicate that we are near the “Father of Waters.” The earthen dike stretches to Trempealeau Mountain, which French voyageurs named for its abrupt rise out of the Mississippi, “soaking its feet in the water.” Steve and I vow to hike this intriguing hill someday. The Burlington Northern dike connects mountain and
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Editor's Note: These excerpts have been reprinted, and composed into one story, from the Blufflands Design Manual: Winona County/La Crescent Area Common Visions Project, whose author and photographer is Robert J. Hurt, with Korelle Hendee. That book's publication was made possible by an appropriation from the Minnesota Legislature, M L 1995, Ch. 220, Sec. 19, Subd. 5(d), as recommended by the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, and the Future Resources Fund, and additional funding from the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance. The author and the State of Minnesota have given permission for the republication of this material.

The Land

The Blufflands Region, which includes southeastern Minnesota, southwestern Wisconsin, northeastern Iowa, and northwestern Illinois, holds one of the most beautiful and awe-inspiring natural landscapes of the Midwest, if not the entire country. The region consists of a rugged, ancient setting of limestone bluffs, lush vegetation, steep hillsides, and an intricate maze of deep valleys and coldwater trout streams. For millions of years environmental forces have transformed this region, which was once at the bottom of a warm, shallow sea, into its present captivating landscape of endless hills, towering bluffs, and alluring valleys.

The last glacial period, which ended ten thousand years ago, did not cover this land, but rather encircled most of it with its massive ice sheets. While glaciers scraped and flattened the rest of the Midwest, the old river valleys carved deeper into the blufflands landscape. When the climate warmed, the surrounding glacial meltwaters pierced the Blufflands Region, carving the existing valleys even deeper, and accentuating the current rhythmic succession of bluffs, valleys, and streams that ultimately weave their way to the Mississippi River Valley.

The fact that the most recent glacial advance missed the blufflands not only affected the geology and landforms of this region, but it also allowed for the creation of a unique biological setting. The combination of a highly varied topography, along with this area's being a refuge during the Ice Age, accounts for the existence of more than one hundred rare native plant and animal species. These plants and animals require very specific natural habitats for their survival, and in the past, the blufflands setting has accommodated them well. The unique geological landscape is complemented by a teeming diversity of natural communities.

One of the unique and uncommon natural communities occupying this land is located within the cool, moist microclimate of algific talus slopes. As a result of deep rock fissures and year-round ice caves, continuous cold air currents exit the bottom of certain blufflands slopes, creating an environment that seldom exceeds sixty-one degrees Fahrenheit in the summer. This delicate microclimate supports truly rare species of plants and snails.

A tour of the blufflands landscape in the early 1800s would have revealed a variety of other native plant communities. The floodplain forests found in the backwaters of the Mississippi River, along with marshes and sloughs, are important parts of the wetland complex. These systems provide excess water storage during periods of high water and flooding and provide habitat for frogs, toads, birds, mammals, and other creatures. The steep slopes and deep valleys of the blufflands created fast-moving coldwater streams, providing habitat for a variety of different frogs, toads, fish, birds, and mammals. The jagged rock outcroppings of the bluffs and the Mississippi River itself provide roosting sites and migratory routes for numerous species of birds.

Moving up the slopes, you would have found dry oak savannas occurring on the south-facing slopes of Minnesota's blufflands landscapes, and mesic (moderately moist) oak savannas on the blufftops. Oak savannas are a unique natural community that occur on the prairie/forest border, resulting in a mixture of a woodland and prairie species. A typical oak savanna has scattered oak trees, with prairie grasses and broad-leaved flowering plants in the understory. These natural communities were maintained by fires and large herds of grazing and
browsing animals. The dry bluff prairie systems, which occurred on the tops and southwest-facing slopes of some bluffs, were also maintained by periodic fires. Together, the remaining savannas and bluff prairies still provide habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals. A summer walk through one of these communities would provide you with a colorful display of activity.

In addition to the oak savannas and bluff prairies found throughout the blufflands landscape, maple-basswood forests are found on the cool, moist, northeast-facing slopes. These forests were historically protected from fires by natural boundaries like cliffs, rivers, and wetlands. In the spring months, the maple-basswood forests harbor wonderful displays of wildflowers. Mesic oak forests are also found on the cooler north-to northeast-facing bluffland slopes.

Today, the natural communities of the blufflands landscape are threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation. Less than ten percent of the natural communities that historically occurred within the blufflands landscape still remain. Less than one percent of the prairie and oak savanna systems remain. These natural communities are of critical importance to the animals and plants that depend on them. To improve the human/nature relationship in the region, it's crucial to encourage preservation of key habitat to support wildlife and plant communities and to provide excellent scenery, compatible recreational opportunities, economic opportunities, and a variety of lifestyles for the people.

Over time, the Blufflands Region has experienced a rich cultural heritage. About eight thousand years ago, after the retreat of the last glacial movement, the earliest people to reach the blufflands did so by migrating northward to the region. Woodland cultures known for their pottery and effigy mounds occupied the Mississippi River Valley between one thousand and three thousand years ago. Since that time and into the 1800s, Mississippian groups lived along the river’s terraces growing corn, squash, beans and tobacco. Although these early cultures did make some changes to the land, they did little to modify it in an extensive or permanent way.

In the mid-1850s, the Southeastern Minnesota Blufflands Region was settled by the first Europeans. Mississippi riverboats provided passage for the soon-to-be town founders, merchants, farmers, blacksmiths, road builders, preachers, and school teachers, who, together, established communities and shaped the rural countryside. Over a 150-year period, as an outgrowth of necessity, considerable changes were made to the land. Cities and small towns were established as places of commerce, and the countryside, for the most part, was converted to agricultural uses.

Until recently, the pattern of settlement within the blufflands landscape was similar to traditional early American growth patterns elsewhere. Compact settlements of small towns and somewhat larger cities were established as self-contained locations of trade,
habitation, social interaction, education, and worship. At the same time, the natural landscape was being modified for the purpose of growing crops and raising livestock. Towns were typically located at convenient locations, so that agricultural products easily obtainable across the landscape. They provided the necessary goods and services for farm families and became a source of distribution for farm products. Farmers domesticated much of the land and established their rural homesteads, while townspeople established centers for commerce, civic facilities, and residential neighborhoods. A clear distinction, however, was drawn between the physical boundaries of towns and the rural countryside.

As time passed, modifications to the rural lands were made in a complementary manner to the blufflands’ hilly terrain. This was not always the case, though, as can be seen in the Whitewater Valley around the community of Beaver. Some of the early farming practices used on the steep hillsides and along the ridgetops caused excessive soil erosion. These land modifications turned out to be extremely destructive to the natural environment, to local farms, and to the community of Beaver itself. Topsoil, sand, and clay that were washed off the eroded hillsides due to poor land management practices covered parts of Beaver, as well as surrounding farmsteads and fields, to a depth of up to twenty feet.

As early farmers, along with government officials, learned more about farming in the hilly landscapes, they developed contour tillage, strip-cropping, terracing, no-till, pasture rotation, woodland management, and other land management techniques, which helped protect the valuable soils, water, vegetation, fish, and wildlife. As a result of these lessons learned, many of the steeper hillsides of the blufflands landscape have remained undisturbed, and contour tillage and strip-cropping of the less severe slopes has resulted in a tranquil countryside of intriguing beauty.

Meanwhile, as new communities were being created, it was not only the day-to-day functional needs that determined the design and layout of the town fabric. In addition, architectural craftsmanship, a sense of pride, a desire for pleasant surroundings, an opportunity for social interaction, and a feeling of community spirit all had a positive influence on the design and creation of early communities. The town fathers carefully planned the street layouts, neighborhood parks, central focal-point locations for commercial and civic buildings. The results included conveniently located, thriving downtown centers, tree-lined residential neighborhoods, corner grocery stores, serene community parks and green spaces, churches, schools, historic courthouses, and mills.

The small towns and cities of the Blufflands Region were laid out in a compact, functional, and pleasant design. Trees were planted, gardens were established, public and private improvements were carefully made, and slowly the early communities became places of pride, beauty, community spirit, citizen interaction, and flourishing trade. These congenial traditional communities can serve as excellent models for future development as the Blufflands Region continues to experience new growth and creative progress.
“Evening’s Ebb,” Trempealeau Bay, Perrot Park, WI
(By Steve Kiedrowski)
The American Mosaic

Top left: Indian maiden dancing at powwow, 1990s. (By David Oelfke).

Top center: The wedding day of Adolph and Christina Goetz Kress, who came from a village in Bavaria to Summit Ridge, Monroe County, Wisconsin. They were married at Norwalk, Wisconsin, on November 3, 1881. Adolph began Kress Memorials, which is still in existence, in Tomah, Wisconsin. (Courtesy of Thomas Kress, their great-grandson).

Top right: Ingvold Hagemo soon after arrival in America. (Courtesy of Helen Bolterman, his daughter).

Bottom left: Hmong theatre students at Logan High School, 1990-94. La Crosse, WI (By David J. Marcou).

Bottom right: (Clockwise, starting at right) John Medinger; his wife, Dee; their son, Jonathan; and their daughter, Emily; 2000-2001. La Crosse, WI (Courtesy of Mayor John Medinger).
Ray Lowe of rural Trempealeau has roots that run deep into the history of this land. Ray remembers his ancestors’ past with pride.

“I still have the log cabin my grandfather, George Lowe, built in 1895. I moved it log by log from Black River Falls to my backyard in Trempealeau,” said Ray.

He has decorated the inside much the way his ancestors would have at the turn of the century.

“Sometimes in the winter, I come out to the old cabin and fire up the stove, relax and just remember,” he said.

Ray’s own retrospective is one of bravery and honor.

Born in 1923 near Valley Junction, Wisconsin, Ray grew up near Black River Falls and went to the Indian elementary school in Tomah. The school was for all Indian tribes. The building is now the Veterans Hospital.

“We had to wear uniforms when we went there,” said Ray.

For seventh and eighth grade, he went to a Winnebago school in Neilsville, Wisconsin, called the Hochungra Indian School. He graduated from Black River Falls Public High School in 1942.

In 1943 Ray enlisted in the Army and saw combat in Europe. He drove a tank into the famous Battle of the Bulge in Germany. He fought in three major conflicts in World War II. Ray served in the Army until 1946. In 1956 he joined the National Guard and served a total of 30 years.

During this time, he drove a truck for Gateway Transportation of La Crosse. After 33 years, he retired in 1983.

In 1947 he married Lorraine Nemitz of Alma Center, Wisconsin. They settled in Trempealeau in 1957, and have three children: Sherri, Peggy and Jeff.

Lorraine had a special gift for spotting unusual antiques. Their home and yard are a veritable museum of collectibles, old metal advertising signs, relic gasoline pumps and archaic autos.

Visitors to the Lowe household are awed by the number of antiques in their home. Getting to the television set, which was inside an ancient stove, required one to snake though the living room.

Ray said, “Lorraine loved antiques from the time she was a little girl. She had an eye for things that people didn’t even think twice about keeping.”

Ray and Lorraine Lowe were the two local authorities on antiques in the Trempealeau area. They were inseparable, until, after a ten-year battle with heart disease, she died in 1999.

“That was real hard. Lorraine was my life,” Ray said softly.

After Lorraine’s death, Ray became even more active in his Indian traditions. Since 1988, he has worked in Wisconsin Dells as a ceremonial chief, public relations person and dancer.

“I would dance out and lead the dance group onto the stage in front of the audience. I also would greet the people as they came in,” said Ray.

 Afterwards, he would sign autographs and mingle with the public. Ray also sold Indian collectibles that he and Lorraine had made.

Ray Lowe is proud of his Ho-Chunk heritage. He wants the public to learn more about where his people came from and where they are going. He has been asked by schools, churches and nursing homes to speak to them about his heritage.

There has been some controversy in the news lately about using Indian names for school sports teams. The Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau School District’s nickname is the Redmen. Some area residents think the name should be changed. The G-E-T School Board approached Ray about his feelings on this. He said, “I think it’s all right; I’m not offended by it.”

There was also talk of tearing down the Big Indian statue in Riverside Park in La Crosse. Ray wants to keep it.

“I like the Big Indian. I took my kids and my grandkids to see it,” he recalled.

Ray’s future is one in the fast lane. At seventy-seven, he is still an avid hunter and fisherman. He just built a brand new log house next to his old house, he visits friends and family every week, and he continues to educate and teach about his Indian forefathers. He’s always on the move to somewhere.

As Ray has said, “I’m still able to get up and go.”
The Responsibility of Understanding

Daniel Green

Editor's Note: This is a recent guest editorial, reprinted from the La Crosse Tribune with the author's permission. It deals with local TV coverage of the Native American/school mascot controversy.

Approximately ten years ago, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) issued a mandate to Wisconsin public schools known as Act 31. Act 31 states that Native American treaties, sovereignty and Wisconsin Indian history must be included in the K–12 curriculum at least three times. This enactment was a result of the northern Wisconsin spear fishing controversy of the late 1980s. The idea was that the spear fishing controversy might have been avoided if our education regarding Native America was not so neglected—a good start, in my opinion. However, the Wisconsin DPI did not place any teeth in the mandate. As a former La Crosse School District employee, I visited many other school districts and found that some had never heard of Act 31. When we couple this fact with the omissions and distortions of textbooks, the generations of teachers unable to couple this fact with the omissions and distortions of textbooks, the generations of teachers unable to couple this fact with the omissions and distortions of textbooks, the generations of teachers unable to couple this fact with the omissions and distortions of textbooks, the generations of teachers unable to couple this fact with the omissions and distortions of textbooks, the generations of teachers unable to couple this fact with the omissions and distortions of textbooks, the generations of teachers unable to couple this fact with the omissions and distortions of textbooks, the generations of teachers unable to couple this fact with the omissions and distortions of textbooks, the generations of teachers unable to couple this fact with the omissions and distortions of textbooks, the generations of teachers unable to couple this fact with the omissions and distortions of textbooks.

On February 3, 2001, UW–L hosted a daylong educational conference entitled “Images that Hurt.” This conference’s agenda was to provide the community with a perspective of the Native American logo/mascot issue that is not commonly offered, a perspective based upon scientific research and conclusions. My concern is not only for the issue itself, but also for the way in which our two local television news stations covered the event. One station seemed genuinely professional in their presentation. My only objection was to the scenes from the UW–L Powwow in the background. I can only understand that decision as one of (artistic) narration, as a contemporary social event had nothing to do with this education conference. It seems the news station wanted their audience to think “Indian.” This tactic is akin to the old Bonanza TV series and their weekly introduction of the Chinese servant Hop-Sing. Remember the little tinkling bell? Or recall the seductive saxophone in some movies that so often introduces women, in various states of undress, and often in bedroom doorways.

The other news station presentation concerned me more. First, this news service introduced the report of the UW–L conference by stating, “... UW–La Crosse changed its mascot from the UW-L Indians to the UW-L Eagles... the change was made to be more sensitive to Native Americans.” While I appreciate the sensitivity, the major impetus for change is the fact that a school representative that stereotypes a group of people is antithetical to the goals of education! Then, a reporter was sent out to “divide and conquer.” The reporter asked a local Ho-Chunk man what he “thought” about the logo/mascot issue, not what he knows. I know this man; if the news service had asked him what he thought (or knows) of internal combustion engines, he would have given an informed reply. To further their apparent disdain for educational attainment, the channel provided an “unscientific poll” on the issue. An irony here is the channel’s byline: “accurate and dependable.” An unscientific poll is neither!

For me, the issue comes down to education—decades-old research conclusions vs. decades-old feelings. While feelings should never bias research outcomes, education does affect our feelings. I feel very protective of my daughter and do not want her to see pep floats that have “Indians” caged, tied up and hung by the neck.

The American Indian Mental Health Institute of Minnesota (among others) has scientifically shown a causal link between the negative self-concept of Native American children and such images (Indian mascots). I understand that many supporters of mascots do not wish to harm ANY children. However, the many misunderstandings about this issue do harm children. The Wisconsin DPI and UW-L understand this, and accept their educational responsibility.

Neutralities is the responsibility of news personnel. Creating news and “unscientific polls” are not neutral, and, therefore, are irresponsible to understanding. W

The Old Indian Woman

Yvonne Klinkenberg

The old Indian woman
By the table sat,
Remembering her childhood
Sitting on the deerskin mat,
Helping her mother grind the corn
That a young boy helped to reap,
Secretly watching him fish
In the creek so deep.
She saw him grow up strong
To be a hunter brave and true,
Her parents a yellow flower given
To say to her, “I love you.”
Now, she waits for the day
When he'll ride toward the sunset
To the hunting ground in the sky.
Her grandson is listening,
And writes in his book,
As she goes back in memory.
Many moons past, taking a final look.
My father, Ingvold Hagemo, left his beloved homeland of Norway in 1907, at the age of twenty-one, to travel to the country of golden opportunity, the United States of America. It took him weeks by boat to reach America, with his first stop being England. Upon reaching America’s shores, he recalled, with pride, viewing the Statue of Liberty. The passengers were processed at Ellis Island before entering the country.

On March 3, 1914, at age twenty-eight, my father became a citizen of the United States. He had met all the requirements, including his having resided in the United States for at least five years, and one year in the state of South Dakota, where he filed his petition for citizenship. He needed to swear that he intended to live permanently in the United States.

His first destination was South Dakota, where he worked as a farm laborer. His older brother, Arnie, had preceded Father to America, and had also settled in South Dakota. Years later, Dad saved enough money to buy his own farm.

He eventually married Lillian, a widow with three children. They established residency in Omaha, Nebraska, where my father went into the real estate business, and where I was born on July 22, 1925. These were prosperous years, up until the depression hit in 1929. Later, Dad moved the family to the Upper Midwest. We survived through these traumatic years until economic conditions improved in our country.

Dad didn’t speak Norwegian to us children, but I wish he had, as it would have helped us in our adult travels in Norway. He used to say, “We live in America, we speak English,” but he never quite lost his Norwegian accent. He knew more about our country’s history than a lot of American-born citizens. Father kept current on news happenings, loved politics, and never failed to exercise his privilege to vote.

We now live in a country of many nationalities—from Native American to European, African, Asian, and Australian American, and beyond. Immigrants have helped make our country great—bringing their dreams, their hopes, their talents, and, in turn, sharing the golden opportunities afforded to all people here, in our beautiful United States of America.
The American Mosaic

Editor's Note: This is a guest editorial, reprinted from the La Crosse Tribune with the author's permission. It deals with Asian American TV actor Jack Soo’s victory over simplistic stereotypes in the humaneness of his depictions.

The other night, my wife, Laura, and I were perusing the shelves of Red Oak Books and lamenting yet another win by corporate America over neighborhood business—Red Oak would soon close. My perusal led me to a magazine on Native American Art. The excessive use of stereotypical paraphernalia—drums, feathers, blankets, braids, ad nauseam—within this magazine, was disheartening, to say the least. Laura and I spoke of the issue on the way home, and it was then I recalled the late actor Jack Soo.

Jack Soo was an Asian American comic actor, whose most prominent acting role may have been that which he was portraying at the time of his demise—Sergeant Nick Yemana on the 1970s sitcom Barney Miller. In one episode, Yemana’s friend and fellow detective, Wojohowitz (“Wojo”), had to escort an extradited criminal to another state. The comic situation was that Wojo was deathly afraid of flying. Having exhausted all avenues for alternative travel, Wojo became resigned to his duty and prepared to leave for his assignment. Before exiting the office door, he turned to his friend, Nick, for some last comforting words. Yemana took a ten-dollar bill out of his pocket, offered it to Wojo and said (paraphrasing), “You know those insurance counters at the airport? Take out ten dollars worth and sign me up as beneficiary.” As Wojo’s mouth gaped in horror and the audience (or laugh-track) roared at his seeming insensitivity, Yemana, a notoriously hapless and frequent gambler, explained in gambling jargon, “It’s a sure thing. I’ve never won a long shot in my life.” Slowly, staring at one another, both men began to smile; Wojo then took the bill and thanked Nick.

The pertinence of this story to the “Native American” art magazine is three-fold. First is the symbolism (visible sign of something invisible). Symbols are a powerful form of communication. The ten-dollar bill (symbol) imparted something unsaid that caused the audience to laugh, and the shared smile (symbolic gesture) was all that was needed for understanding (invisible) between both men. Symbols are basic foundations in learning, as they allow us to convey our thoughts and associations to the learner. So what are the magazine and other social “Indian” paraphernalia saying to the viewer when what is presented is limited to stereotypical and archaic symbols?

Secondly, what one might initially intend does not necessarily determine the outcome. Wojo’s horror at the suggestion of flight insurance was certainly not Yemana’s intent. And while an explanation of motive did bring about the desired effect, that is not always case. The intention of the magazine is probably to sell copies and not to harm Indians. However, the measured consequences of the stereotypic symbols used in magazines indicate that great harm is done (for example, school children believing Indians only existed in the past). Further, counter to the publisher’s intentions, I and many others, given the content, will not buy that magazine.

Finally, there was Jack Soo himself. Hal Linden, who played the lead role, Barney Miller, remembered Jack Soo at the time of his death (paraphrasing): “The comic distinction and acting of Jack Soo was that he did not contain himself in an Asian role. His jokes were funny to us all because they were human jokes, not just Asian jokes.” Dualistic thinking confines us to thinking of people as existing at one extreme or the other. Jack inhabited neither. I presume the actor knew his ancestry and his American citizenship and was proud of both. I presume he knew he could agree or disagree with Asian-related issues without worrying that the public might call into question his awareness of his own culture and history.

Nowhere is the old axiom of “we are what we eat” more evident than in our consumption of Native American and related subcultures. Our Indian diet, whether in literature, commercial film, commercial licensing, scholastic text, or public statuary, leaves us (Indian and non-Indian) in great need of nutritional supplement. Jack Soo offered us a humane supplement by illustrating that people have more similarities than differences. He taught us that human beings are more wonderfully complex than can be contained in a stereotype.

Thanks, and rest in peace, Jack.

Daniel Green

“'The comic distinction and acting of Jack Soo was that he did not contain himself in an Asian role. His jokes were funny to us all because they were human jokes, not just Asian jokes.'"
Memoir Excerpt from Anna’s Story, “New Continent—New Life”
Anna Muktepavels-Motivans

Editor’s Note: Although this is a book excerpt, it fits so well into this section that it is placed here. Anna’s Story is the author’s reminiscence-writing involving the thoughts and feelings that have mattered to her over the decades in the settings of war and peace. It is a story of courage and perseverance; a story of ordinary and extraordinary people whom she wishes to remember—who were “Good Samaritans” along her life’s journey. Its chronological setting spans the first decade of 1900, the start of the First World War, her witnessing of the Second World War, life in a displaced persons camp, immigration to the United States, up until the present day in the year 2001—the twilight of Anna’s life. This excerpt gives a glimpse of her feelings, experiences, and aspirations during her first year as an immigrant in the New Land.

The cargo ship General Hollbrook entered Boston’s harbor on the foggy morning of September 2, 1949. It carried more than nineteen hundred refugees from displaced persons (DP) camps in Germany to work in this country in manual labor jobs. Most American labor unions did not want these immigrants taking over their jobs, so they picketed each ship entering U.S. ports. As we were unloaded, the picket signs and shouts could be seen and heard. To make matters worse, our sponsor, from Pinehurst, North Carolina, had died while we were on the high seas. As we landed in Boston, we did not have a sponsor or a guaranteed job. We did not have a place to stay when we got off the ship. In other words, we did not know what would happen to us next. The Red Cross ladies were the only friendly sign—they offered coffee and doughnuts.

The National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC) was one of several church organizations sponsoring stranded European refugees in this country. As soon as we landed, we were directed to take a train to New York, where Prelate Eduards Stukels would meet us. He was in charge of Latvian Catholic refugees entering this country. We each received a train ticket to New York and $2 for lunch on the train. Our sparse luggage—a wooden box containing our family’s clothing, some books, a few of Dad’s carpenter tools, and some mementos—was sent to us later. We arrived in New York’s Grand Central Station carrying our hand luggage, still feeling sick, dirty and hungry from the sea voyage. Our “guardian angel,” Prelate Stukels, had sent his secretary to pick us up and take us to his hotel in downtown Manhattan. We were so overwhelmed by everything that when we saw the Latvian priest and heard our language, my mother cried. Meeting the dear Prelate again touched us all. Before our emigration had started in Germany, Prelate Stukels had been the Catholic priest in our displaced persons camp in Augsburg. He remained our family’s friend and priest until he died on August 2, 1956, in New York City. Through his wise guidance, thousands of refugees were taken care of and settled in different parts of the United States.

In four days, we had a sponsor—a family on Staten Island by the name of Gans. My father, mother, and I were to work on their estate. My sister, Veronika, was placed with a physician couple (both were psychiatrists). It was good to know we had a place to stay and a guarantee of work. Mrs. Gans, along with a woman friend, came to meet us at the hotel. She was a pleasant lady and spoke fluent German; we all could converse quite easily. Our hotel bill was paid by either the NCWC or the Ganses, I don’t remember which. (We did have to pay back the boat fare, during the year we worked.)

We came to Grimes Hill on Staten Island. To me it seemed that the estate covered the top of Grimes Hill—a very large home, nestled in beautifully kept gardens and vast grounds. We were shown a furnished, clean, small apartment over the garage, consisting of two rooms and a bathroom. We were to eat in the main kitchen downstairs. Mrs. Gans said: “Clean up and rest. Mr. Gans will be here in the evening, and then you may meet the rest of the family!”

When the evening came, the three of us came down to the large, well-lit kitchen. Here, we met the Ganses: husband John and son Walther were introduced by Mrs. Gans. They also had older sons, who lived with their families away from Grimes Hill. We met the cook, the groundskeeper/gardener couple, and their little daughter; later, we also met the laundry lady (she did the laundry for this family once a week). They all were very pleasant people. A thought passed through my mind—are all these people working for this one family? Yes, they were!

The next day, we were assigned our duties. My father had to learn to drive Mrs. Gans’s Cadillac and obtain a chauffeur’s license. His duty was to be Mrs. Gans’s chauffeur. My mother was responsible for cleaning the house. My duty was to be the upstairs maid and serve the meals in the dining room. I was trained in all the dining graces and given a uniform with a stiff, white apron and cap. I was expected to serve all the meals.
and be responsible for the china, silver, and the dining room. I also was the doorknob “grater” at the entrance when the family had their many social gatherings. I was expected to stay until the last guest left, until the last dish was put away in the kitchen—sometimes, this meant until the early hours of the morning.

I liked the different jobs, and was eager to learn. In the morning, after breakfast, I made up the beds, cleaned the upstairs bathrooms, and it would be noon before I knew it. The cook would have lunch all ready to be served! Thursday afternoons were “time off for the maid.” Whenever there was nothing special happening in the house, I got off Sundays, too. On those days, I visited my friend Dagmar in Manhattan or my sister, Veronika, just a few estates away on Staten Island. Dagmar Igals and Aivars Aistars were my high school classmates in Augsburg, and all three of our families came over on the same ship.

Here, I would like to quote from some of my diary entries. They give a glimpse of my feelings and emotional state of mind as an eighteen-year-old, working at my first real job in the New World.

September 16, 1949. Tonight, I’m opening a new notebook, to continue to write my diary. A new notebook, a new continent and a new country—the U.S.A. Is it really true? Yes! I’m in a new land and a new life! My youthful summers are left behind, in Augsburg—so are my unfulfilled love and dreams. Everything, everything...Now, I have to start my life over again. I feel like I have been dropped out of the sky without a penny to call my own. I’m sitting in my tiny room, thinking of Augsburg, of my dear friends still left behind. As tired as I am, I keep remembering. Today, I received my first letter from Austra Skadule, from Augsburg. When I saw the letter, I jumped up in the air! After I read it, I felt sad—her life was harder than mine. Everyone was leaving the camp, but her family still did not have a sponsor. Austra is going to immigrate to the U.S.A., by herself. Also, how do those people feel who are pressured to immigrate to Australia? Is it a crazy world? As much as I would like to help Austra, I can’t. We have been here just two weeks, and we live life in a dark sack—we don’t know what is happening around us. I wish we could go out into the community, meet other people—then maybe we would know what to do and how to help Austra. We have to work very diligently and seriously so we do not jeopardize our workplace on Grimes Hill.

Now, about my new life here! I have written so many letters that I’m getting tired of writing the same again. One thing, though, I can say—This is NOT a land of ‘milk and honey’ as we were led to believe. Here, as everywhere else, one sees the rich and the poor, unimaginable wealth and also deprivation. Here the dollar is the king—nobody but nobody will feel sorry for you if you are unable to pay! Even in the church on Sundays, money is the object of the homily. It is very hard for me to get used to this way of life. I don’t know if I ever will get used to it! But here we are, we have to work as hard as we can and make the best of our lives. My only wish is that our people who are left behind in the camps would get out sooner. Here we have an opportunity to live decently! I have to concentrate to get ahead myself! I can’t think of schooling now—my English [these entries were originally in Latvian] is not good enough. I do hope, as time goes by, I will go to school again.

September 17, 1949. Today is Irene’s birthday—I also received a letter from her. Lucky Irene! All her problems are over! Her life in Belgium is going well—she has passed the entrance exams at a university. I can understand her joy. I also would be happy, if I could have a chance to go to school.

Irene’s letter gave me so much encouragement that I decided to start educating myself. I HAVE to put aside my memories and dreaming—I HAVE to concentrate. I have to live! Tonight, I gathered all my English language books—I am going to learn the language. I have to practice conversation more—I cannot be so shy. Maybe I’ll ask “Mr. Walther” to get some more books. So— I HAVE TO STUDY!"
October 3, 1949. Life goes on— it has been a month in the new land. Work, work, work fills my days and evenings. There is no time to think about my memories, there is hardly any time to turn around in my room.

None of the people who came on this ship have it better. We all have to work and strive to survive. We Latvians have been known to survive under duress and still get ahead! Even if now we are factory workers, shipyard workers, household workers (the trades of the three of us—Dagmara, Aivars and me). We WILL get ahead someday! Yes, in this land of plenty, everything means money. Even I have become thrifty—today I took my month’s salary of $60 to deposit in a savings account. It is such a small sum for a month’s work—but I’m very happy.

Most of the people here have started small. I wish I would have more time for my language studies. I would like to go to an evening school, but as I work in the evenings, that is not possible. If I stay as a domestic, I will not be able to go to evening school. I am not giving up hope.

October 26, 1949. Last Sunday, I visited Dagmara Igals. It is so nice that we, both from the same graduating class, happened to find our first jobs in New York. It was good to visit and catch up on the news. Time had flown, as most of our free time had been taken up with travel. Her family lives on 120th Street and Broadway and I am on Grimes Hill, Staten Island.

All in all, I’m happy I’m in New York. Here, one can hear even Latvian spoken on the streets! Even if it is sad sometimes, I’ll be able to meet and hear other Latvians.

I’m living very quietly and working as never before in my life. Work fills my days—I wish I would have a normal life, but I’m not thinking about that for now. I’m thinking about money. Yes, these are my new worries—worse I never had faced before. If I can’t become independent financially, I’ll be working as a servant all my life! I have to save, save—I have become very frugal. Life does not spoil me.

December 9, 1949. December is here—Christmas is coming. Everywhere, there are shiny trinkets, loudness and lights. In my heart, there is only sadness. Oh, you worldly New York! Can you ever really hold a human soul?

I’m shivering in the cold kitchen and thinking of Jazeps and college. What opposites—but both are so dear to my heart—I long for Jazeps to be here and also for an opportunity to study. Really, how dumb I am! But what else can I do? I would be so very happy if even one of these longings became real. My dear mathematics teacher from high school, Mrs. L. Snikers, would be so disappointed in me if I gave up college for a love affair.

December 25, 1949. My pen is limp and silent in my hands. I’m unable to write on this day—everything has become indifferent to me.

January 1, 1950. What can I write? My heart is so empty, and yet so full. My dear diary, I would like to talk to you so much tonight. Today is your third birthday! So many things have changed in these three years—lately I have become so indifferent to everything.

Even now, when I write these lines, I don’t want to think about sadness and deeper thoughts. As it is, God will take care of us! If I would keep thinking and asking so many questions—[including] why sad things happen in the world—I would have withered and died long ago. This cool indifference that has come over me does not let me think. It cannot be otherwise; I want to survive in this land!

It is the halfway mark of the twentieth century today! Is it possible that ten years have passed since Latvia became occupied? Ten years have passed, and my homeland is still soaked in blood. Dear God, protect and give freedom to Latvia! On this half-century mark, God, give freedom to Latvia!

As time went by, my father obtained his chauffeur’s license. He drove Mrs. Gans and her friends to Manhattan and wherever else she needed to be. Young Walther, who was a student in one of New York’s colleges, liked my mother a lot. His own mother had died when he was quite young. His father had remarried his mother’s sister, the present Mrs. Gans. Many evenings when Walther was late getting home from school, he would miss dinnertime. He was always in a hurry, and he used to fly into the kitchen—he knew that my mother would keep the supper warm and tucked away for him. He called my mom “Mutti,” a diminutive form of the German word “Mutter.”

My mother and I kept the house very clean—our employers were pleased. Mrs. Gans made arrangements for me to attend the local Catholic grade school and sit in the fifth-grade English classes for a couple of hours a week. Although I felt awkward, being eighteen and sitting in with the young kids, I studied and learned English. To this day, I’m grateful to Mrs. Gans for the opportunity she gave me.

Toward the spring of 1950, the Ganses left on their yacht to go to Florida for a month. During that time,
we took care of the house and cooked our own meals. The groceries were delivered to the house. I had to make a list of what was needed and call the grocery store. I kept all the receipts for the food and other expenses and paid the bills with the money the Ganses had left. I was amazed how high the food costs were! Mom was saying that maybe we should go to the store ourselves and bring the food home—it would be less expensive. The stores were far away from Grimes Hill; there was no transportation in the vicinity. When the Ganses came home, they seemed satisfied with our management of the bills. For us, managing money in this new land was truly a learning experience.

That spring my sister, Veronika, was not doing well at her place of employment. In fact, Veronika became very ill. Although she did not complain, she had lost a lot of weight, coughed a very painful cough, and eventually she was diagnosed as having pleurisy and malnutrition. She lived in her employer’s home, did physical work, and did not have enough calories to keep herself healthy! This was an unpleasant situation. Within days, my sister was placed with another employer—Mrs. John McKinlay (Grace). This wonderful lady nursed my sister back to health! To this day, I keep in my memory Grace McKinlay, the kind and compassionate lady who was my sister’s Good Samaritan. I would like to quote a recommendation letter written by her on July 31, 1950.

To whom it may concern,

The bearer, Veronika Muktepavels, has been employed by me in my home from March 27th, this year, to the present date. She came to me to improve her English and save money to tide her over. She has accomplished both. She is highly intellectual, with an eager, retentive mind. She is of excellent character, well educated, and willing to carry out such work as she has been given to do. She is anxious to improve her position in life, and that is her reason for leaving me. She has my good wishes in her endeavors.

Grace M. McKinlay

In the summer of 1950, our family kept in touch with other Latvian immigrants in New York as well as in other cities. My father had written letters to several of our hometown people from Latvia who now were living in Indianapolis, Indiana. They wrote to him that jobs were available in the building industry. Our family decided we had to get on our own. Although we liked the people we worked for very much, with the salary we earned now we could never become independent. And my sister and I had not given up our hope of going to college.

We told the Ganses of our intentions to leave as soon as they could find other people to take our place. They were very upset and angry about our decision. Mr. Gans said, “You may go now, if you wish so!” We packed up our few belongings and cleaned the little apartment. One Saturday morning, we called a taxi, said good-bye to the gardener’s family, and were ready to leave. We wanted to say good-bye to Mr. and Mrs. Gans, but their door was closed. I felt sad to leave without saying good-bye—they were good people. They had given us our first opportunity in this country! We did not blame them for anything! We understood that they had given us their trust and care. We just wanted to say thank you. What was hard for them to understand was that we also wanted to better our lives. We were not cut out to be domestics, to use the back door for our comings and goings, to say: “Yes, Ma’am” and “Yes, Sir.” We could be trained for any job, but we never could be trained to be subservient!

We left the beautiful Gans estate in silence with our belongings in a couple of suitcases. The taxi driver dropped us off at the dock of the Staten Island Ferry. On the way to Manhattan, I remember looking at the Statue of Liberty while gliding past and feeling a sense of utter exhilaration—a real feeling of freedom! We were on our own!

We went to Manhattan, to Dagmara Igals’ family. There was a little one-room efficiency apartment available in the building where Dagmara’s father was employed as a super (caretaker). Now, of course, none of us held a job. I frantically looked through the papers for a factory job—those jobs paid better. I went for a couple of interviews and was hired by a hosiery mill in the Bronx. Since we now lived on Broadway, it was a long way to the Bronx—it took me more than two hours to get to work. Diligently, I took the cross-town bus and went to work. My parents were happy I’d gotten the job. Father, after unsuccessfully trying to get a job in New York, packed up his tools and took a Greyhound bus to Indianapolis.

At my job, I quickly learned how to sew and finish nylons, support hosiery, and athletic garments. I earned a much better salary than a domestic did. By that time, I could speak English quite well, and I still dreamed about college. In fact, on weekends I sat on the steps of Columbia University—just to get the feel of being near it. I listened with awe as the students at the Jordan School of Music practiced the piano and voice. On Sundays, Dagmara and I went to Riverside Park, on the banks of the Hudson River, and spread a blanket at the foot of General Grant’s Tomb to get a suntan. In those days, Riverside Park was not as dangerous as it is now. Many young people and families with children enjoyed the sunshine. Mother and I lived in a small one-room apartment until Dad wrote to us and asked us to come to Indianapolis. At that time Veronika joined us for the trip to our new destination.

In my memoir, the next chapter starts with that Greyhound trip and the next period in our lives. On that bus, I thought about the unknown future with hope, belief, and trust that this country, which sheltered us from persecution, was filled with good, generous and compassionate people. Those people who touched our lives that first year were our Good Samaritans. I will always think of them as treasures that money cannot buy.
American Immigrants: The Asian Indians

Pamela Shipstone

Editor's Note: It's proper that Asian Indians have been coming to America in greater numbers recently because, as a nation and a “hemisphere,” America arose because Christopher Columbus had been looking for a western route to India when he arrived in this “New World.” Thus, the name “Indians” was applied to Native Americans. In any case, Americans include Indian Asians whose contributions to the American nation are also great.

Indian civilization is one of the world's oldest, dating back to 2500-1700 B.C. India was then populated by Aryan invaders in the north and Dravidians, India’s native ethnic group, in the south. Northern India was invaded by Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C., and by Islamic tribes, like the Turks and Moguls, in the tenth century A.D. The British came as traders around the 1600s but eventually established rule over India. Mahatma Gandhi led the movement for India's independence through nonviolent protest, which succeeded in 1947. India and Pakistan were created during the partition, following British rule, due to irreconcilable differences between Hindu and Muslim leaders.

Asian Indians (citizens of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka) arrived in America as early as mid-nineteenth century. Among the early settlers were the Sikhs (a religious minority from Punjab). They worked in the areas of agriculture, logging, and construction of the Western Pacific Railway in California, along with other immigrants from China, Japan, Korea, Norway and Italy.

The turn of the century brought violence against Chinese, Japanese and Sikh immigrants, who were seen as the “Yellow Peril.” As Sikhs wore turbans, they were also referred to as “ragheads” and as the “turbaned tide” by European Americans. Racial discrimination was officially instituted in 1907 when the Asiatic Exclusion League (AEL) was organized to expel Asian workers and to deny them residence and citizenship in the United States. Travel visas to the United States were denied in Indian cities. These actions were, in part, inspired by the 1790 Naturalization Law, which said that only "free white" people could become citizens. Although Asian Indians are considered anthropologically Caucasian, they were brown-skinned, thus non-white, thereby rendering them ineligible. This basic idea was reinforced in 1923, when the U.S. Supreme Court declared that, although Indians were Caucasian, they were not white, and therefore were ineligible for citizenship. Thus the "non-white" exclusionary Immigration Act of 1924 was passed.

Asian Indians were facing a struggle for independence in their homeland and racial discrimination in both the United States and Canada. In 1908, a Bengali student at the University of Washington, Taraknath Das, created a newspaper, the Ghadar, to unite all Indians against British educational policies. In 1913, California's Alien Land Law prohibited Asians from owning land. The Immigration Act of 1917 restricted Asian Indians from immigrating to the United States. Those who were already in the country were declared ineligible for citizenship and lost the right to own property. In response to the discriminatory rules, many Indians left the United States. Some married non-Asian Americans; almost half of the agricultural laborers married Mexican Americans in order to retain their property under their spouses' names.

Congress passed a bill in 1946 allowing Indian naturalization. In 1957, Dalip Saund was the first Asian Indian senator to be elected to Congress. Immigration quotas remained tight. Between 1947 and 1965, about six thousand Asian Indians entered this country. The Immigration Act of 1965 took into consideration employment demands in the areas of medicine, engineering, computer science, and other professions. This opened up immigration for educated Asian Indians and started the slow but steady "brain drain" of India. In the next decade, more than 100,000 professionals and their families entered the United States. The 1990 U.S. census indicated there were 570,000 Asian Indians in this country. Settlement patterns vary: 32% settled in the Northeast, 26% in the South, 23% in the West, 19% in the Midwest. The oldest established Indian communities exist in San Francisco and Los Angeles, since the first Indian immigrants landed in California. The Asian Indian population in Wisconsin is concentrated near university areas, in cities such as Madison, Milwaukee, Eau Claire, and La Crosse.


In the 1980s, physical attacks on Asian Indians were carried out by a group in New Jersey known as the "Dotbusters." This gang name was derived from the binthee, a beauty mark worn on the foreheads of many Indian women. This form of harassment and discrimination did not discourage the Asian Indian population. Today, Asian Indians are perceived in America as being industrious, professionally and educationally advanced, and prosperous. This
perception is based on reality, as the population that immigrated to America was composed of highly educated individuals. A large number of Asian Indians are professionals; but others own businesses, and some are employed as semi-skilled workers. Although Asian Indians are a vibrant part of American society, their acculturation and assimilation into American society is slow, as they strive to maintain their Indian culture and heritage. The Asian Indian community is ethnically diverse. The various groups trace their roots to different Indian states. Each Indian state is very diverse, having its own languages, customs and cuisine. Some of the subgroups that contribute to Indian American culture are Sikhs, Sindhis, Maharashtrians, Malayalam speakers, Punjabis, Tamils, Telugus, Bengalis, Biharis, Gujaratis, and Jains.

Marriage is a key part of Indian tradition and culture. Most first-generation Indian parents favor arranged marriages, where they actively seek potential spouses for their sons or daughters. Two methods of research are printing matrimonial ads in newspapers like India Abroad and acquiring the assistance of friends and relatives to search for the ideal mate. All individuals involved in the search must follow the criteria outlined by the parents and their adult children. Usually it is the parents who are primarily involved in the search for a spouse for their adult children. Parents prefer that their children marry individuals of equal rank in terms of education, economics, and religious caste, in the case of Hindu weddings, whether they are Hindu, Christian or Muslim, are very elaborate, and the festivity usually lasts several days. In Hindu tradition the bride and groom exchange garlands of flowers and circle a fire three to seven times. The bride usually wears a red sari and gold jewelry. Her hands and feet may be decorated with henna, a tradition called mehendi. The groom may wear a churidar and kameez, which means tight-fitting cotton or silk leggings and a long shirt. Many grooms wear Nehru jackets and pants, which is closer to the western-style suit.

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In general, Asian Indian parents feel that their children will be happier married to individuals who share a common history, tradition, culture, cuisine and social customs.
The brand-new pastor and his wife, newly assigned to their first ministry—to reopen a church in urban Brooklyn—arrived in early October, excited about their opportunities. When they saw their church, it was very run-down and needed much work. They set a goal to have everything done in time to have their first service on Christmas Eve. They worked hard, repairing pews, plastering walls, painting, and so on, and on December 18, they were ahead of schedule and just about finished.

On December 19, a driving rainstorm hit the area and lasted for two days. On the 21st, the pastor went over to the church. His heart sank when he saw that the roof had leaked, causing a large area of plaster—about six feet by eight feet—to fall off the front wall of the sanctuary just behind the pulpit, beginning about head-high. The pastor cleaned up the mess on the floor, and not knowing what else to do but postpone the Christmas Eve service, headed home.

On the way, he noticed that a local business was having a flea market-type sale for charity, so he stopped in. One of the items was a beautiful, hand-made, ivory-colored crocheted tablecloth, with exquisite work, fine colors and a cross embroidered right in the center. It was just the right size to cover up the hole in the front wall. He bought it and headed back to the church. By this time, it had started to snow. An older woman, running from the opposite direction, was trying to catch the bus, but she missed it. The pastor invited her to wait in the warm church for the next bus, forty-five minutes later. She sat in a pew and paid no attention to the pastor while he got a ladder, hangers, and tools to put up the tablecloth as a wall tapestry. The pastor could hardly believe how beautiful it looked, and it covered up the entire problem area.

Then he noticed the woman walking down the center aisle. Her face was like a sheet. “Pastor,” she asked, “Where did you get that tablecloth?”

The pastor explained. The woman asked him to check the lower right corner to see if the initials EBG were crocheted into it there. They were. These just happened to be the initials of the woman; she had made this tablecloth thirty-five years before, in Austria. The woman could hardly believe it as the pastor told her how he had just bought the tablecloth. She explained that, before the war, she and her husband had been well-to-do people in Austria. When the Nazis came, she was forced to leave. Her husband was going to follow her the next week. She was captured, sent to prison, and never saw her husband or her home again.

The pastor wanted to give her the tablecloth, but she made him keep it for the church. He insisted on driving her home, for that was the least he could do. She lived on the other side of Staten Island and was only in Brooklyn for the day for a housecleaning job.

What a wonderful service they had on Christmas Eve. The church was almost full. The music and the spirit were great. At the end of the service, the pastor and his wife greeted everyone at the door, and many said that they would return.

One older man, whom the pastor recognized from the neighborhood, continued to sit in one of the pews and stare, and the pastor wondered why he wasn't leaving. The man asked him where he had gotten the tablecloth on the front wall, because it was identical to one that his wife had made years ago when they lived in Austria, before the war—and how could two tablecloths be so much alike? He told the pastor how the Nazis came, how he forced his wife to flee for her safety, and how he was supposed to follow her, but was arrested and put in a concentration camp. He never saw his wife or his home again, for all of the thirty-five years in between.

The pastor asked him if he would allow him to take him for a little ride. They drove to Staten Island, to the same house where the pastor had taken the woman three days earlier. He helped the man climb the three flights of stairs to the woman's apartment, knocked on the door, and saw the greatest Christmas reunion he could ever imagine. God and life work in mysterious ways, their wonders to behold.
Taking Another Look at the Past

Top left: (L to R) Augusta Emilie Lemke, Antonia Pretasky Lemke (the children’s mother), William Lemke, and John Lemke. La Crosse, WI (Courtesy of Kimberly Alexander).

Top right: Joseph and Barbara Goetz family: (Back L to R) Rose Goetz Englerth, Mike Goetz, and Charles Goetz. (Front L to R) Barbara Goetz, Joseph Goetz, and Christina Goetz (who married Adolph Kress) (Courtesy of Thomas Kress).

Bottom left: “Gone but not forgotten,” a remembrance card for Adolph Kress, who died on November 17, 1930, at age seventy-nine. (Courtesy of Thomas Kress, his great-grandson).

Bottom center: Charles and Ethel Schwertfeger on their wedding day. Charles was ready to ship out for World War I, 1918. Waco, TX (Courtesy of Kimberly Alexander, their granddaughter).

Bottom right: John George Kress and Eva Kress, parents of Adolph Kress, 1840-1850, Germany (Courtesy of Thomas Kress).
Sacajawea and the Corps of Discovery
Nancy L. Kaminski

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Editor’s Note: The journals of Lewis and Clark (1804-1806) give us ample reason to admire the courage and accomplishments of the Corps of Discovery. The contributions of Sacajawea to the success of this expedition cannot be denied. Although the Corps of Discovery did not discover a water route to the west, it did forge new friendships with many Indian tribes, establish the best route to the Pacific, and provide much new information regarding the western portions of our young nation.

Author’s Note: A rare opportunity to explore the Lewis and Clark Trail presented itself during my summer break from school. Although the lives and travels of the two captains are intriguing, the driving force for my trip was the tale of their young Shoshone guide, Sacajawea. The following excerpts present a coherent story of her influence on the Corps of Discovery, led by Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, during their eight thousand-mile attempt to find a Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean. This story is derived from five installments printed over six months in the WWTC student magazine. It picks up here with the group’s winter-stay at Fort Mandan.

With winter 1804-05 nearing, the captains began building the winter quarters at Fort Mandan, North Dakota. This would be their home until mid-April. One of the Frenchmen living near the village came to offer his services as an interpreter. The captains hired him, not only because of his skills, but because his wife had been captured in a Hidatsa raid four years earlier near the Bitterroot Mountains. Lewis knew it was home to the Shoshone Indians, and he hoped to buy horses from them to cross the mountains. The French interpreter-trapper was Toussaint Charbonneau; his wife was Sacajawea.

The expedition would most likely not have survived the bitterly cold North Dakota winter without corn that the Mandans had traded with them. (See photo of Mandan paraphernalia on page 138.) On February 11, 1805, Sacajawea gave birth to her first-born, a son, Jean Baptiste. She and her husband were living within the fort in preparation for the expedition’s attempt to reach the Pacific in spring. The captains spent the bitterly cold days at Fort Mandan getting to know their interpreters, doctoring the natives, and extracting information from visiting dignitaries. One Mandan chief, Little Crow, gave them a chart of the Missouri River to the west. It was the Hidatsa, however, who provided vital information about the route before them. These people would send war parties west, to raid Shoshone and Blackfeet villages. Successful missions made warriors into wealthy chiefs. It was on one of these raids that Sacajawea had been captured. Four years later, her captor would lose her in a game of “Hands” to Charbonneau.

Lewis and Clark sent their keelboat back to St. Louis on April 7, 1805, with soil and animal samples and letters for their loved ones and President Jefferson. Captain Clark sent Jefferson three maps he had charted. From St. Louis to Fort Mandan, he got it right. Heading west were the two large pirogues and six canoes, with a permanent party of thirty-three. Although the expedition saw signs of Natives, they encountered none. Each man had his duties, which, at times, included steering a pirogue while it was under sail. Sacajawea’s husband was at the rudder when a violent wind and a frightened Charbonneau left the craft on its side and taking on water. Bowman Cruzat helped right the pirogue. Lewis noted in his journal that “the Indian woman, to whom I ascribe equal fortitude and resolution with any person on board at the time of the accident, caught and preserved most of the light articles which were washed overboard.” Sacajawea would prove frequently to be valuable beyond her command of Native tongues. The expedition’s hunters were still bringing in buffalo and antelope, and now added bear to their diet. Lewis noted, “While walking on shore with Sacajawea, she gathered wild licorice and white apples to supplement their diet.”

The expedition’s next great challenge would come not from Natives, but Nature. The Great Falls lay in their path. The Hidatsa had informed them that it was a simple half-mile portage around the falls. Later, Lewis would realize that all the Natives underestimated time. It took the expedition a month to portage the five great falls. Once beyond this major obstacle, however, the Corps of Discovery found smooth sailing and magnificent scenery to the headwaters area, where the Gallatin, Jefferson, and Madison rivers give birth to the mighty Missouri. On July 22, 1805, Sacajawea lifted spirits as she recognized the countryside and assured the captains that her people, and the three forks area, were at no great distance. By July 27, the expedition was camped at the Missouri’s headwaters. Lewis and Clark named the rivers after the president, the secretary of state, and the secretary of the treasury. This was also the place where Hidatsa warriors had captured Sacajawea some five years before.

Shortly after Lewis and Clark had departed, in the spring of 1805, Fort Mandan burned to the ground in a prairie fire. North Dakota’s state park system has built a perfect replica just downstream from the original location. The remnants of Sacajawea’s Hidatsa home, the Knife River Indian Village, have been preserved by the National Park Service. In this village, women built and owned the homes, gardens, food,
animals, and tools. New husbands came to their wives’ earth lodges with only their weapons, clothes and horses. One of the homes is fully restored and decorated with artifacts of the era.

At the Missouri’s headwaters, the captains chose the south fork as the route that would lead them to a mountain pass, and, hopefully, to the Lemhi Shoshone. Within five days of their departure, Sacajawea recognized a large bluff as the Beaver’s Head, her people’s hunting grounds, and assured the party that her family would be found close by. Lewis took three men and scouted ahead. As he searched for the Natives, he crossed the Continental Divide, becoming the first white man known to do so. One can only imagine his disappointment, though, in finding that the horizon was cluttered with yet another mountain range; the Bitterroots. Hopes of an all-water route to the Pacific were fading.

On August 13, 1805, Lewis was welcomed into the Shoshone village with great fanfare and hugs. The Natives carried each visitor into their town high above the crowd. This band was very poor, held in check by their armed neighbors, the Minnetarees. The great poverty of this fine people did not smother their joy. The journal notes how they sang as they marched to their buffalo-skin lodges. Captain Lewis’s gifts were received with great appreciation. Cameahwait, the Lemhi Shoshone chief, informed the captain that there were no navigable rivers leading to the “salty water.” The dream of an all-water route to the Pacific was dashed forever. Lewis’s only consolation, though, in finding that the horizon was cluttered with yet another mountain range; the Bitterroots. Hopes of an all-water route to the Pacific were fading.

The expedition awakened on September 16 to four inches of new snow. Clark named his September 18 campsite “Hungry Creek, because at this place, we had nothing to eat.” Eleven days after entering the Lolo Trail, as they descended onto the Weippe Prairie, Lewis and Clark encountered the Nez Perce Indians. The entire Corps was close to starvation. The struggle across the mountain pass had left most of the party in very poor condition. There were several journal entries about sick men. Although most of them recovered in about a week, some suffered much longer.

The Indians shared buffalo, roots, berries, and salmon with the Corps. Nez Perce Chief Twisted Hair drew the captains a map of the rivers leading to the Pacific on white elk skin. The Indians also helped build five dugout canoes. On October 7, they began the final leg of their journey west, down the Clearwater, Snake, and Columbia rivers, leaving their horses in the care of the Nez Perce.

The expedition’s progress was good even though there were “many bad rapids.” The Snake River Valley had been inhabited for at least ten thousand years, and villages were a common sight. The Corps bought food from the Natives; salmon was very abundant, both fresh and dried. Nez Perce villages were found all the way to the Columbia and beyond. The Natives lined the river’s edge to watch these white men battle the rapids. But on October 19, the Corps found a village whose residents were too terrified to leave their homes. In one lodge, Lewis found thirty-two Indians “in the greatest agitation, some crying and wringing their hands, others hanging their heads.” The sight of Sacajawea was all they needed to confirm the expedition’s “friendly intentions. As no women ever accompanied a war party.”

After nearly a month of shooting the rapids and portaging Celilo Falls, the journal reads: “Great joy in camp. We are in sight of the ocean.” It rained continuously, and there was always a heavy morning fog. The party was usually wet; bedding and clothing rotted, but once again, the hunters were able to find elk and ducks. As the party proceeded, they encountered the Chinook and Clatsop Indians. Captain Lewis set out in search of a site for their winter quarters. On November 24, a historic vote took place. All members of the Corps of Discovery voted on Fort Clatsop’s location, including Sacajawea, the first American woman to vote, and Sergeant York, a Black man known as “Big Medicine.”

The expedition stayed at Fort Clatsop from December 7, 1805 until March 23, 1806. During their stay, the captains worked on their journals and maps, planning the return trip. They also bartered with the Indians for food and gathered geographic information from them. Other members of the Corps boiled seawater near the ocean and made three and one-half
bushels of salt. When two of the saltmakers returned with blubber from a beached whale, there was much excitement. Sacajawea was very impatient to go to the ocean. She had never seen it and wanted to observe the “monstrous fish.”

By the time the explorers made the thirty-five-mile walk to the ocean, the Native Tillamooks had stripped the whale to its skeleton. Captain Clark bartered with them for blubber and oil. These Indians had traded with seafarers in the past. They wore British clothing, carried muskets, and cooked with copper and brass kettles. But the Corps of Discovery never saw any coastal vessels, and began their return voyage on March 23, 1806. The Columbia River was twenty feet higher than before, and they struggled upstream only until the falls. Here, they traded the canoes for horses and continued on to the Nez Perce villages at the base of the Lolo Pass, where they waited for spring. Winter in the higher elevations lasted another month. During this time, Clark successfully treated a wide variety of ailments for the Indians and a serious infection in Sacajawea’s small son.

After spending nearly a month waiting for spring to come to the Rockies, the expedition crossed the Lolo Pass in only six days. Once across the mountains, Lewis and Clark separated. Most of the men and horses went south, with Clark and Sacajawea, to retrieve canoes and caches. They would then travel down the Yellowstone River to the Missouri. On July 14, 1806, Sacajawea guided the party through Bozeman Pass, a shortcut to the Yellowstone. Eleven days later, Clark climbed a “remarkable rock.” He named the unusual formation after Sacajawea’s son, whom he affectionately referred to as Pompey.

Lewis’s northern route was a little more exciting. The captain and nine men explored the Milk, Sun, Cut Bank, Two Medicine, and Marias rivers. As the party slept one night, they were awakened by Blackfeet Indians attempting to steal their horses. After killing two of the warriors, the party quickly retreated down the Missouri.

On August 11, 1806, Lewis was accidentally shot in the hip by one of his own men while hunting elk. Fortunately, the small party overtook Captain Clark the next day. Clark’s final patient was his good friend Captain Lewis, who had sustained a very bad flesh wound. By August 17, the expedition was back at the Mandan village. Here they left Sacajawea and her family, picked up the Indians who had consented to visit President Jefferson, and continued on to St. Louis. The Corps of Discovery entered the city at noon on September 23, 1806, to a rousing welcome. They had been gone two years, four months, and ten days, and had traveled eight thousand miles. During this monumental adventure they had found the best route to the Pacific, discovered hundreds of plants and animals, and made friends with several Indian tribes.

This epic journey was made possible through the efforts of a very diverse group. Native Americans and other men and women, Black and White, cooperated to expand our nation from coast to coast.

Sacajawea’s time with the Corps of Discovery is well documented, but when the expedition ended, so did the life-records of this courageous woman. The story of the remainder of her life is still in dispute. Even her name has three spellings. I have used “Sacajawea,” with respect to her people. This Lemhi Shoshone spelling means, “One who is carrying a great burden.” The final record of Sacajawea comes from the official daily journal entry of Fort Manuel, South Dakota. Dated December 20, 1812, it reads: “This evening the wife of Charbonneau died of putrid fever. She was a good and the best woman in the fort, age about twenty-five.”

But Sacajawea was not the only Shoshone wife of Charbonneau. And there is a Wind River Reservation legend that tells us that Sacajawea left her abusive husband and traveled west to these Southern Shoshone, where she died at nearly one hundred years of age.

In my account, I have used only journal entries to convey Sacajawea’s story. These records alone have convinced this writer that Sacajawea performed invaluable service to Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery. No one needs to embellish or romanticize her story to admire the spirit of this remarkable young woman.
The Kiedrowski Corner
Steve Kiedrowski

Reprinted from the Winona Post of December 13, 2000, with the paper’s and author’s permission.

At the intersection of Highways 35 and 93 in Centerville, Wisconsin, there stands a tavern called the Sand Bar. The birth of that bar is a tall tale in the history of the Kiedrowski family and Centerville. They grew up together.

Three generations of Kiedrowskis have owned the tavern. My grandfather, Frank Kiedrowski Sr., built the structure in 1926, the beginning of a “downtown” Centerville.

My grandfather Frank’s entrepreneurial spirit came from his father, Valentine Kiedrowski, my great-grandfather. Valentine was born in Poland in 1832. He married Rosalia Domska and settled in the Dodge and Centerville area. They had fourteen children—three girls and eleven boys.

Anthony Kiedrowski, one of the great-grandchildren, and my cousin, still lives and works on that original family farm.

Frank Sr. was born in 1883. At the age of eighteen, he moved to Winona and worked for the Phoenix Iron Works, fixing cars. In 1903, at the age of twenty, he married Josephine Berzinski of Dodge. They lived in Winona, then moved to Dodge and started their own car repair business on Main Street. But with four corners in Centerville and the advancement of the automobile, he knew that it would be prime development land.

So, in 1926, he bought one acre of land in a cornfield from Mike Scarseth. Then, for $1,600, he built a new garage with four gas pumps called the Centerville Motor Works. Business became so brisk in Centerville that he sold his garage in Dodge and moved to Centerville.

Frank and Josephine had three sons: Elmer (1908), Art (1918), and Frank Jr. (1924).

From Frank Sr.’s initial garage grew other ventures. Through the years, he added a grocery store, barbershop, Chevrolet car dealership, ice cream parlor, and tavern. It was the first “mini mall”!

Frank Kiedrowski Jr. laughed. “They’d make illegal moonshine in the back room, and after Prohibition, they just turned the lights on.”

Once a week during the 1930s, Frank Sr. drove into Winona and loaded up his car with goods from the Griesel Brothers Grocery Store, then drove back and put them on the shelf of his grocery store. When the driver with the delivery truck came back from his rounds, Frank Sr. filled up the truck again and the driver transported the groceries all over the territory. The truck was on the road six days a week.

Frank Jr. said, “I remember going with my dad one time in his 1937 Chevy for groceries. We drove across the old Wagon Bridge to Winona and loaded up the car so full, I couldn’t move a muscle.”

The delivery of groceries stopped in 1942, because during World War II it was too hard to get rubber tires.

About this time, Frank Sr. changed the spelling of his last name from Kiedrowski to Kedrowski. He thought it would be easier to pronounce. Slowly, through the years, it returned to Kiedrowski.

In 1933, he added a tavern and called it the Green Circle. Frank Sr. ran the garage and his oldest son, Elmer, ran the bar. But there was another area bar with a similar name, the Green Lawn Tavern, so Elmer changed the name to Elmer’s Tavern.

Elmer married Marge Bauer and they had three daughters: Betty Lou, Judy and Susan. They all live in Winona. Susan is married to the mayor of Winona, Jerry Miller.

Frank Sr. wanted to try the rental trade, too. He thought with the increase in car traffic at the four corners, some cabins could make a go of it. So he built two cabins to rent out, and later, Elmer ran the rentals. In 1960 those cabins were sold and moved to Trempealeau.

In 1938, Art, my father, married Margaret Marcou. They had five kids: Ruth, Dick, Tony, me, and Mike.

Frank Sr. broke his leg in 1939. He decided to retire at the age of 56. Art then took over the garage full time and Elmer had the tavern.

In February of 1952, one month before I was born, Frank Sr. died at the age of sixty-nine. In 1954, Elmer passed away and his wife Marge ran the tavern for a short time before selling it to Art. The youngest son, Frank Jr., then took over the garage in 1955.

When Art took over the tavern he changed the name to Art’s Bar. Every morning before going to school in Trempealeau, I cleaned the bar. In the evening, I filled the beer and pop coolers.

Frank Jr. was in the Navy from 1942 until 1946. He lived in Guam for several years after the war to help rebuild the island. He then settled in Dodge and worked in Winona at a car dealership.

In 1948, Frank Jr. married Mary Wagner and they had eight children: Jeff, Donna and Don (twins), Kim, Pat, Eric, Heidi and Holly (twins).

In 1960 Josephine died in Trempealeau.

Art and Margaret divorced in 1964 and Margaret took over the tavern until 1966, calling it Margaret’s Bar. My father, Art, died in 1972 and is buried in St. Mary’s Cemetery in Winona. He is remembered as a man who always liked to laugh.

In 1966, Frank Jr., bought the bar from Margaret Valentine was born in Poland in 1832. He married Rosalia Domska and settled in the Dodge and Centerville area. They had fourteen children—three girls and eleven boys.

Anthony Kiedrowski, one of the great-great-grandchildren, and my cousin, still lives and works on that original family farm.

In 1966, Frank Jr., bought the bar from Margaret...
and altered it. He decided to get out of the garage business and focus on the bar, explaining, "My eyesight was getting bad and I needed a backup. So I had an auction and sold most of the garage equipment. With the money I made, I paid for the remodeling of the bar." He reopened with a new name, the Sand Bar. His trademark was his 1919 Oldsmobile truck, which he restored himself. Frank drove it in many local parades, with his dog Mandy riding on the roof. (See page 139.)

He sold out to his son Jeff and last year, Jeff’s brother Eric bought the bar. Frank Jr. is now retired and lives in Centerville.

Eric and his wife, Angie, are now carrying on the Kiedrowski name at the Centerville corner. Next year they hope to tear out part of the attic above the bar and raise the roof.

Eric said, "I grew up here in the garage and bar. It was exciting; this is what I know."

The Kiedrowski Corner in Centerville continues today. 

Frank Kiedrowski Sr., thirty-two, and Josephine (Berzinski) Kiedrowski, thirty-one, and their son, Elmer, five, 1915. (Courtesy of Steve and Mike Kiedrowski, their grandsons and nephews.)
The Red Clay of "My Hill"
Anna Muktpavels-Motivans

When I was growing up I did not have a close-in-age sibling. My sister was eight years older. My closest friend, Olga, lived on the neighboring farm, and she had many chores to do at her home. So I used my imagination to entertain myself a lot.

Latgale is a region in Latvia where my homestead is located. It is known for its blue, clear lakes, hills, birch trees, swamps, and red and gray clay. This clay is ideal for potters. To this day the most famous pottery in Latvia is made in the Latgale region by local families. The art of pottery is passed down from one generation to the next.

Our family was not really made up of artists or potters, but my mother annually went to Silajoni—quite a distance to travel by horse—to buy new cream pots, jam pots, and large crocks to be used in our household to preserve and store food. As a girl, I accompanied her on those trips and really liked the shiny new pots. Some of these pots were decorated with intricate Latvian designs; some were plainer.

I must have been about five or six years old when I started playing on our small hill southwest of the hay barn. This little knoll consisted of red clay—a very pliable material when mixed with water. I started to build my own kitchen: the cookstove with four openings on top for pots, an opening for firewood, and a hole for a chimney. The holes for the pots on the stove I covered with several round rings—just like my mother's stove had in the house. I formed pots with handles and lids. I made a set of plates, cups and saucers, a teapot with a cover, and a sugar bowl and creamer. I fashioned a cupboard out of clay by digging deeper into the side of the knoll and making shelves. I lined up my dishes on the shelves to dry. It took several days of sunshine to dry the red clay. Once dry, the dishes would hold their form and water for some time.

Later, when I got older and went to school, I still played on my hill. Now I fired my little creations in a separate small fire pit with wood pieces and branches piled up on the tops of the pots. The smoke and heat created a black patina-like finish for the dishes, and they were quite strong. I have learned since that much primitive pottery was made this way, not only in Latgale, but also by Native Americans. Sometimes this pottery even had similar designs and decorations imprinted by a rope, comb or thumb. The latter was my method of decoration—just my thumb- and fingerprints on the fresh clay!

Making my own pottery from the red clay of that hill was a great way to pass the time during my childhood when I wasn't with my family or Olga. My hill also served as my pet cemetery, and I gave meaning and order to my childhood universe there. The death of farm animals was part of my world then, just as their life was, and I did not perceive of either as morbid or scary. As a result, deep down in my soul, nothing feels as good today as the red clay of my hill on our family homestead in Latgale, Latvia.

The Librarian
Mary Claire Fehring

Last month in her newspaper column, Laura Schlessinger ("Dr. Laura") was bemoaning the fact that our public libraries are allowed to display paintings such as "The Pleasures of the Flesh" and "Musings on the Nature of Desire." Both of these depict old men ogling and pawing very scantily clad or nude women. The libraries' defense is "freedom of expression." Who in his right mind would consider that appropriate subject matter for young children to view? Also, the American Library Association supports "free choice" reading materials. This, I suppose, includes free choice for young people.

Of course, there are no librarians around anymore like Jennie Fullerton, who ran the library in Rockford, Iowa, a town of about a thousand people when I lived there. For a place that size, it had a substantial library, probably due to Jennie's efforts.

I remember that in about 1934, when I was thirteen years old, Jennie called my mother to tell her the book I'd checked out was not one I should be reading. Mom said I must take it back. I wish I could remember its title, but all I recall is its being about a soldier in World War I who met a girl.

Naturally, I wanted to find out what was in it that I shouldn't be reading, so I took it to school. I should have known that Jennie would call my mother again to tell her I hadn't returned the book yet. Mother was furious with me and sent me back to school to get it and return it to the library. I was only about halfway through it, and I hadn't been able to figure out why it wasn't fit reading for me. The only hint of anything that suggested Hanky-Panky was when the young couple was standing over their baby's crib and talking about how they met. The father said, "Then we talked about you," to the baby. I never did find out any more.

I imagine Dr. Laura would be pleased with librarians like Jennie Fullerton who would shield young people from reading books not considered "proper."
My Grandparents’ Homestead
Nelda Johnson Liebig

The Willis Clark Duncan and Mertie Eitel Duncan homestead, circa 1895, was located in Carroll County, Arkansas, about ten miles south of Berryville. My grandfather, Willis Clark, constructed a one-and-a-half-story log cabin. On the first floor was the family living area, with a large, native-stone fireplace. My grandparents’ bed was at one side of this room. The upper level of the cabin was the sleeping room for their six children. My mother, being the oldest, shared a double bed with her sister at one end of the room, under the eaves. The four boys shared a common sleeping area. There were no finished walls or partitions. An iron cookstove in the lean-to kitchen also provided heat in the damp Arkansas winters.

The outbuildings included a log smokehouse for smoking meat. The rock springhouse had cold water flowing through it. Milk and butter, in watertight tins, sat on flat rock ledges in the water. Another spring bubbled up near the corner of the yard, creating a stream that flowed past the house and through the adjoining woods.

The cabin was razed around 1955 and replaced by a one-story frame house. The smokehouse still stands.

From Pencil to Computer
Marjorie Davison

I first remember the lead pencil we had to sharpen every once in a while to keep a nice fine point on it. Later came the Eversharp. All you had to do was insert a small piece of lead and you could write for some time. Good-bye, pencil-sharpening.

I also remember having seen the quill some people used by dipping it in ink and then writing. The quill was a feather from a big bird, sharpened on one end to a fine point. I don’t recall ever writing with a quill.

The pen with a wooden handle and a metal point was marvelous! One could dip it in ink and write. At school, our desks had inkwells for convenient refills. It was also a temptation for the boys to stick the girls’ pigtails in the inkwells!

Next came the fountain pen by Parker. My, how wonderful—you could fill your pen with ink and write for quite a while before it needed a refill.

My next experience in writing was with the typewriter. WOW! As I remember, the only practice I had on the typewriter was in class. One day, as the teacher stood and watched me with amazement, he said, “Oh, my goodness!” I was typing like I was learning to play the piano!

In the late 1970s, someone mentioned to me that our department was going to change to the keypunch for work. Keypunch—what was a keypunch? I knew what a house key and a car key were, but what kind of a special key do they punch with, and what is it they punch? I found out that Western Wisconsin Technical College was giving a course in keypunching, so I enrolled. My hope was to know all about this strange machine before it ever arrived at work. A couple of weeks later, my boss called me into the office to make me aware that we would be changing our work to the keypunch format. Oh, yes, I responded, I had heard that was going to happen, and since I knew nothing about the machine, I had begun studying it at WWTC. He said, “You have!” as he sat up straight in his chair. “Well, we will pay for your class.” This surprised me, and I was most grateful.

A few years later it was good-bye, keypunch, and hello, computer! We had on-the-job training for the computers. What wonderful, increasingly convenient inventions all these writing tools have been.

A few years ago I had the privilege of using my son Dennis’s laptop computer. And after much persuasion, I was able to send an e-mail message. I must admit—it was fun! I can understand why people are so excited about computers and e-mail.
Viewing a Quilt
Alicia Burgmeier

Bev lay tired and cold on the davenport. She felt ill and was grateful the children were gone for the weekend at their uncle’s farm. It was difficult, but she managed to walk down the hallway to her bedroom to get a large pillow and a blanket. However, when she reached into her closet for the blanket, she remembered that all of her blankets were in the laundry. She wanted to lie on the sofa because it felt better on her back than the bed, so she had only one choice: she had to get out her mother’s quilt. Bev didn’t like to use that quilt. Though it was warm and pretty, it made her think too much about her deceased mother, with whom she had never been able to see eye to eye. But she pulled the quilt out anyway and lay back down on the davenport. As she lay there throughout the afternoon, she tried not to focus on the quilt. She thought about her five children and the past when she argued with her children, a quality she usually looked worn out. She usually looked worn out. Bev had never gotten along with her mother. She used to think that it was because she and her mother were too different. Now she realized that they had been too much the same.

Looking at the quilt, one could see that the fabric was just common cotton, and many pieces were faded. But on closer inspection, Bev noticed the perfect small stitches that characterized her mother’s quilting. Her mother had been a perfectionist in all aspects of her life—with her seamstress work and later, when she hung wallpaper for the wealthy people in town. She made her four girls keep the house in meticulous order, and insisted on hours of study so they would earn high grades in school.

The fabrics making up the quilt were all cut from her mother’s dresses and skirts. There was one of a beautiful aqua color, reminiscent of water. Bev’s mother had been petrified of water, and had not allowed any of her daughters to go swimming in the quarry, though she insisted on swimming lessons for all of them.

Then there was the lilac cotton. Purple in medieval times was a sign of wealth. Bev’s family was never wealthy, but they made do and had enough to eat, decent clothes, and even a little left over for a movie now and then. Their financial status seemed, to Bev, symbolized by that lilac color.

Of course, the quilt contained much of the fabric of a red dress her mother had adored. The red suited her mother’s attitude, Bev thought. She could become irritable at any moment. But Bev also thought about how her mother would stay up through the night sewing to provide the money they needed to get by. In the morning, her eyes would be red and puffy from lack of sleep and from squinting in the poor light.

Though there was a lot of red in the quilt, her mother had also thrown in little pieces of a pink-flowered cloth. If one thought of the pink cloth as a symbol of love, it fit Bev’s mother perfectly. Her mother had not had much love in her life. She had come from an abusive family, but had married. She was happy for about five years and had four children—all girls. But then her husband turned to alcohol and abandoned them.

Also in the quilt was a striped brown material. Brown is a mixture of all colors. In an argument, her mother would bring up all sorts of things from the past. Everything, every emotion that she felt, stayed inside her for years, making her a murky combination of feelings that came out often.

Then Bev noticed the faded quality of the fabric. This showed that her mother was very frugal, but it also was symbolic of the way her mother carried herself. She usually looked worn out.

Bev had never gotten along with her mother. She used to think that it was because she and her mother were too different. Now she realized that they had been too much the same.

Bev was a perfectionist. She was always cleaning and spent hours making sure the pictures were hung just right. She had taken swimming lessons, by order of her mother, but almost drowned and never swam again. However, she had insisted that all of her children take lessons. Bev and her family were not wealthy now, but well-off. With her husband’s two jobs and her profits from selling Avon, they had enough money to buy food and clothes and maybe catch a movie. When Bev looked at the red as a symbol of her mother’s puffy eyes, she realized that the red was also symbolic of care. Her mother stayed up through every night to provide for her children. Bev had many things of her mother’s packed away in trunks and boxes. The next day, when she was feeling better, she unpacked all of those boxes. She had enough quilts to place one at the foot of everyone’s bed and still have three left over to keep in a closet for guests. There were beautiful doilies her mother had made that she placed on each dresser, under each vase, and under the kitchen table centerpiece. There were also beautiful embroidered cloths, which she immediately took to a friend to be framed.

Now Bev, my grandmother, tells me that she keeps these things displayed not only because they remind her of her mother, but because they also remind her of herself. W
I was born on June 11, 1926, on a little farm near Valley, Wisconsin, Forest Township, in Vernon County. We lived for a short time on this small farm and then moved to a farm west of Hillsboro, Wisconsin, I remember only a few things about living on that farm. I remember riding in the horse-drawn buggy with my dad as he took the milk to the creamery in Hillsboro. I enjoyed hearing the clip-clop of the horses' hoofs on the gravel road. It was lots of fun to go for buggy rides with Dad.

My mother did her laundry on the back porch in the summer. I remember one washday, my brother and I were playing house. We were having such good fun. My brother decided he was hungry, so I fixed him some "soup." I took about one cup of the rinse water and put it at the place I'd set for him on our play table. He thought it was good! About that time, Mother came back from the clothesline. When we told her our soup story, she was immediately frightened. My brother was probably two or three years old, and I was a year or two older.

Mother called a neighbor lady who had a car. The lady's husband took Mother and my brother to the doctor in Hillsboro. I stayed with the neighbor's wife. I was so worried—Would my brother die? Would they put me in jail? Oh dear, what shall I do? After what seemed to be forever, they came safely home. Apparently, no harm was done to my little brother.

We then moved to a home about a mile north of the Eastman School. It was a short distance from both of my grandparents' homes. Our house was really quite nice. The siding, I believe, was tile. I remember that the previous owners had left their piano, and my mother used to play it from time to time. That's about as much as I remember about living in that house.

Our next move was to a farmhouse owned by friends. The property adjoined my great uncle's farm. I have many wonderful memories of our family living there. We had a nice yard, with lovely shade trees and a garden. There also was a spring in the yard. It was close enough to the house that it was easy to carry water for all our needs. The spring was also a wonderful place to keep our milk and butter cool in the summer. We had to keep watch if a big rainstorm came along, because it could cause the spring to flood. We did not have electricity at that time.

My mother cooked our meals on a wood-burning cookstove. In the winter, we were kept warm by a wood-burning heater. In the evening, my parents read by kerosene lamplight. As for a bathtub—what was that? We children had no idea what a bathtub even looked like. We used the washbasin, warm water and soap. The wood heater provided enough heat to make us comfortable while we bathed. Yes, we also had an outside toilet. We children had no idea what an indoor bathroom was—what a wonderful invention, when we got one!

On December 27, 1933, a baby boy joined our family. One of my jobs was to get him to sleep in the morning before I went to school. I usually ended my song session by singing "Old McDonald," and he would go to sleep. Well, to be truthful, I could have put most anyone to sleep with my singing!

Friends of my parents lived just up the hill and road from us. They were special to my parents. They had one son, just one year younger than I, and two daughters. The girls were about the ages of my brothers. The six of us played together, either at our home or theirs, nearly every day. What wonderful times!

About a mile farther, up County Trunk P, lived a family that also were friends of ours. There were several children in that family. One of their daughters was about eight years older than I. She walked to Valley High School, and I expect it was a little more than two miles from her home to school. She had two younger brothers, and they were still going to Eastman School.

When I first started school, those three children used to stop for me so I could walk with them. The youngest boy used to come up to the house and ask my mother, "Is Marjorie ready yet?" in a cute little voice. My folks always appreciated that family's thoughtfulness. I often think how considerate and kind those children were to me. I especially remember that those two boys had wonderful toy guns. They were made of metal, and there was a little wheel that you could hook a rubber band onto, and then place it over the end of the barrel. In some way, the wheel was connected to the trigger. When you pulled the trigger—AWAY went the rubber band! Two of my uncles attended Eastman School, too. They also had rubber band shooting guns made out of lath. It was great fun to shoot those guns! We used to play cops and robbers and Lone Ranger at school with them.

Three Black families lived in our neighborhood then. One couple had three children—two daughters and one son. The boy and one of the girls were younger than I. One morning the boy came about an hour late for school. Our teacher questioned him about his tardiness. He explained that he had had a nice walk through the woods on his way to school. The teacher then asked him, "What do you think this is, your birthday?" The little boy quietly replied, "Yes, it is." We all had to laugh, because he was so sincere in his response.

In the springtime, the older students competed in pole vaulting, broad jumping (today, it's called long jumping), and other track and field events. During recess one day, my uncle was smoothing the dirt in the broad jumping pit. Just as he finished smoothing it,
another boy in his class jumped, landing on my uncle’s hand. His shoes had spikes in them, so they hurt. I was so frightened for him!

One cold morning, Dad came home riding Old Jim, my grandpa’s horse. He had been milking at Grandpa’s farm. We had gone out on the porch to walk to school. Dad immediately said, “You children, go back inside! It’s too cold for you to walk to school. It’s thirty degrees below zero!”

There was a little creek in the pasture next to our yard. In the winter, we loved to slide down the hill and skate on the ice in the creek. One day, my uncle and I were skating and the ice made this cracking sound. He said, “I dare you, Puss, to cross it again.” So I skated across another crack. He dared me again, and I skated on it again. This time, a bigger crack developed, and I broke through the ice! Needless to say, my uncle wasted no time in rescuing me. Luckily, it was a shallow stream of water. Oh, what fun!

“My mother cooked our meals on a wood-burning cookstove. In the winter, we were kept warm by a wood-burning heater. In the evening, my parents read by kerosene lamplight. As for a bathtub—what was that?”
By 1950, at age thirty, my life had become an arid waste. A three-year relationship had ended, and my work did not appear to be bringing me enough satisfaction to allow me to emerge from a colorless existence.

To break the slump, I decided to take advantage of the G.I. Bill of Rights. This would enable me to attend school for two full school years. The first year I would be a "special student," with no need to fulfill a degree requirement. Then, with writing skills under my belt, I would work toward a master's degree in Public Health Nutrition, and astound the world with an advice column in national newspapers.

This proved to be the perfect time to change my focus, for the first year spent in writing became the most challenging and fascinating year I had ever known.

The short story class, a two semester adventure, was probably the most interesting of all my courses. The assortment of students was fascinating. There was a fiftyish couple who had done some writing in California. They talked of bathtub gin parties they had attended several times with F. Scott Fitzgerald and Zelda. When they decided to come to North Carolina to hone their skills, they put all their belongings into their rattlesnake car. This trek was accomplished with more faith than good sense.

"We came across the desert on steam. We didn't have enough money to buy gas," they read to the laughing class. They became a part of the avant garde scene in Chapel Hill as they drove around, often parking in front of Danziger's for a couple of beers. There in the basement, they were always surrounded by a group of cheering students, awash with Champale and high spirits.

Another student was Gail, the seventeen-year-old wife of John Ehle, novelist and teacher of radio writing. She and her mother had spent much of her childhood going to Saturday afternoon movies, and Gail was planning to go into movie scriptwriting. I could tell that the interest in this new industry was high with the better students. It was fascinating to be involved with some of the kids who later became well-known on national radio and television.

The professor who taught this unruly class—I cannot recall his name—was an obliging person who encouraged and listened with just the right amount of guidance for this disparate and interesting group of students. One of my stories was accepted by the Carolina Quarterly, giving me encouragement to continue writing.

Then I turned to playwriting. This was even more fascinating, for I learned the vocabulary of stage directions and how to write emotion and meaning into a careful choice of words. One assignment was to write an adaptation from a story. I chose the story of a dog considered to be the runt of a highly bred litter of hunting dogs. (I cannot remember the book it was taken from.) It won a $25.00 prize in a playwriting contest—a magnificent contribution to my limited income of $83.00 a month.

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At one class in acting, the famous Hollywood actor Charles Laughton talked to us about ways in which actors can give certain effects. I remember him showing the technique of thundering as if he was shouting into a tempest as he did as Captain Bligh in Mutiny on the Bounty. He seemed a rather pleasant person in real life, in contrast with the cruel character he played in that movie.

The son of Jan Pierce, the Metropolitan Opera star, was in my playwriting class. Once, during a visit to his son, Jan sat on the edge of the stage and talked, answering questions for the fascinated audience, me included.

The students studying acting were trained to perform in the yearly performances of The Lost Colony, written by Pulitzer Prize winner Paul Green. The play, which recalled the struggles of early English colonists, had been performed since 1937 in an amphitheater on Roanoke Island, off the eastern coast of North Carolina. This was a splendid way to train for the stage or movies.

It was in radio that I took most of my classes. I learned to write for advertising, and if I do say so, came up with some pretty snappy ten- and thirty-second gems. Two of my radio dramas were produced. Students (including me) acted and taped them, to be broadcast later over the public radio system of North Carolina. It was fun to act in dramas in which one did not have to face an audience.

Television was in its infancy in the early 1950s, but I could tell that the interest in this new industry was high with the better students. It was fascinating to be involved with some of the kids who later became well-known on national radio and television.

The final exam of one course required me to be a radio announcer and disk jockey. It required a lot of dexterity to keep everything going smoothly. Just my luck—something went wrong with the equipment! The entire time I was trying to announce the records, get them playing, and give advertising spots, someone was crawling down around my feet trying to get the wires set properly. This was a bit disconcerting. I did thank the Gods of Radio that I had worn slacks that day! And I passed, although I have wondered ever since whether the teacher heard any of my efforts.

I was so afraid of the sarcasm of Mr. Briskin, who taught production, that I declined taking that one course. Otherwise I would have emerged from that year with a major in Radio. Mr. Briskin had a brother who was big in Hollywood, and the possibilities there might have been interesting. Perhaps I could have been tempted to follow that venue instead of going the second year to acquire a master's degree in Public
Health Nutrition. But that is not what I did. Oh, well . . .

And yet I enjoyed the entire year, and met fascinating people doing incredible things in the arts. Kay Kaiser, whose national radio program was entitled Kay Kaiser and his College of Musical Knowledge, lived in Chapel Hill. On occasion, he would wander into a class to see what was going on. The entire town was actually a writer’s colony. Well-known writers came to breathe in the atmosphere that seemed to seep into our bones.

It was about that time that Thomas Wolfe’s You Can’t Go Home Again was published posthumously. He had attended the University of North Carolina, and many of his novels were set in that beautiful state. I felt as if I had lived within his aura. Along with the natives, I mourned his passing at the age of thirty-eight.

What a grand year it was!

Laura Ingalls was born in a little gray log cabin near Pepin, Wisconsin, on February 7, 1867. Shortly after her first birthday, the family moved to Chariton County, Missouri. One year later, they returned to Pepin. When she was approximately two years old, she traveled in a covered wagon to Kansas. Her family returned to Wisconsin in the summer of 1871 via Missouri and Iowa.

In 1871, Mary, Laura’s older sister, and Laura enrolled in the Barry Corner School near Pepin. In 1874, they moved to Walnut Grove, Minnesota, and to Burr Oak, Iowa, in 1876, before moving to De Smet, South Dakota, where they were the first settlers.

She started teaching in a little schoolhouse at the age of fifteen and married Almanzo Wilder three years later. They moved to a farm in Mansfield, Missouri, where she lived until she passed away in 1957.

Laura Ingalls Wilder began writing at sixty-five years of age. She wrote the first in a series of eight books, Little House in the Big Woods, describing her life in the Pepin area. She thought that after she wrote the first book her success was ended, but to her surprise, it wasn’t. She didn’t think she was an author, because she hadn’t graduated from a big school; she had only attended little red schoolhouses.

Laura Ingalls Wilder is loved for her delightful writing style and for her homespun philosophy, especially in the Little House books. Reflecting on her rugged frontier youth, she always felt that the truth we learn from our parents and the principles they teach are usually based on honesty.

This pioneer writer’s life is honored by a town approximately seven miles from her birth site. Pepin, Wisconsin, is proud to claim this author as a native daughter. Townspeople have dedicated a park in her memory, along with a historical marker. The business community and present landowner acquired three acres of land on which a replica of the log cabin of her youth stands. A wall inside the cabin has family letters, pictures, and important documents displayed behind glass. When standing in the log cabin, one thinks of how the fireplace was used for warmth and cooking back in the 1800s. When looking at the loft, one imagines the ladder the children climbed to get to the feather beds and the handmade covers used for sleep.

Laura Ingalls Wilder is also honored by a memorial society organized in her name in July of 1974. That group meets periodically and publishes informative newsletters, which are distributed worldwide. An example of information within the publications follows: “William Boyd Newcomb was the postmaster at Pepin when Laura was born in the little house in the big woods. He was the first white settler in the village in 1850. On February 12, 1867, five days after Laura was born, Milton B. Axtell was commissioned as postmaster. He was also the town’s physician.”

Laura was always active doing something, like being a member of a group of women putting on a fund-raising bazaar. She organized study clubs, parties for celebrations, created a group to help get books for a classroom, and set up a library.

It’s been many years since wicks of kerosene lamps have been trimmed and their chimneys cleaned. The days of covered wagons and women’s bustles have gone, but children continue to learn how their forefathers lived through the pioneer’s books. In 1954, Laura Ingalls Wilder was awarded a medal for “lasting contribution to children’s literature,” which she certainly deserved.

“It’s been many years since wicks of kerosene lamps have been trimmed and their chimneys cleaned. The days of covered wagons and women’s bustles have gone, but children continue to learn how their forefathers lived through the pioneer’s books.”

Writing Pioneer

Doris Kirkeeng
My great-grandfather, David A. Marcou Sr., was always interested in the meat business—that's why he started his stores. At first, he didn't have "Marcou's Market," he had smaller meat markets in Mondovi, Black River Falls and Galesville. He had grown up on a farm owned by my great-great-grandfather, John Marcou. David learned how to butcher meat on the farm. This family story will tell about how his last store started and ended, and some of the little things that happened there.

David A. Marcou Sr. bought his last and biggest store in 1941 from Herman Heggy. Great-Grandpa renamed it "Marcou's Market." It was mainly a meat market, since my great-grandfather specialized in that, but it had other items also, including sugar, meat, milk, and butter. It was somewhat limited in that you wouldn't be able to find everything you could at a Quillin's grocery store today. My great-grandpa wasn't the only one in the Marcou family to own the market. My grandpa, David A. Marcou Jr., owned it for a short time in the 1950s, and his brother, Jim Marcou, owned it for a while too, when my great-grandpa thought he was going to retire. He came out of retirement after a year or two when he decided to run the store again, since he loved running it. Through the sixties, my uncles also worked there, and my dad.

During World War II, people used stamp-like documents called rationing coupons to buy food so that they wouldn't be able to buy too many of the products that others needed—like meat and sugar. Also during this time, Great-Grandpa started a credit store for his friends and people who really needed help. He kept tabs on everyone's bill, and credit customers were supposed to pay him back sooner or later. Of course, not everyone paid their debts, and some of his customers cheated my great-grandpa. He was too forgiving, and kept thinking they would pay him back in time. He never went to their houses asking for the money back.

Another interesting thing about David A. Marcou Sr. is that he had an amazing gun collection. In the store every morning, when he got bored or tired of the rats, he would go down to the store's basement (especially early in the morning when he came to open the store up). When he went down into the basement, he took a World War II German Luger and shot as many rats as he could before it was time to open and before anyone else in the family, including Great-Grandma Marcou, could wake up and find out.

Although Marcou's Market was once one of the city's largest grocery stores, it closed in 1972 because not enough money was coming in during its last few years, and because other supermarkets were starting. But today, the story of the store is known through my grandparents, my dad, and all my uncles, aunts, and cousins. We all wish this store was still open and that a Marcou would soon re-open it. We are all happy that this store existed and affected our lives so much. Though it wasn't as big as many of today's stores, it will be remembered for generations to come, maybe even longer than the big stores. We Marcous were, and are still, very proud of that store.
Entries from My Great-Grandfather's Civil War Diary
Joyce Crothers

Editor's Note: These entries from the two-volume Civil War diary of Robert Welch Jr., a member of the 165th New York Volunteers, the Duryea Zouaves, have been transcribed into manuscript form by Joyce Crothers, one of his descendants, to be published eventually in book form. These entries (from 1861) have been left virtually unedited to emphasize their historical authenticity. Trooper Welch served from 1861 to 1865, in more than one enlistment. The battle described here is the First Battle of Bull Run, the first great battle of that war, which could have resulted in the fall of Washington if the Confederate Army had pressed its advantage. Trooper Welch and his unit came back to acquit themselves well later in the war, especially in the Deep South.

July 19th: It rained ... last night. During the day there was considerable excitement. Several batteries went to the front. Wagons are passing all day. The Regiment had fresh beef issued. Our rations are not very good, but the men do not complain. Took a bath today and went after some berries. We had our regular dress parade. Am in good health and spirits.

July 20th: Up bright and early. The day is very warm. Received the mail, some letters for me—answered them. Today the battery attached to the 8th Regiment New York State Militia refused to go any further as their time was out. They went to the rear to the shame and disgrace of themselves and Regiment. The 8th Regiment remained with us. Our time is out today, but the men all decided to stay and did not want to go home without a fight. Most of the militia’s time were up, but they all stayed. We had our dress parade.

July 21st: Sunday. At 12 midnight Saturday night the Regiment was called up. Everything was ready and at 2 A.M. we commenced the march. We were in Hunters Division, Burnside’s Brigade composed of the 1st and 2nd Rhode Island, 2nd New Hampshire, and 71st New York, General Sprague accompanying us. The march was continued in the above order. The column marched for some 8 hours. We passed through Centerville, through the woods and at the blacksmith shop, a branch road was taken towards Sudley’s Springs near where was a church called Sudley’s Church, arriving there about 10 A.M. They [sic] men were completely tired out, having had nothing to eat, and on a continual march of 8 hours, and completely unused to it, a great many dropped out from fatigue. Still, the spirit of the men was good. When we arrived at the Sudley crossing of Bull Run, the roar of battle was raging. Passing into a piece of timber after crossing, the advance of the Brigade halted and our Regiment passed to the front leading the advance of Brigade and Division, and the extreme right of the Union Army. As our Regiment filed out of the woods by the right flank and became clear, the order was given by the left flank in line of battle. As we were advancing with our howitzers on our left, we had hardly advanced when two pieces of artillery came dashing through our line from the rear. The Regiment opened quickly to the right and left, the battery advancing to the front. The Regiment quickly closed again, marching quickly to the front, abow of the hill, in full view of the enemy just emerging from the woods. It was the extreme left of the enemy. Hardly had the men arrived at the crest of the hill when the enemy received a full volley from our Regiment. The other Regiment became engaged also. The roar of battle was deafening, and the enemy pounced a heavy volley [sic] into us. A good many officers and men were killed or wounded. I was wounded in the first fire, was immediately carried to the rear at Sudley Church, which had been turned into a hospital. After having my wound dressed, I sat against a tree and rested. Was wounded in the thigh, a flesh wound. The hospital was under fire of the rebel artillery, shots often coming amongst the men, and such a sight at the church – hundreds of men laying [sic] around with all manner of wounds. Amid the groans and moans of the wounded and dying and the roar of artillery and musketry, such a horrid sight to witness by men unused to such a sight. The Regiment continued in the fight, our men were being brought to the hospital to be attended to. Our Brigade drove the enemy from their position and caused them to retreat. After the retreat the Regiment rested at the edge of the woods. The day was considered ours. The enemy were driven at all quarters, and General McDowell passed by the hospital and from what was said, the day was ours. There was a lull in the battle at 3:30 P.M. I had been resting myself, for I was very tired and hungry. All my arms and equipment I clung to, not intending to lose them. The Brigade was called again, after an hour’s rest, to advance into position from where the enemy had been driven. Hardly had they reached the position, when a murderous volley [sic] was pounced into them at short range from a dump of trees that skirted the hill. The head of this column struck our Regiment as it had the extreme right of the army. The rebel reinforcements were Early’s Brigade of Johnston’s army. Reinforcements that had arrived from the

They [sic] men were completely tired out, having had nothing to eat, and on a continual march of 8 hours, and completely unused to it, a great many dropped out from fatigue. Still, the spirit of the men was good.”
Shanandoah [sic] Valley just in the nick of time. The rebels were in retreat and the day was considered lost to them, and the [sic] here were fresh troops of some 12,000 shoved in against our men, tired out and hungry. Soon the order was given to retreat. Such a sight. When I hear [sic] it, I picked my things up and limped to the rear as soon as possible. Such a confusion and turmoil. Men of all kinds mixed in one confused mass. Teamsters cut the traces, mounted the horses and put to the rear as fast as possible. Soon our Regiment came along in order and I joined them, They were much reduced, not much like the proud men that went so bravely forward that morning. The men were very kind to me, helped me along by the arms. One carried my musket. My knapsack I had on my back. We arrived at our old camp near Centerville. After resting a while, orders were given to return to Washington. I felt tired, hungry and my leg began to get stiff, but a man on each arm, another my musket, I managed to get along to Fairfax Court House. I completely used up, very feverish, and no water to drink. The roads all along were strewn with men used up and laying [sic] about not able to go any further. It was a good thing the enemy did not follow up the retreat, as they could have taken thousands of prisoners. I could go no further and I told the men so, when one of the men hailed a teamster who I asked me if I was going to Washington, I was, so I got lead to the long bridge and Alexandria, the teamster refused. When one of the men threatened to shoot him if he did not, finally he consented, and I was permitted to go. When one of the men hailed a teamster who I asked me if I was going to Washington, I was, so I got lead to the long bridge and Alexandria, the teamster refused. When one of the men threatened to shoot him if he did not, finally he consented, and I was permitted to go. The roads all along were strewn with men used up and laying [sic] about not able to go any further. It was a good thing the enemy did not follow up the retreat, as they could have taken thousands of prisoners. I could go no further and I told the men so, when one of the men hailed a teamster who I asked me if I was going to Washington, I was, so I got lead to the long bridge and Alexandria, the teamster refused. When one of the men threatened to shoot him if he did not, finally he consented, and I was permitted to go.

July 22nd: Arriving at the junction of the roads that lead to the long bridge and Alexandria, the teamster asked me if I was going to Washington, I was, so I got out and offered him for his kindness a $2.50 gold piece which he refused. I thanked him. Being away from the Regiment, I managed to get along. Arrived at the earthworks on the west end of the long bridge. Found a large number of men there all anxious to get across, but the officer in command would not allow anyone across. Told him I was wounded, but he would not believe me. Finally I said if you do not believe me, there's my wound, showing it to him. I was anxious to have it dressed for it pained me very much as I had had no sleep for over 24 hours and on the march, hungry and completely used up. It rained soon after I got out the wagon, covered with dust, [and I] was a sorry looking object to look upon. About 11 A.M. I passed over the bridge, the permission being granted me, and was about the first in the city. Such a crowd of people, men and women and children, many crying and all had an anxious look for they did not know what would happen to them, as they supposed the city would soon be captured. A great many beseeched me to go to their homes with them, and finally a gentleman, a brother of the Mayor of the city (I believe), said I must come to his house and get something to eat and take a rest, dirty and wet as I was. He took me to his wife who gave me a good dinner, and made me rest upon a lounge. Slept for a couple hours. I awoke and after thanking them for their kindness, I proceeded to a drugstore on Pennsylvania Ave., procured some linament [sic] to bathe my wound with. About this time, 2 P.M., the troops were coming into the city in some degree of order. They were detained on the other side of the bridge until the men could form their Regiments. Our Regiment came over very soon, having kept up the Regimental formation. Arrived at the Yard about 3 P.M. A dirty, wet and forlorn looking body of men, so far different from the neat and proud Regiment that left a few days ago. The Colonel felt very keenly the shabby looks of his once proud Regiment. The rain continued all day. The men were completely used up, hungry, tired and low spirited. The doctor made me come up to the officer's quarters and sleep all night.

July 23rd: Went to my quarters, my limb troubling me considerable. Kept it well bandaged. The doctor ordered me to keep quiet and take plenty of rest. The ball went through the fleshy part of my thigh grazing one of the arteries. I received a telegram from Amos Smith in regard to G. W. Smith. Answered it. He was a prisoner in the enemy's hands. A telegraph I sent to father that I was safe. The Regiment lost in the battle in killed, wounded and missing—63 officers and men. Company F loosing [sic] the largest number of men, 16, Company D the least. 3. Company I lost their howitzers in the retreat although they tried hard to bring them home with them. Our total loss in the Army was 481 killed, 101 wounded, not including missing. The enemy lost reported 378 killed, 1489 wounded.

July 24th: The Regiment had a parade in the morning to see how the men looked. After the rest of two days, the men felt better. They did not look so nice and firm, clothes dirty and somewhat haggard in appearance. Received letters from home and friend. My limb quite stiff. Orders were given for the men to be ready to go home to New York. As our time was out and the men had done their duty. At 12 noon the Regiment (sic) left their quarters, marched to the depot. After considerable delay, we got off, and arrived in Baltimore.

“Whee-e-e,” her mother said as she held Anna Li, my adopted granddaughter, and whirled round and round the room in a dizzy dance. Anna Li’s dark eyes sparkled as she squealed with delight. This was her introduction to the feel of air rushing past her face and the joy of movement in space.

I am certain I must have felt the wind in the same way down in the Ozarks, when Daddy tossed me high in his strong arms. My memory can still see him as he did the same with my younger brothers, James and David. They, too, were experiencing the lovely catch in the pit of one’s stomach—a momentary escape from gravity that released us from Newton’s Law!

FREEDOM!

Burned into memory is the day our Model T Ford, Lizzie, came into our lives one bright summer day in Alton, Missouri. I was four, and can remember placing finger marks over its shiny surface as I memorized this new miracle of speed. I can see Mother, shedding her apron and grabbing toddler James, as she slammed the screen door and demanded a test ride. Into the car we climbed, no seat belts there to hinder our plunge into the miracle of the century—freedom to go wherever we pleased in the shortest time possible.

By today’s standards, the promise of thirty-five miles per hour seems ridiculous, but then, what a marvelous sensation! Since my dad had never driven before that day, we experienced a series of jerks and stops as he figured out the process of driving. His approach to this new skill was adversarial. For weeks, the engine killed. Daddy would get out and violently turn the crank to start it again. This would inspire a terror in me that perhaps we would never go again. When at last the fear of failure was past, James leaned his head out one side, and I did the same on my side, our mouths open to receive the wind.

When at last the fear of failure was past, James leaned his head out one side, and I did the same on my side, our mouths open to receive the wind.

Later, after we had moved to Thayer, we often drove to Alton to spend Sunday afternoons with my grand-father Steele. He lived in a small house on the edge of town. There, he could, in retirement, still keep a cow for milk, a few chickens for eggs, and a pig for butchering in the fall for winter meat.

James and I loved to wander around his small “farm.” However, when the call came that it was time to go, we would race to the car to see who could sit behind Daddy. It was there that we felt we could assist with the driving.

Although the Ozark Mountains sport a more or less up-and-down terrain, there was between Alton and Thayer a special hill. Years later, when we made this drive, I could not find it. Did they reroute the road? Or was my idea of a hill magnified by its challenge to our Lizzie? Before we even neared that “mountain,” I would begin to dread the climb. If Daddy could speed up a lot, he might make it to the top. Often he did not, in spite of our cries: “Go faster, Daddy. Go faster.” Then we would have to back down the hill and far along the straight stretch before Lizzie could attack the enemy once more. I can still feel my clenched hands and anxiety level as she labored to reach the towering peak.

Once when we were visiting my grandparents, we discovered a cute little pepper plant sitting on a small table in the dining room. James, never afraid to taste forbidden fruit, popped a pepper into his mouth. In seconds, he bellowed with pain. It was the hottest of hot red peppers that my grandmother used as an ornamental plant. Ever afterward, I would remember the ride home—poor James trying to ease the sting by hanging his head out the side to feel the rushing wind in his mouth.

Occasionally on our Sunday drives, we encountered rain. Then, Mother and Daddy pulled side curtains from under our back seats. They needed to be snapped on metal buttons placed around the top of the car. Until we learned that there were other cars out there with roll down and up windows, I felt quite regal with this arrangement. The curtains gave a delicious sense of security as we peered out the tiny isinglass windows at a world turned amber.

The approach to Thayer was a danger we children never knew until one rainy day we drove with the side curtains obscuring our view. As Lizzie neared the tracks of the Frisco line between Springfield and Memphis, Tennessee, a passenger train suddenly loomed out of the mist and roared by. We had stopped only fifteen feet from the tracks. My father had not seen the train until it was nearly upon us. I can remember him sitting there, shaking, and Mother rubbing his shoulders and murmuring comforting words. Even then, the split-second of safety we had been granted to receive did not impress James and me until we heard the story repeated again and again.

Later, when David joined the family, we could add to our parent’s joy by beginning arguments about who was going to sit where even before we left the house. Since I was the oldest, I could out-argue David, but James was a worthy adversary. We would poke each other and find other diversions to tax Daddy’s endurance. Then came the stern threat, “Shall I stop the car?” A blessed silence would ensue for maybe three or four minutes.

Lizzie served us well for many years, but eventually she became quite outdated. This did not bother us until a fat little boy named Sherman began teasing us. Whenever he saw us driving by, he would shout out, “I can run faster than you.” Although we knew this wasn’t true, black anger would cause James and me to forget sibling rivalry for a moment as we “Yah-yahed” back at that stupid kid, passing him.

When we finally deserted our Ford for a Chevrolet, complete with windows that rolled up and down and
minus that crank to turn, we felt quite elegant and dismissed Lizzie with no regrets. At last we were joining the ranks of car lovers, which we continue to belong to today. Still, I rather like to remember Lizzie’s eccentricities. She was stalwart in spite of her whims and crotchets.

Never again did we enjoy the rush of wind past our faces, the adventure of stopping to put up curtains with isinglass windows when rain showers came, or the freedom of travel without seat belts and speed laws.

Elkhart Lake: A Sailor’s Sailing
Gordon H. Hampel

The front door’s chime sounded. I said aloud to myself, “I’ll bet Randy is finished cutting the grass and is about to collect his check.”

We talked through the screen door. (I talk often with Randy, and at a fast pace, as he is most always in a hurry to get somewhere, or to do something.) Randy said: “Hi, Gordon. I stopped by to tell you Pat and I, and Justin, too, are about to drive to Milwaukee. I’ll cut your grass when I return. We will be visiting Pat’s parents in Cudahy. We’ll also attend a family reunion at Elkhart Lake on Sunday. Are you familiar with that lake?”

That question opened a floodgate of memories. I replied: “You bet I’m familiar with Elkhart Lake. Even though I haven’t been there in more than eighty years, I remember it well. Immediately after World War I, I visited the area with my parents. We stayed at a lawyer friend’s home that Art, Ruby, and his father—an aged, elfin, snow-white-haired man—occupied during the summer. A big, two-story, white, wood-clad, one-of-a-kind structure, encircled by a decorative porch, dominated the lakeshore.

“Early in the afternoon, Mother, brother George, and I crossed the lake in a large wooden boat powered by an Evinrude outboard motor operated by Mother. We were proud of her mechanical abilities. She was also learning to operate and drive the family’s Elgin Six touring car. Seated at the back of the boat, she wore a stiff, straw sailor hat, which a strong gust of wind lifted off her mass of blonde hair and set afloat alongside the boat.

“‘Don’t bend over to reach for my hat, boys. Just watch it float’—and that it did, to the other side of that pretty lake. I still admire her calmness. On its way, the sturdy, stiff, summer hat filled with water and sank.

“Back on land, after telling the exciting hat story, we boys took a walk to a neighboring farmer’s apple orchard. Later, we returned to the big house with as many apples as we could carry. Mother and Dad warned us that we might be arrested for stealing the apples, as we hadn’t asked the farmer if we could take any. To keep from going to jail, George and I returned all of them. Back at the summerhouse, we felt good and safe, knowing the Elkhart Lake police would not take us off to jail.

“After a delightful picnic lunch and visit, we readied ourselves to return home to Milwaukee in our new red Elgin touring car. Our wonderful visit to the Richter summerhouse was never repeated.”

(L to R) Elisabeth and Kathlyn, tiny sisters, in hats, 2001. Onalaska, WI (By Stephanie Dabrowski, their mom).
Theatres and Popcorn
Helen Bolteman

Entertainment in the 1940s and '50s did not have to be expensive. Many times, we made our own entertainment—ice skating in the winter, roller skating in the summer, along with baseball, football, or other neighborhood games. Our paid entertainment included the occasional movie, because television had not made the scene yet. Although radios were the home entertainment center and communicator, outside the home we could take in the matinee movie for ten cents; and if we had an extra nickel, we could buy a box of popcorn or a candy bar for the show.

I often reminisce about the summers spent at my grandfather’s farm in Minnesota during my early teens in the 1940s. While there, I visited my special cousin, Jane, daughter of Aunt Tilda and Uncle Sam. Jane was just a year younger than I, but both of us had a lot of energy and we were quite agreeable about finding entertainment.

One of our favorite activities was when Aunt Tilda and Uncle Sam went shopping on Friday night in the nearby town of Maynard, Minnesota. While my aunt and uncle did their shopping, Jane and I walked up and down the streets, hoping for the chance to see some of our friends. After walking several streets in this small town, we’d gather with our friends to watch the free movies offered by the town’s merchants as an incentive to lure shoppers to their stores.

At dusk, the movies were projected on the side of a two-story building. Rows of benches were available for the viewing audience. There was also popcorn to purchase from a vendor on the nearby street corner. The movies were somewhat outdated, but we didn’t mind.

In the larger city of La Crosse, free movies were not offered; but we had seven movie theatres in the city to choose from, and a matinee show was a good buy at ten cents. The main theatres were the larger Rivoli and the Hollywood, both located downtown. They had priority for first-released movies; thereafter, they would be offered to the neighborhood theatres. Of course, there was always the scent of popcorn tempting our tastebuds at all the theatres.

My first “must go to the movies” involved Shirley Temple shows. As I grew older, also popular was Gone with the Wind, during which an intermission was scheduled to give the audience a break. But Tyrone Power was my real hero, and starred in such movies as In Old Chicago, with Alice Faye, and the western thriller Jesse James. Other famous movies I recall are The African Queen, starring Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn, and Grapes of Wrath, starring Henry Fonda, Jane Darwell, and John Carradine. The hair-raising Frankenstein movies starring Boris Karloff were popular, too.

Two smaller theatres located downtown were the Bijou and the Wisconsin. They often featured westerns starring Gene Autry and Roy Rogers; also, my husband recalls the Frank Buck movie series, Bring Them Back Alive, featured at the Bijou Theatre.

The Fifth Avenue Theatre, also located downtown, offered incentives on otherwise low-attendance nights. I recall Mother getting some inexpensive dishes by attending on bargain night.

After Wes and I married, the Strand, a neighborhood theatre, was within walking distance of our rented apartment on the south side of La Crosse. We enjoyed first class movies there, even though they appeared months later than the original showing at the downtown theatres. In later years, the smaller theatres gradually disappeared.

In the late 1950s and early '60s, outdoor drive-in theatres began springing up on the outskirts of the city. Movies could be viewed from the comfort of your car, and the ticket price covered all passengers in the vehicle. Each stall was equipped with a speaker that fit over the driver’s side window. A large movie screen stood in front of the cars, accommodating all viewers. These outdoor theatres were popular with young couples and also with families having small children, since it meant savings for them by not having to hire a baby-sitter. Movies began at dusk, and sometimes there were two features.

After we purchased our home in Onalaska and had a growing family, we often took advantage of the opportunity to see a movie at the outdoor theatre. Since the movie would progress past our two younger children’s bedtime, we dressed them in their pajamas so they could be slipped into bed on arrival back home. We realized another savings by popping a huge bag of popcorn to take with us. Drinks, popcorn, and other snacks were offered for sale at a concession stand on the grounds. At intermission time, which would be announced on the screen, we sometimes bought pop to accompany our popcorn.

The popularity of color TV and the offerings of movies at home caused the outdoor theatres’ demise. Today, home entertainment options are numerous, with our VCRs and inexpensive rental films, and there is no need to go out for movies—unless, of course, Mom and Dad need a night out to relax away from the children.

Of the seven original movie theatres once here, only two remain today, the Hollywood and the Rivoli; movies are now shown at them on a much smaller scale, with older films often being featured. Several modern movie theatres have also been built in the area, carrying the latest movies, but they do not excite me as I recall the movie adventures of my youth. I still hold fond memories of free movies, neighborhood theatres, and the days when we packed our children up for a night at the outdoor theatre, complete with our own freshly popped popcorn.
Yesterday's Treasures
Helen Bolterman

I am my father's daughter, having inherited his longing to save, and I am a child of the Depression era. When our children were young, times demanded conservation. Jeans were mended, with neat patches of material from Mom's scrap box. Then, children didn't mind wearing the patched jeans for after-school activities, since all their friends did likewise. They saved their good clothes by changing to older jeans or shirts when they got home from school. I smile now when I see baggy jeans on teens, with the soiled, tattered bottoms flopping over their shoes. Today, these same teens wouldn't be caught dead wearing patched jeans, but for a while, holes in the knees were acceptable.

My daughter once asked me, "Mother, why are you saving those Ziplock bags?" as she viewed the washed objects hanging over kitchen racks to dry. I replied, "They are still usable, and think of the savings to our environment. Some of our grocery stores encourage us to save their paper bags, too, and offer a five-cent return for reusing them to pack our groceries again. Think of the trees we would save over time if all of us would reuse our paper bags." She shrugged and walked away, but maybe someday she will inherit her mother's bug to save.

There are so many things today that make life easier—we have nearly every appliance modern science has dreamt up. We have washers and dryers that take little more energy than pushing a button. I remember the washing machine of my early married life. It was modern compared to my mom's machine—it had large balloon-type wringer rollers to wring out the washed clothes into two nearby washtubs mounted on legs. The clothes went through two rinses as we swung the wringer from the washing machine to each tub. I used to divide the clothes, washing the white clothes first, then the colored, and last, the jeans or dark clothes—thus using the same soapy water over again. Strangely, I use this routine today, with white clothes first, although each load uses fresh water and soap. We take water for granted today. A few states are expecting a water shortage, though, and maybe the old wringer washer wasn't such a bad idea.

With electricity and natural gas becoming more scarce and expensive, maybe we will be forced to use other sources, such as the wood or coal of earlier days, as well as cut back on the many luxuries and modern appliances we're used to, like TVs, Nintendos, VCRs—but please, not my computer. I rather miss going to the large movie theatre to view those spectacular movies, such as Gone with the Wind. Those movies are now available for rent, and we sit in our comfortable chairs to watch them at home. They tell us Americans to exercise for our health, so let's get out of our comfortable chairs and go to a movie!

We are a throwaway society, with landfills overflowing and people buying for now, with no regard to the future. The manufacturers are no help either, as they encourage us to buy new appliances sooner than we need to by changing their color—from green to gold, from gold to almond. Now, almond is already dated, having been replaced by a lighter color. My fifty-year-old white refrigerator in the basement, which we used for overflow, just gave up the ship; whereas, the two frost-free models bought after it each lasted less than a third as long. Our gold stove, which played out recently, has now been replaced with white and black—it doesn't match our gold refrigerator, but so be it. I'm determined that white will be it for all appliances purchased from now on.

I still look forward to going to auctions to find special buys. My husband sometimes accompanies me, but being a little less caught up with auction treasures, he cautions me, "You don't need that," as I wistfully note the great buy on a chair I just have to have. Yet, when I bought a flexible desk lamp for a dollar, he quickly swept it up and put it on his workbench downstairs. Also, when I purchased a $5 popcorn popper, with the label still on it, for one of our children, he said: "No way. We'll keep it—you can't touch that for $20 in the store."

I note also the antique dealers who take in auctions, investigating the many boxes for treasures—items we threw away years ago. I see them examining dishes or glassware to see if there is a certain trademark before making their bid. I do not attempt to outbid these people, but observe their treasures to see if possibly I may have such valuable items at home.

I believe we are coming to the realization that there is a need now for conserving and recycling—Americans are saving newspapers, cans, bottles, and turning in aluminum cans for cash. I was particularly pleased when a young man whom we visited with at a vacuum/sewing machine shop told us that in Germany, they make durable appliances due to limited landfill space. He said that the German-made vacuum cleaners they handle may cost a lot more, but they are made to last. Maybe, with more thinking like this, there is hope that future generations will preserve our environment for their children. Maybe too, our American manufacturers will do as their foreign cohorts do and use more durable materials in what they sell; and maybe we as customers will look more for quality instead of cheaper, throwaway goods.


The winter had been long and hard, the worst it had been in quite a few years. Spring was trying to break through. The rivers were all above flood stage. I had been out to the mall and decided to see what the flooded area on the north side of Copeland Park looked like.

As I drove south through the intersection of Rose and Clinton Streets, just north of Copeland Park Hill, I remembered the ice skating rink that had been in this very place. It was where I had learned to skate and had spent many enjoyable hours with family and friends.

The warming house was at the foot of the park hill. A nice man, whom we called “Peanuts,” was the attendant. He kept the fire going in the potbelly stove, and if we asked him, he helped us tighten our skate laces so our ankles wouldn’t buckle too much. He stopped us if he saw us playing crack-the-whip, which we often did. He didn’t want anyone getting hurt.

Our favorite game was blacksmith, a combination of tag and hide-and-seek. Many times when we played it, we climbed up to the top of the hill to hide so we wouldn’t be the first ones caught. Then, when we thought we were safe, we skated down the hill, sometimes into the back side of the warming house, to stop ourselves and hide a little longer before going back on the ice.

There were times when we went sledding and tobogganing down the hill. For some reason, it seemed much steeper then; perhaps we wore it down. We’d go down and up the hill until we were almost frozen; then we’d take the shortest way home. There we warmed up on hot chocolate topped with marshmallows, and toast or cookies, while we thawed out the frozen parts of our bodies. Then we talked about going again the next day.

I kept driving, quite slowly, so I could look out at the playground on the west side of the hill. Everything was sitting in floodwater: the wading pool was overflowing, the street on the other side of the park had disappeared, and the boathouses were sitting high in the Black River.

My friends and family had spent many summer days at this playground. We lived just a few blocks away. When we were young, but old enough to make our way, Mom used to pack us a lunch in a brown bag, usually a peanut butter sandwich, some cookies and an orange or apple. We could get a drink from the water fountain, or “bubbler,” as we called it. Wearing our swimsuits under our play clothes, we’d carry towels on our shoulders to use after we went into the wading pool.

Since the pool opened after lunch, we’d bide our time by challenging each other on the swings to see who could go the highest. Then we’d all help turn the merry-go-round to get it moving fast before we hopped on. The teeter-totters and slides also got much use. We’d spend a fun-filled afternoon there before making our way back home, tired and hungry.

When we were a little older, a group of us neighbor kids used to go to the old ball park to watch the baseball or softball games at night. We could sit in the bleachers for free, but we also used to try to sneak into the grandstand. Sometimes, after a few tries, we succeeded; other times we’d get caught and have to go back to the bleachers. A few times, my dad took us and we were paying customers. It was fun either way.

By now, I had reached the south end of the park. At one time there was a lumber company on the corner, but I can’t recall the name. I continued down the street, across the new viaduct over the tracks, past the place where my dad’s barbershop and our home had been, and my eyes were as flooded as the park. My drive through memory lane was over.
The police department of the city of La Crosse, Wisconsin, has seen its share of violence over time. Riots have left their mark on the city, beginning with those that took place right after President Lincoln was assassinated. A little while later, Nathan “Scotty” Mitchell, a deranged man who murdered a local business leader at a political rally, was lynched. The Coon Creek riots made news around the world in 1991 when a police car was torched and overturned, leading to the development of some of the most effective crowd-control tactics in U.S. history. Three city police officers have died in the line of duty. The police department has met its difficulties with resolution and ingenuity.

On a peaceful summer day, July 20, 1935, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was in the White House, and the country was working its way out of the worst depression it had ever known. The world was at peace, the country was at peace, and La Crosse was at peace—a peace that was to be broken by the sounds of gunfire and careening cars.

It was a routine day at the La Crosse County Jail, located at 1003 Zeisler Street. It was 2 P.M., and an inmate, a nineteen-year-old auto thief named Harold Chamberlain, of 1629 Loomis Street, was getting his haircut in the jail while being watched by trusty Dewey Meinertz. A thirty-five-year-old inmate awaiting trial for armed robbery, Orville Moore, formerly of St. Paul, Minnesota, was being led to a phone by the turnkey on duty, Robert Garrow, because Moore wanted to call his attorney and this seemed like a harmless request. What Garrow and Meinertz did not know was that everything was going just as it had been planned by the inmates.

Orville Moore had befriended Harold Chamberlain a month earlier when they had been cellmates. The turnkeys had noticed that the two were becoming too friendly, so they separated them for security reasons. This was apparently done after the two had already hatched a desperate plan to escape.

At the same time Moore was being led from his cell to make his phone call, Chamberlain was being led back to his cell after his haircut. Moore suddenly pulled a straight razor from his sleeve and held it to Robert Garrow’s throat, shouting, “Bob, you—you—, I gotta have those keys.” Garrow’s response was, “Boy, you can have them.” He then turned the keys over to Moore.

Simultaneously, as Meinertz was leading Chamberlain back to his cell from the barbershop, the trusty was suddenly struck with a wooden stick used to wash prisoners’ clothes. Meinertz, at this point, saw that Chamberlain was armed with a scissors. The disturbance inside the jail was heard by Andrew Jungen, the jail’s gardener. He called the police and reported the commotion, but was not sure what exactly was happening. He was sure something was out of control because of the shouting and other noise he heard.

The police department had recently purchased bullet-proof vests and an armored vehicle, but not knowing the nature of the disturbance, Officers Clarence Koblitz, Aaron Sanford, and Joseph McGrath responded in a squad car driven by Officer Jack Fitzpatrick. Officer Koblitz thought to snatch a 30/30 rifle on his way out of the station.

As the police were heading to the jail, the escapees were on foot in the area of the jail, trying to make good their escape. They found an unoccupied blue cab, owned by Voss Cab Company of La Crosse, parked a short distance from the jail. When the squad pulled up to the jail, Jungen, the gardener, frantically pointed at the blue cab accelerating southbound on 11th Street with Chamberlain behind the wheel. Fitzpatrick, heralded as a top-notch driver, wheeled the squad around and went in pursuit of the cab, which was now turning west on La Crosse Street. The police were able to rapidly gain ground on the fugitives due to a safety device installed in the cab that prevented employees from driving at excessive speeds. This hindered their escape and would, quite literally, be the death of them.

At Second and La Crosse Streets, the squad was close enough for the escapees to fire the first shot. The cab was driven south on Second from La Crosse Street; about one-half block south of La Crosse Street, it was pulled to the side of the road by the driver, Chamberlain. Officer Aaron Sanford felt that the desperados were giving up, so he ran from the squad toward the cab to take them into custody. As Officer Sanford approached the rear of the cab, he saw the barrel of a gun being brought to bear on him, and he dropped to the surface of the road as he heard a loud report from the gun, which blew out the back window of the cab from the inside out.

Koblitz, seeing his partner in grave danger, shot at the cab with the 30/30 as the cab pulled away. The driver, Chamberlain, probably died from the 30/30 rounds that struck him in the neck and back. Moore frantically pulled his dead partner from the wheel and took over driving, firing back at the pursuing squad when he could. The pursuit continued south on Second Street to the Old Wagon Bridge, and then Moore turned west and crossed the bridge, trying to rectify his now-flawed escape by making it to Minnesota.

While pursuing the fleeing bandit, the police continued to fire, with Koblitz taking careful aim with his 30/30. Fitzpatrick drove, with Koblitz and Sanford firing while standing on the squad’s running board. As the cab was driven over the Milwaukee Road overpass, Moore appeared to have been struck. The cab began to swerve, and then, suddenly, it left the roadway and
struck ten guardrails before it came to a stop. The officers cautiously approached the car and found both occupants dead, victims of their folly. Moore had been struck by two 30/30 rounds, one in the head and a second in the shoulder. Koblitz, who was later to say, “We’re lucky we didn’t get it instead of them,” had fired with deadly accuracy. Sanford then hitched a ride back to La Crosse to obtain a coroner, as they had no radio, and Fitzpatrick, Koblitz, and McGrath stood by to direct traffic, which by now had become very heavy.

The investigation revealed that one of the escapees, probably Moore, had fired six rounds from a riot gun and two rounds from a revolver. A machine gun was never fired, but the magazine was found in Moore’s pocket. Six rounds were fired from Officer McGrath’s revolver, and six were fired from Officer Sanford’s revolver. Officer Koblitz fired twelve shots from the 30/30. Four found their mark, bringing an end to the deadly gun battle.

The cab was found to have eleven bullets in it, including the shot fired from the inside that nearly struck Officer Sanford. The cab was shown at county fair exhibits for years, but has long since disappeared. It probably lies rusted and half-buried in some farmer’s field, its exciting past a secret, the bullet holes camouflaged by shots of passing hunters that have come and gone over the decades.

Illinois had Dillinger and Capone. The Southwest had Bonnie and Clyde. La Crosse had Chamberlain and Moore. Thanks to the La Crosse Police Department, their reign of terror was short-lived and did not reach storybook proportions. Four officers from the police department laid their lives on the line, relentlessly pursued these criminals through a hail of gunfire, and did the unpleasant job they were sworn to do. On a quiet night, as young officers walk the beat of downtown La Crosse in the twenty-first century, you can almost hear the echoes of those shots fired long ago during those few desperate moments in time when it could have gone either way.

The Healing Ointment

Nelda Johnson Liebig

A less determined young mother than mine would have been defeated by the chain of misfortunes that struck during the 1930s. Just as our country was recovering from the depression years, Oklahoma was stricken with hot, dry winds that created the infamous dust bowl. Crops failed and thousands of farmers plunged deep into debt. Some lost their land by bank foreclosures; others watched as the wind stole the thin layer of topsoil. Many walked away from their worthless land and started over in more promising areas.

My father was fortunate to obtain housing at the gasoline refinery, where he was employed on a twenty-hour-a-week schedule.

We were weathering those years fairly well until one cold blustery morning when fire damaged our modest two-bedroom house. Fumes from petroleum products in a nearby shed ignited, and a wall of fire swept through the rooms, turning curtains into hanging torches. I was playing “dress up” with my mother’s heavy old coat draped over my shoulders and touching the floor. Although fire swirled around me, searing my arms and face, that old coat protected me.

I don’t recall details, but I remember the arrival of the ambulance and my fear that my mother would not come with me to the hospital. Most of all, I remember my homecoming. With my arms swathed in gauze, smelly of strong ointment, and with my hair singed short, I wandered through the house. Mother had painted two rooms, and new yellow curtains brightened the stark living room. She looked weary. Her curly, dark hair, usually waved softly about her thin face, was brushed back carelessly. Her slender hands were rough and red from washing clothes, towels, and bedding to rid them of the acrid, smoky odor. In a box of rubbish, I found my Christmas doll, black with soot and almost unrecognizable. I hugged her close to me and sobbed. I had been burned, too. Would they get rid of me?

Mother’s eyes told me she understood. “Come and help me wash your doll,” she said softly.

She cradled the doll gently in her arms and filled the sink with warm, soapy water. She washed the damaged face and doughy body, then cleaned the chubby, wide-spread fingers as gently as if washing a newborn baby. Nothing could be done for the doll’s chipped, blistered nose and cheeks. Liquid shoe polish replaced the brown painted hair. With a piece of new flannel from the sewing box, she wrapped my baby carefully and handed her to me.

“We will make some new dresses for her,” she assured me. From the medicine cabinet she took the yellow ointment prescribed for my burns and put some in an empty cold cream jar. “Now, Mrs. Jones,” she said briskly, using the name I always chose while playing with my sister, “put this on your baby’s blisters each morning. Rock her when she cries and don’t worry. She will be fine.”

The cheeks remained rough and unsightly, of course, but to me they were just scars like mine. The emotional damage that could have scarred me healed, because mother understood and gave of her precious time. I hope as the years pass and my children face life’s con­flicts, my actions will be a healing ointment, just as Mother’s were for me.
I grew up hearing story after story about life on the farm from my mom. My dad always used to say, “You can take the girl away from the farm, but you can’t take the farm away from the girl.” He had a few stories to tell about farm life himself, but this story relates my memories of the Anders Bendickson farm, the “home place” established by Grandpa Sven H. Bendickson in Riceland Township, Freeborn County, Minnesota, and the Leon James farm nearby.

We visited the home farm often. It was about twelve miles from Austin. My earliest memories are of our family traveling out on Saturday afternoons in our little green Chevy. We went straight west on Highway 16, then turned onto a gravel road when the Oakland Lutheran Church appeared off in the distance to the north. I often wondered how people found their way in those days; there were very few, if any, signs on those back roads.

After about three miles, we arrived at Uncle Anders’ farm. It was 120 acres of flat, rich Minnesota farmland, with lots of black topsoil, which made for prosperous farming. There were two entrances to the farmyard. The first led past the chicken house, which had been converted from the original log house that had been built on the place in pioneer times, then past a rambling machine shed and granary, and then up a rise toward the windmill. There, one parked outside a green gate. The large, square, white house sat facing east in the middle of a huge grassy yard. There was a line of blue spruces planted along the south and east sides of the yard as a windbreak. There were apple trees between the house and this windbreak on the south side of the house. The house had been built when my mother was a child. She often told of Grandma Josie (her mom) saying, “The barn will bring the house.” They had lived in the log cabin then, and a huge red barn had been built north of the cabin.

The second entrance to the farm led from the main road past the two large pig houses and a double corncrib, which was built with one roof sheltering both cribs and a large covered space in the middle to store large machinery safely away from the elements. From the corncrib, the road led to the barn. (To my grandchildren, who I’m sure won’t know what a corncrib is, I should explain that it is a storage building for cobs of corn raised to feed the pigs. This building had sides made of slats that had spaces between them so the air could circulate and dry out the corn. The dried ears of corn made excellent feed for the pigs.) These two entrances from the main road were connected by a horseshoe-shaped driveway.

There was always much joy associated with visits to the farm. The two cousins who lived there were Maurine Volfred (Renee), just one year older than my sister Diane, and Sherman Harlan, just one year younger than I. We cousins were good friends. Our collective parents thoroughly grounded us in the geographic limits of where we were allowed to roam.

As we progressed in age, we graduated from the yard, to the farmyard, to the outbuildings, to the nearby woods, and then pretty much wherever we pleased as long as we were cautious about the areas that had burning weed, poison ivy, and quicksand—and we were told, “Stay out of the pasture when the bull is out.” There was very much freedom on the farm compared to the restricted areas we were allowed to traverse in town.

Besides roaming like gypsies on our summer visits, there were chores to attend to. Diane and I eagerly waited for egg-picking time, but what was a treat for us was boring work for the others. Our cousins hoped their dad would do it since they had company. By the time we were old enough for this chore, the log cabin had been moved back into the grove and away from its prominent place fronting the main road. The outside walls had been covered with siding, so the old log walls showed only on the inside.

Sometimes I helped my cousin Sherman feed the horses. The grain had to be measured and placed in a box on the end of the manger. The hay went into the manger. One learned never to walk behind the horses without saying, “Whoa, boy,” in a gentle voice, just so they would know you were there and wouldn’t kick out at you in surprise.

In the springtime, we would be asked to help feed the little chickens. My Aunt Berdie experimented with hatching her own chicks for a while, but it was pre-REA (Rural Electrification Association) days, and I don’t know how she managed to heat that little hatchery. It looked like a square wooden box set on table legs, about five feet by five feet, with an enclosed glass top. Mostly they ordered their baby chicks from Maple Dale Hatchery in Austin. But once the baby chicks were out at you in surprise.

Reminiscences of Visits to Family Farms
Mary Lou Ryan
prime positions at the feeder. I loved the look and sound of those little creatures. When they grew up, I found it hard to believe that those ugly chickens had once been puffy little yellow balls of fluff.

Viewing the new arrivals was always a must on a farm visit. Litters of pigs, bawling calves, wobbly-legged colts, all held a fascination for us town cousins. What a strange sensation to put your hand near the nose of a young calf and have it lick at your hand with its rough tongue. Baby kittens were a real treat, and my cousins always knew just where in the haymow the mother cat had hidden her litter. For a while, there was a Shetland pony named Princess to ride, but because my uncle was a super worrier, he would only let us ride when he or my father would lead the horse.

During World War II, with all the young men gone to war, help was hard to find. My father used to go out to the farm to help my uncle whenever he got off work early. At harvest time there wasn’t any help, so my folks enlisted all the members of their bridge club to go out and have a “shocking party” at the home farm. In those days, few women wore jeans, but the ladies turned out in slacks and kerchiefs, the men in denim work clothes, and people brought along their children. Everyone pitched in, and my uncle went around instructing all the kids and grown-ups who hadn’t been raised on farms in the art of shocking the bales of grain that lay in a row in the field. One placed two bales together to prop each other up, then two more in the same fashion, and closed the shock with two bundles propped against each end. The shocked grain stood thus in the field waiting for the end of harvest, when the threshing crew would arrive, pitch all the shocked wheat into wagons, and take it to the barnyard, where the grain was separated from the straw.

When I was ten or eleven years old, I was in the barn waiting for Sherman to finish his milking chores. He had two cows he was responsible for at that time. Uncle Anders kindly asked me if I’d like to learn to milk. Wow! Would I? But it was scary. The business of cleaning off the udder came first. Then one had to balance on a one-legged stool, holding the big galvanized steel pail between one’s knees. Beware bossy’s swishing tail; unless you paid attention, you could get hit in the face by that fast-moving missile, which was often none too clean.

With patient demonstrations from Uncle Anders as to how the milking action was achieved, I finally managed to fill half a bucket with frothy warm milk. What a sense of achievement to hear the rhythmic sound of the milk hitting the side of the metal pail, one squirt at a time! I was glad, however, when he said that was enough for the first time, and took over. I remember being so scared that I let go of the bucket and spilled the precious contents. If you get a chance to try it sometime, you’ll use muscles you didn’t know you had. But with the advent of REA and milking machines, about the only place you could have the experience would be on a model farm or at a petting zoo.

At that time, the milk was poured into a separator, where the cream went into one can and the milk into another. The separator was turned by hand, then later by a gasoline engine, and finally by electricity, and then the metal discs used in the separation process were taken to the farm kitchen to be cleaned. Milking time at Uncle Leon James’s farm was a good time to stay out of the barn, as cousins Harold and Charles loved to squirt anyone in the vicinity while they were milking. They had excellent aim, and if you weren’t vigilant, they would get you right in the face. All the barn cats always congregated at milking time, since they were fed milk in the separator room.

Although many of these things are fond memories, the tasks I disliked the most were all related to itching. Shocking wheat made one itch. Helping with the haying made one itch. And about the itchiest of jobs was weeding rows of onions in the pea field on the west of the home farm. During the war, they hired women and children to do the work normally done by Mexican migrant workers. The migrants couldn’t get there during the war due to gasoline rationing and/or holding better-paying jobs in California defense industries. My mother took my sister and me and a neighbor out to work in the fields to help the war effort. I always lagged behind. I hated the job, and the worst part was when the soil was wet and the itchy peat water soaked through my overalls.

But there were bright spots—attending barn dances, corn roasts and church dinners at Oakland Lutheran on Cemetery Sunday; bicycle riding between the two farms in summer; skinny-dipping in the creek in Uncle Leon’s pasture; and picking elderberries in the fall in the north forty woods of the James farm. These visits, adventures and experiences enriched my childhood. We took our children to visit these farms when we could, but living such a great distance away in St. Paul, Detroit, and Reno made the visits very seldom and very brief. These farms were sold in the 1970s and are no longer in the family.
An Incident from the Simpler Times of the Fifties

Samuel McKay

In the spring of 1952, the Korean War was still going strong, but we college students at the University of Wisconsin didn't worry about it as long as we didn't flunk out. I was in ROTC as well as having had a student deferment. I had just been initiated into Beta Theta Pi fraternity and was looking forward to our spring formal in May. It was a bigger than usual dance because two other fraternities were involved. They were Phi Delta Theta and Sigma Chi. All three were founded at Miami of Ohio in the nineteenth century, and the dance was called the Miami Triad.

Since the mid-forties, at the height of the New Orleans Jazz Revival, I had been collecting reissues of vintage classic recordings of the twenties and early thirties. One of my favorite artists was Louis Armstrong. His trumpet and singing improvisations were to me the absolute epitome of the art form. You can imagine the euphoria that overcame me when I found out he and his band had been engaged for the dance. Our president, who had bummed around a bit after high school before going to college, knew the ways of show biz and had lucked into the booking. The other two fraternities were delighted with the choice, as Louis was very popular at the time, and that was the domain of GDIs, as the Theta Pi fraternity and was looking forward to our spring formal in May. It was a bigger than usual dance, because two other fraternities were involved. They were Phi Delta Theta and Sigma Chi. All three were founded at Miami of Ohio in the nineteenth century, and the dance was called the Miami Triad.

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None of the three fraternity houses was capable of handling such a big event. Actually, we could have had it at the Wisconsin Union, which had a beautiful ballroom, but that was the domain of GDIs, as the independents were called. An independent was one who did not belong to a fraternity or sorority or live in a dorm. The Union also had the Rathskellar, which served only 3.2 beer and was a hangout for bohemians—as the forerunners of the hippies were called—and pseudo-intellectuals. This was certainly not a suitable place for our formal. The unanimous decision was to have it at the Hotel Lorraine, with its Crystal Ballroom, a complete bar, and restaurant facilities downstairs.

At the time, I had no special girlfriend and needed a date. At a recent beer supper with the Chi Omega sorority, I had met a girl named Mary Ann McKinley. (When a fraternity invited a sorority for dinner and a few beers, they called it a "beer supper.") My fraternity had a full-time cook and a housemother, so the happening was well chaperoned and perfectly legal. I called Mary Ann, who was a senior, and she was happy to accept my invitation, with only one catch—I had to come to the Chi Omega formal, as her date. Well, I kind of suspected that would be dullsville, but I agreed to do it anyway. As it turned out, I was right. At her dance, she was gone half the time checking on this or that. I felt like a wallflower. I was polite and didn't complain, because Miami Triad was just two weeks away, and I didn't want to look for another date.

Finally, the big day arrived. I hadn't had much sleep the night before just thinking about seeing Louis Armstrong. I had gathered together a big stack of stuff I was hoping to get autographed. I had several albums of 45s, a couple of LPs, and several magazines with reviews of his reissues that I'd written. I picked up Mary Ann and we walked over to the hotel, which was in the first block off the Capitol Square on West Washington Avenue. There we joined several of my buddies and their dates to eat dinner before the dance. When we finished our dinner, it was time to get up to the ballroom. We entered it, and I was really impressed. It indeed was a crystal ballroom. It had one large crystal chandelier in the center that revolved, with different colored lights playing on it. Surrounding it in the rest of the room were evenly spaced smaller chandeliers that did not revolve and had their own lights. On the bandstand, the band boy was setting up the drums, and the soundman was arranging the microphones. The band boy went over to one of the mikes, and on a chair next to it he placed a tall stack of fresh, clean, white handkerchiefs. The enlightened among us knew what they were for.

In 1939 or 1940, Louis Armstrong had given up his big band and returned to a small-band format. For a while he had Kid Ory on trombone, and later Jack Teagarden replaced him when he left for the West Coast during the war. Jack needed the work because his big band had failed. Originally, he had Big Sid Catlett on drums, but he died. The band's personnel at this time was Louis on trumpet, Trummy Young on trombone, Barney Bigard on clarinet, Billy Kyle on piano, Arvell Shaw on bass, and Barrett Deems on drums. The singer was Velma Middleton.

I left my stack of goodies on a chair against the wall, and we strolled over in front of the bandstand. Mary Ann had her program, but didn't know anything about the band. I was explaining things to her when Billy Kyle came out and sat down at the piano. He played it for a while to see if it was tuned properly. Barrett Deems came out and sat down behind the drums. He was making adjustments when Arvell Shaw came out, followed by Trummy Young and Barney Bigard. I was getting more excited by the second. Finally, Louis came out, carrying his gleaming brass trumpet. By now, everyone had gathered in front of the bandstand, and a big cheer went up. The band warmed up for a minute and then launched into Louis's theme song, the slow "Sleepy Time Down South," and we all started to dance. After the theme song, Louis introduced himself saying, "Good evening, ladies and gentleman, I'm Louis Armstrong, here to play for your dancing pleasure." My heart was racing at a thousand beats a second.

After the second number, which had been an upbeat tune, he introduced the rest of the band, one
by one. When he introduced Billy Kyle, he referred to him as "Liberace in Technicolor." This drew a big laugh. The band played a couple more dance tunes, but Louis was playing and singing so well that we began to gather in front of the stand and listened instead of dancing. He was at one of his heavy stages and had a little pot belly. When he sang, he simply exuded happiness, and I stood there enthralled, with a big smile on my face. I couldn't believe how good he sounded on trumpet. He sounded just like he did in the twenties. I had thought that an old man, like him, at fifty-two, would have lost his lip.

Soon we were all standing around the bandstand. He asked us if we wanted to dance or listen to music, and we all opted for music. So he said, "Well, if you don't want to dance, we'll play some good ol' jazz numbers fer ya." We all cheered, and everybody sat down on the dance floor in a large semicircle. He then brought Vémia out, and they proceeded with some of their concert routines, which brought down the house. For the rest of the evening, we had our own private Louis Armstrong concert.

After playing for more than an hour, the band took a break. Louis and his manager stayed up on the stand and were talking to some people. Mary Ann wanted me to take her down to the bar, where most of the partygoers had gone. I said that I wanted to talk to Louis, and besides, I wasn't twenty-one years old, and they didn't know me. She was a little upset, but went down by herself. I picked up my pile of items to be autographed and approached the bandstand. I introduced myself to Louis and asked if I could have his autograph. He said, "Sure." One by one, I handed the albums, the magazines, and the program to him for signing. After each one, he looked a little bit disconcerted as I handed him another item. He was sweating profusely by this time. With just one more item left, I looked at him and said, "I have waited a long time for this moment, Louis."

He paused, reached down, grabbed one of the handkerchiefs, and wiped his brow. When he removed the handkerchief, he had a big toothy smile on his face, and said, in his gravelly voice, "Ya have?"

I took my stuff over to the chair again, and people began returning to the ballroom from the bar, including Mary Ann. I told her that I had talked to Louis, but she did not seem impressed. She began chiding me for neglecting her. I put up my hands and said, "Whoa!" I then informed her that after the way she neglected me at her formal, she had no right to complain. Besides, Louis Armstrong was more important to me at this time than anything else. She became quiet, and we enjoyed the rest of the concert.

After the concert, we joined several of my buddies and their dates. We found out that the band was staying at the hotel. Louis had been following a policy of not playing where he couldn't stay. We were informed at the desk that Louis was not to be disturbed under any circumstances. However, we did find out what floor he was on and that Barney Bigard had a room nearby. We honored Louis's request, but found Barney's room. We pounded on the door, and he said, "Come in." He was already in bed, and we immediately apologized. As we started to leave, he said, "No, no, please stay." He was very pleasant, with a warm smile. Some of the girls sat in the available chairs, but the rest of us stood around the foot of the bed. We were eager to hear about his days playing with Duke Ellington, because he had been one of the original members of the band. He was telling us a story when there was a pounding on a door down the hall. Apparently, two kids from Madison, not connected to our party, had found Louis's room and wanted his autograph. We heard the familiar gravelly voice explain that he was tired, but he obliged them and sent them on their way.

Our attention returned to Barney, and somehow, I don't know why, the conversation got around to religion. My date perked right up when he said that he had been an altar boy in New Orleans, where he grew up, but had not been to church for years and had more or less rejected his religion. Mary Ann, being a good Catholic, came to the defense of the Church. The argument dominated the remainder of our time with Barney. There were to be no more Duke Ellington stories that night, much to our chagrin. We left the hotel, and I walked Mary Ann back to the Chi Omega house. The next day my friends asked me who the heck my date was, and I apologized profusely. Needless to say, I never had another date with Mary Ann McKinley.

"One by one, I handed the albums, the magazines, and the program to him for signing. After each one, he looked a little bit disconcerted as I handed him another item. He was sweating profusely by this time. With just one more item left, I looked at him and said, 'I have waited a long time for this moment, Louis'"
Two Great Men
Doris Kirkeeng

John Adams, the second U.S. President, and Thomas Jefferson, the third, were great friends who were instrumental in laying the foundation of the United States of America. At the very first meeting of the Committee of Five, designated to draft the Declaration of Independence, John Adams suggested that Mr. Jefferson alone be delegated to prepare the draft because he was informed on all sides and had an unmatched talent with the pen. Mr. Jefferson did invite comments from Benjamin Franklin, the foremost American of that day, but Franklin offered only two or three trifling suggestions. A few others offered suggestions, too. Before the declaration was adopted, it was strongly debated and heatedly criticized. It was approved by the Committee of Five on July 2, 1776, then edited by the Committee of the Whole (Continental Congress), which affirmed the final draft on July 4, Independence Day.

In Quincy, Massachusetts, fifty years later, it was a hot day. John Adams asked to be placed in his study, where he could enjoy such cooling breezes as might flow in from Massachusetts Bay. His health was failing. His doctor, Amos Holbrook, believed he wouldn’t live until sundown. His small body relaxed in his upholstered chair. He turned his noble head, with its fine white hair, and his faded blue eyes looked around at extensive gardens and stretches of lawn. A simple, stately brick and white clapboard structure was his home, purchased in 1787 from a descendant of Leonard Vassal, a notorious Tory. His home was graced with an honor guard of fountain elms. As he reclined, he could hear artillery salutes and strains of martial music could be heard, along with muffled drums and shrilling fifes. Field music was being played before the militia, which marched in the Fourth of July review on Quincy Commons.

Around that time, John Adams's dear friend, Thomas Jefferson, was weak and fading away at Monticello, but, hearing reports, was able to ask, “Is it the Fourth?”

“No,” Dr. Robley Dunglison, his physician, encouraged, “but soon it will be.” He was hearing salutes being fired in Charlottesville. Citizen Jefferson lived to see the Fourth of July—the fiftieth anniversary of the day he had so crucially and gloriously helped to honor. His mind sped back to those critical days in late June and early July 1776. He relived being with his special friends, his caring relationships with countrymen, and the comradeship of statesmen. Neighbors, townfolk, servants, and slaves collected on the beautiful green lawns of magnificent Monticello, in awe of its very famous resident, on the day of celebration for freedom for the colonies and independence from Great Britain. He had once said, “All my wishes end where I hope my days will end, at Monticello.” His wishes were granted. His final words were also spoken with love: “I resign my spirit to God, my daughter [and] to my country.”

John Adams said two memorable things on his deathbed. His final words were: “Thomas Jefferson still survives.” He was unaware that his old friend had died a few hours earlier. Both of these great men had lived full lives. They served America and humanity to the best of their abilities. How fitting that both men left this world to meet their Maker on the very same day: July 4, 1826. Citizen Adams’s other famous deathbed words were equally memorable: “Independence Forever!”

The American Dream

The Time I Saw JFK
Dona Popovic

It was election time again, and the Democratic top brass were in Chicago for a fundraiser of some kind. I remember the first two times I voted; both times it was for Adlai Stevenson, the former governor of Illinois, and he lost to Dwight D. Eisenhower in both elections. But the third time I voted nationally, the Democrats had a sure winner with a senator from Massachusetts: John F. Kennedy, who at forty-three would become the youngest elected president of the United States.

I'd never been to a political rally or stood for hours in the cold or rain to see a movie star or other important person, so I was a bit surprised to find myself waiting for a glimpse of the motorcade as it slowly moved down Wabash Avenue in the Loop. I was working at Carson Pirie Scott, a large department store downtown, and my boss, Gen O'Donnell, and I were late leaving that day. She was carrying an armful of new account applications, with credit reports attached, to work on at home, but when we saw the crowd of people—many of them co-workers—we decided to stick around for a while.

As the motorcade came into view, all those people became a mob, and we were jostled about and moved along for two whole blocks. When Kennedy's car made the turn at Washington and Wabash, it stopped. We were so close to the car that I reached up, grabbed his hand and looked into his eyes. That was quite a thrill for me!

When poor Gen tried to reach his outstretched hand, she was pushed aside and lost her hold on that load of applications. They went flying all over the street. She was doubly disappointed. She wasn't able to touch Kennedy, and as the last car disappeared down Washington Street, we had to scurry around to pick up all those credit applications. Most of the crowd followed the motorcade, but a few kind older people stayed to help us. It was dark by the time Gen left to get her car from the parking lot and I turned back to State and Madison for the subway ride home.

Three short years later, on a Friday—my day off—November 22, 1963, I listened in horror to the news from Dallas. I felt that Camelot was over, and nothing would ever be the same again.
There is the stereotypical belief that all African Americans grow up in households below the poverty level, in neighborhoods that are crime-riddled ghettos, and have illiterate, single, or absent parents. In my experience, nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is, the vast majority of African Americans grow up in working-class environments the way I did, with family and church involvement. Like me, many Blacks have racially mixed bloodlines. In my case, I am proud of my African, European, and Native American ancestry. Far too many of America’s citizens still use skin color as the factor by which to judge and measure a person’s worthiness, intelligence, and capability. As a result, having black or brown skin when you grow up and live in the United States can be arduous. The anger you feel can be profound. Enduring repeated episodes of racial cruelty and unfairness often begins when you are a child, and may continue in some form your entire lifetime. This injustice can rob you of your ability to trust or to be compassionate if you let it. I have experienced malice and contempt from White racists, but I have also known Whites who have shown me love, encouragement, and compassion.

I was born in Georgia, but grew up in Burlington, North Carolina, in the early fifties. My Black neighborhood spanned five blocks in one direction and five blocks in the other. Everybody knew everybody else and I, like other children, felt safe. Everyone I knew owned their own small home or rented a house.

The usual practice of the time was for parents to sit down with their Black children to discuss certain “realities” about the races, and to talk about the need to be careful where you went, where you ate and drank, and even where you sat down. When my parents had these talks with me, I felt a sense of confidence that when I left the security of my neighborhood, I would be fine because I knew and understood “the rules.” But no amount of conversation could have prepared me for the cruelty and horror I faced at age nine.

Summer vacation had just begun. My sister had chicken pox, and she wasn’t allowed out of the house. I had three dollars burning a hole in my pocket, and the circus was in town. My mother needed to stay home with my sister, so I begged and pleaded to be allowed to walk the eight blocks to the fairgrounds alone. As I left home, I was admonished to “mind your manners,” which meant that I was to be on my best behavior and to say please and thank you.

The first day of the circus was the most fun to me, because there was a small parade of the animals and clowns. This was the era of bearded ladies and tattooed alligator men, which cost fifteen cents each to see. I watched the circus acts, had some cotton candy, and then it was off to the exciting rides.

I had been in line waiting to pay my five cents at the Ferris wheel when from out of nowhere a hand grabbed me by the neck and threw me to the ground. Laughter erupted, and the White man who had thrown me to the ground spat upon me and yelled some profanities. I began to cry as I gathered myself, and a White woman told me to “get away from here, you filthy nigger.” Once I was on my feet, I was shoved, and someone’s foot was stuck out to trip me, sending me to the ground a second time. Someone else kicked dirt toward me. I got up and began running, terrified that I would be chased. The laughter seemed to grow.

I don’t remember where I stopped running. I paused before reaching my house to adjust my clothes...
so as not to alarm my mother. I sat on the porch swing, my heart pounding in my ears, feeling hated, demoralized, and scared to death of White people. I never told my mother what had happened.

My view of Whites began to change when I was in sixth grade. The great composer Leonard Bernstein was on tour doing symphonies for young people. When he heard that Black students would not be allowed at the concert, Mr. Bernstein refused to come to Burlington until an agreement was reached that would allow Black students to attend. At the concert, Mr. Bernstein lectured the Whites in the theater about their attitudes, and introduced me to my lifelong love of classical music. At that time, he was the first man with white skin that I had heard be sympathetic to the plight of African Americans, and it was the first time that I had sat downstairs in the theater instead of in the balcony.

My father found a job that paid more, so we moved to Rochester, New York. My experience at Madison High School in Rochester would forever change how I viewed Caucasians and other cultural groups. To my amazement, the White teachers seemed to care about me. I was encouraged and even praised. My guidance counselor and an English teacher were particularly wonderful. When I did not have the fee to send along with a college application, my guidance counselor gave me the money from his own pocket, saying to me, “You must go to college. You’re too smart a girl not to.” An English teacher wrote in my yearbook, “Good luck to a girl whose very personality is testimony that life is infinitely worthwhile.” I attended nursing school on scholarship, where I was the only African American in the class of 1969.

African Americans want and expect to be treated just like anyone else. When I am not, I am shocked. The anger comes later.

As a new registered nurse in my first position at a three hundred-bed hospital, I discovered that a few members of the staff resented my presence. Even worse, there were sick people (patients) who refused to accept medicine or care from me and who called me names. I particularly remember one White gentleman who had had a large abdominal operation, who said to me, “I ain’t taking medicine from no nigger.” Two hours later, he was in tears with pain. He relented and allowed me to give him the morphine injection that he had refused earlier.

Over the years, I’ve had to file three complaints with state human rights commissions involving three different employers, and file three lawsuits based upon bias and discrimination. I won one of the lawsuits, but lost the other two. The win would not have been possible without the support and participation of my White and Black co-workers.

The struggle to change behavior, to change minds, and to change unfair institutional customs goes on. In 1999, I entered a barbecue restaurant in Onalaska, Wisconsin, where the manager took my order; then I was very simply ignored.

The United States is a magnificent place, and traveling from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans has given me an appreciation of the majesty of this land. Every experience I’ve had—whether it was good, bad, horrible, or indifferent—has served to make me the strong, confident person that I am. I can’t imagine living anywhere else. When I return to U.S. soil after having traveled abroad, it always feels great to hear an immigration agent say, “Welcome home.” It feels good because, in that moment, I have been identified as an American with rights and privileges. No matter what the race or culture, thank goodness, the good people still far outnumber the stupid and the ignorant.

Iowa: The Birthplace of 4-H
Nelda Johnson Liebig

In 1901, nineteen-year-old teacher Jessie Fields brought new vigor and new meaning to the subject of agriculture at the Goldenrod School near Clarinda, Iowa. The one-room country school was “Miss Jessie’s” trial ground for sowing her innovative theories. Her students studied, absorbed, and adapted these theories, not only improving crops, but boosting their level of education.

In 1906, at age twenty-four, Jessie Fields was the county superintendent of schools. She expanded her boys’ and girls’ agriculture and homemakers’ clubs into the regular curriculum in rural schools. She traveled by horse and buggy over six hundred square miles of dirt roads, encouraging teachers. She organized and developed a club that adopted the four-leaf clover as its symbol, representing conservation and agriculture. The purpose was to inspire and teach youth in agricultural excellence and homemaking skills. This became known as the 4-H Club, which expanded from Iowa to the rest of the United States.

Jessie Fields Shambaugh earned the esteemed title “Mother of 4-H.” Today, 4-H assists culturally diverse youths and adults, helping to increase their awareness of agriculture and the land around us.

Iowa’s fertile land and climate were prime reasons for achieving its status as the top corn producing state, but the nation’s only female agriculture teacher challenged young Iowans to achieve their best.

Motorists traveling across Iowa’s flatland and rolling hills in autumn (see Robert J. Hurt’s cover photo and D. Tony Kiedrowski’s hay bales photo on page 147) encounter vast fields of corn shocks and stubble, testimonies to a state that values education, its 4–H Clubs, and the memory of Jessie Fields Shambaugh, who was dedicated to making invaluable agricultural changes that began in a one-room country school.
Heart of a Wildcat: Centerville’s Dream Team

Steve Kiedrowski

A wildcat is a feline, fierce and ferocious. At one time, there were many wildcats on the loose in Centerville, Wisconsin. They were members of the Centerville Wildcat men’s softball team. During the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s, they won hundreds of games, scores of tournaments, numerous league championships, and they set a standard by which softball teams are measured today.

In 1958, Frank Kramer started the Centerville Softball League, made up of area teams. Kramer also helped start the Centerville Wildcats team in the same year, and was the team’s first pitcher and manager. The Wildcats had several local sponsors, including the Acorn Bar, Don Gibson’s A & W Rootbeer Stand, and Hank and Fran’s Bar. The land for the ballfield was donated by Merlin Wilber, who lived next door to the field, just off Highway 54-35 on Harris Road, near the old Centerville School. Team colors were green and gray.

Ed Stanislowski played centerfield for the Wildcats, was league president for twenty-three years, and took care of the ballfield. “I started playing softball when I was seventeen and quit when I was forty-three,” he said.

Stanislowski’s love for the game was reflected in how he took care of the field. He cut the grass, watered it, and lined and dragged the ball diamond every week. “I still have the 1965 Simplicity riding lawn mower I used on the ballfield,” he said. Ed lives in the same house he did as a Wildcat, only half a mile from the ball diamond, where this left-hander used to lay down many drag bunts.

The name Wildcats was born near the end of the 1958 season. The players were sitting around after a game, trying to come up with a new name, a new image, for the next year. They were also getting low on finances and were ready for a change. Someone came up with Wildcats and everyone liked it. The next season, they hosted numerous tournaments and built their coffers back up. It was just the beginning.

When the Wildcats played in the first Dodge Days Sportsman Picnic tournament, they made it to the championship game against a team from Winona. Ed’s brother, Al Stanislowski, remembers the contest. “They were calling us plowboys and hillbillies. We beat ‘em just hit a homer over the centerfield fence. I stepped first home run, at Bluff Siding. Ed Stanislowski had a comeback peaked when he hurled a no-hitter in 1968.

“A lot of people thought I would never play softball again, but not me,” said the fifty-six-year-old Schwertel. When he batted, it was mostly right-handed; he used his bad left hand to balance the bat. He also became a switch hitter. (He still works the family farm, and now lives in Winona.) His toughest pitching competition came from Gerry Dureske of the Bluff Siding team, George’s Bar. “Gerry was very fast, but after a while the batters adjusted to his quick delivery and we started hitting him,” said Ed.

Ed also recalls the time his brother Al struck out and threw his bat in frustration. It went over the fence and smashed the windshield of his own new 1967 Chevy. That was the last time he ever threw his bat.

The teams used to win $100 to $200 a tournament, plus a trophy. “Most of the time, we only took nine guys to tournaments. We never thought about someone getting hurt,” said Ed Stanislowski. Some of the other Wildcats were: Rick Auseth, George Motszko, Wayne Auer, Jerry Eichman, Dan Thill, my brother Tony Kiedrowski, and me.

In 1967, at the age of fifteen, I played second base for the Wildcats. The other players were a lot older than I was, so it was a bit intimidating. I remember my first home run, at Bluff Siding. Ed Stanislowski had just hit a homer over the centerfield fence. I stepped up to the plate and hit the ball to the same spot. As I rounded the bases, Ed shouted out, “Make sure you touch all the bases.” After that, I was accepted as a Centerville Wildcat.

Before each game, I’d wrap Bill Schwertel’s damaged hand. It was in pretty rough shape. I remember thinking that Bill had a lot of courage, playing ball with that bad hand. He inspired us with his presence.

In 1969, the Wildcats were rated number one in this part of the state by the Sporting Scene, a softball publication. That year, they had a streak of fifteen
consecutive wins in tournament play, with five straight
tournament championships. For the year, the team
batting average was an amazing .302. A newspaper
article that season said the Wildcats were one of the
most popular teams around. They were in big demand
for tournaments due to their sportsmanship,
professionalism, playing skills, and fan following.

One prominent player was Ken Baran. His powers
with the bat and finesse in the infield were fantastic.
He didn’t have an arm—he had a cannon. Baran had a
tryout with the old Milwaukee Braves in 1959. Things
were looking good until bad luck struck. “I was at
County Stadium in Milwaukee when I accidentally
jammed my hand in a wire gate. I was all done then,”
said Baran. He played for the Wildcats in the early and
late 1960s and ’70s, with a three-year hitch in the army
in between. Baran went on to play baseball at the
University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. The fifty-eight-year-
old Baran now lives in Trempealeau and is retired
from Zeches Institutional Supply of Winona.

After the 1974 season, the Wildcats retired on top.
They were replaced in the league by the Sand Bar
team. “We were all about the same age. Guys were
getting married, having kids, working, there were other
responsibilities,” said sixty-four-year-old Ed
Stanislawski. Last year, he retired from his job at L.B.
White in Onalaska after thirty-five years.

The Centerville Wildcats are no longer on the loose.
The dreams of playing ball are just that—dreams—and
memories. The old ballfield is now a cornfield; but it
remains a field of dreams. 

Another championship for the Centerville
Wildcats softball team, 1970. Trempealeau
County, WI (Courtesy of
Steve Kiedrowski).

Curly and David
Dinah Nord

Those of us who sit around the tables of Alcoholics
Anonymous meetings sharing our experience, strength,
and hope have a special thank you to give to two
alkies. Their names are Curly and David. What they
did made it possible for many of us to be at this table.
Here is their story.

Nearly forty years ago, alcohol—“cunning, baffling,
and powerful”—had almost destroyed the life of
Curly, an electrical engineer from Pennsylvania. His
drinking had landed him on St. Paul’s skid row. He
was declared a “habitual drunk” by the courts. Because
there were no detoxification centers at the time, Curly,
in the usual course of events, would simply have gone
to jail for the crime of being a habitual drunk.

But something different happened. He was sent to
Hazelden Treatment Center instead of jail. Curly had
become the defendant in a legal effort to change the
way Minnesota courts dealt with alcoholics.

The lawyer bringing the case to the Minnesota
Supreme Court was David, another habitual drunk. He
was a brilliant lawyer whose career and life had, like
Curly’s, been almost totally destroyed by alcohol.
David, after getting sober at Hazelden, worked with
others in the recovering community in Minnesota,
hoping to find the right person to represent in a
lawsuit aimed at persuading the Minnesota Supreme
Court that alcoholics have a disease and need
treatment, not jail.

Curly was the right person. His background, fine
mind, and impressive career, before alcohol devastated
his life, made it clear that he was ill, not a criminal.

David won the case. The Minnesota Supreme Court
repealed the Minnesota “drunk law” in 1967. By 1971,
drunk laws had been repealed in every state in the
country. Alcoholics, because of this decision, would go
to detoxification centers and treatment instead of jail.

David and Curly made it possible for us alcoholics to
get the help we need to recover from our deadly disease.

So what happened to Curly and David? Curly
stayed sober after completing treatment at Hazelden.
He was a counselor there until his death, sober, from
cancer in 1974. David relapsed. He got sober a second
time, on November 12, 1975, and stayed sober until
his death on April 24, 2000. I think prayers, in that
special “alkie” part of Heaven where Curly went in
1974, helped to give David his second chance at
sobriety. David twelve-stepped me into the program
and became my husband. Many of us sat around this
table with David and shared his experience, strength,
and hope. We still miss him.

We know David and Curly are with us in spirit, as
we start each meeting with the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference. 

The American Dream
Early Signs of Promise
Ross A. Phelps

Martin Luther King wanted the nations of the world to end violence and seek nonviolent solutions and peace. His dream was for each of us to serve as a “drum major for justice and peace, then we will bring to life the inspiring vision of freedom.”

Once a twenty-six-year-old pastor of a modest church in Montgomery, Alabama, he became the foremost spokesman of the freedom struggle. He said, “We hate each other because we fear each other, and we fear each other because we don’t know each other.”

The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change was established in Atlanta, Georgia, after his death. There people are trained to gain an understanding of the principles of nonviolence and the process of creating nonviolent social change, which Rev. King learned in studying the lives of Jesus Christ, Henry David Thoreau, and Mahatma Gandhi.

In school, I couldn’t have predicted that either Segretti or Sonsini would become well-known. But everyone predicted that Michael Tigar would. He became editor of the law review and was ranked number one in our class when we graduated. A year or two ago, he represented Terry Nichols in the Oklahoma City bombing case and successfully avoided the death penalty for his client. Before any of this, though, I knew all of these men because we took the same three first semester classes together: torts, contracts and constitutional law.

Law school professors love to use the Socratic method. A student reads law cases from various jurisdictions. The professor then asks specific questions, and the student must answer, making reference to the assigned cases or other cases they can find through research. Almost every first year student lived in dread of being called on. Invariably, the first student chosen would miss the point, and the professor would go to the next student, who’d give an even less precise response. Finally, the professor would ask if anyone knew the answer, and usually no hands were raised.

During the third or fourth week of law school, no one seemed to understand a complex question in the torts class. Then Michael Tigar raised his hand when the class was asked if anyone could contribute to the discussion.

“Why yes,” Tigar said. “I just happened to come across a case in point while studying last night. If I might, I’d like to quote from the opinion.” Slowly, he started reading the case opinion, which seemed exactly what the professor was seeking. He stopped in mid-paragraph, then said, “I’m sorry for reading so slowly. This opinion is from Volume 229, page 64 of the Montreal Reporter; it’s in French, and I’m translating.” From that time on, we all knew Mike Tigar was destined for greatness.

Martin Luther King Jr.
Doris Kirkeeng

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Early on, a young girl, Linda Brown, attempted to go to an all-White elementary school just four blocks from her home in Topeka, Kansas, instead of boarding a bus to attend a Black school twenty-five blocks away. When the White principal refused her admission, her father sued and won, though only after the case reached the Supreme Court. Their victory in the Supreme Court (1954) was one of five lawsuits the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) used to battle school segregation. Six years after the Brown vs. Board of Education case, four southern states still hadn’t integrated any of their public schools, but eventually things improved even there.

In 1955, a seamstress named Rosa Parks refused to surrender her seat on a crowded bus to a White man, and was arrested. Montgomery Blacks decided to boycott bus companies and asked Martin Luther King Jr. to organize the campaign. During the boycott, King’s house was bombed and he was jailed twice. In 1956, the Supreme Court ruled against the bus company. The U.S. Civil Rights Act was passed in 1957.

Because of school administrators’ reluctance to let Little Rock Central High School become integrated, President Eisenhower took control of the Arkansas National Guard and ordered 1,100 Guardsmen to the scene. Troops remained for the entire school year.

In February of 1960, four Black college students sat at the Whites-only lunch counter of a Greensboro, North Carolina, Woolworth’s store. They waited all day and weren’t served. The next day, twenty more joined them. Within two weeks, ‘sit-ins’ were held in fifteen other cities.
The American Dream

The Amish people live a very simple life, without the luxury of modern conveniences most Americans are accustomed to. They have no need for televisions, radios, or automobiles. A concentration of Amish farms is located just south of Cashton, Wisconsin. Groups of Amish also live near Tomah, Wisconsin, and Rochester, Minnesota. The rural roads leading to their homes are winding and narrow, and sufficient to handle horse-drawn buggies, their usual transportation. Sometimes they accept rides to town from non-Amish neighbors, but they reciprocate and often lend their neighbors a hand.

The main Amish occupation is farming. Amish men use horses and simple tools to plow the ground, plant the seeds, and gather the bounty in the fall. Tractors and other modern machinery are nonexistent. The women tend the gardens and preserve the vegetables for winter use. The women can meat at slaughter time and take advantage of the abundant deer herds for meat for their families. The Amish usually have large families, and the young help with the many farm and household chores. These quiet, unassuming people pay taxes, but ask for little in return. They educate their children in small schools.

The young men are clean-shaven, but upon marriage they grow beards. They live close to their parents, with a son sometimes building his home on the family farm.

The Amish cooperate in building homes and farm buildings. Their houses are very simple and similar in construction; there are no frills. Their clothing is plain; the women wear dark-colored, long dresses and tuck their hair under bonnets. The men wear navy blue pants, suspenders, plain-colored shirts, and brimmed hats. The children’s clothing is similar to the adults. (See photo on page 135.)

The Amish produce beautiful wooden furniture without the aid of electricity. Their machines are run by gas-powered engines. In our annual pre-Christmas visit to Amish country to buy candy and to visit their shops, we observe wood being softened by steam so the workmen can form branches into various shapes to make their famous bentwood furniture.

The women make and sell lovely quilts and other crafts. Although they do use treadle sewing machines, a lot of their quilting is daintily stitched by hand. Some families offer homemade candy for sale, but when spring comes, the women cease candy making to work in their gardens. Their candy kitchens must meet health standards must be met in their candy making, and we note their clean white aprons and hair tucked under white skull caps. They also must pay sales tax to the state.

The Amish people seem content with their simple way of life, and they are very private people—they allow no photographing of their children, and Amish dolls, sometimes seen for sale, have no facial features. Being curious as to whether the Amish celebrate Christmas, on one trip to the Miller farm for candy I asked a young teenage boy who waited on us—his father and mother had gone to the city to shop—whether they celebrated Christmas. He replied that they have no Christmas tree or festivities, but on Christmas morning each child looks forward to one special gift on his breakfast plate.

These friendly, law-abiding citizens offer diversity and talents that help make America a great nation.
Believing in Myself and the American Dream
The Mayor of La Crosse, Wisconsin, the Honorable John Medinger

Would you believe that, like Abraham Lincoln, I was born in a log cabin? I didn’t think so.
Actually Mother and Dad were living in an old converted garage in the Town of Shelby when, on April 26, 1948, I was born at St. Ann’s Hospital in La Crosse. I have no recollection of this first home. I was the third child born to Don and Audrey—eventually there would be eight children: Sandy (1945), Sonja (1947), myself, Daniel (1951), Linda (1955), Timothy (alias “Sven,” 1964), Peter (1966) and Mary (1971). When I was born, Dad was twenty-two and Mother was one week shy of nineteen. My father worked at the Allis-Chalmers factory as a union tool-and-die worker, and my mother was and continued to be a housewife until many decades later when, after Dad retired, she worked part-time in the café at Gundersen-Lutheran Hospital, and, later, as a bagger at Quillin’s grocery store.

In 1951, we bought an eighty-acre farm in the Town of Greenfield. The house was an old log cabin that had been modified. (It still exists today.) We had electricity, but no indoor running water or telephone. When nature called, we had an outhouse we sometimes shared with the chickens and other country creatures. I still remember the day my dad brought home that first television set, in 1956. When that TV warmed up to its black-and-white best, the first image was a cowboy wearing a white hat, riding his horse after some bad guy in a black hat. Life was hard in those days, and we were poor. There were extended strikes at the Allis-Chalmers plant, and surplus government foods, such as commrake and peanut butter, often graced our table. But life was also good. We children enjoyed each others’ company (most of the time) and ran around the hills and fields barefoot for weeks at a time, with the exception of going to town on the weekends to visit the grandparents, when shoes could be worn. There were also the Wilson and Warren children who lived about half a mile away. I’ll never forget the time our German shepherd got a good taste of Jimmy Warren’s butt!

Being the eldest son, it was my job to take care of the animals. I stopped the pigs while ankle deep in muck. (I can still smell and feel it.) I gathered eggs, fed the chickens, and chopped their heads off when it was time. I delighted in torturing my older sisters by grabbing the hissing geese by the neck and tossing them in their direction. I remember my single-shot .22 rifle and my relentless pursuit of a white rabbit in a ditch about a hundred yards from the house, and how much I cried when, after many days of trying, I finally shot and killed that rabbit.

Another benefit of being the eldest boy was getting to work with Dad. There were many bitter cold below-zero nights when we’d be outside, trying to make sure his Studebaker kept running. It was my job to hold and retrieve tools or to keep the tension on the fan belt. Dad also had an old dump truck he used to sell black dirt to the City people, who wanted to grow grass where only sand burrs could survive. I would often spend a day off from school filling that truck, one shovelful at a time, so that when Dad got home we could ride to town and sell that seven yards for seven bucks. I would receive a dollar!

The “good old days” were obviously not all good, but I choose not to divulge much about that aspect of our lives. But three more quick stories about “The Farm.” There was the time, right after we moved there, that I fell asleep in the back of Dad’s Model A Ford and came within moments of dying of carbon monoxide poisoning. (That was the last time I ever spent the night in a hospital.) A few years later, we all went to St. Wenceslaus School. Then, if you attended parochial school, you could not ride the public school bus (even though it turned around at the end of our road). One time, while Dad was taking us to school on his way to work, the road was very muddy. In spite of his efforts, the car climbed a steep bank and eventually the Studebaker tipped on its side. We climbed up and out of the passenger side window, pushed the car back on its wheels, and continued into town. And who can forget the biggest snowstorm ever to hit La Crosse, in March of 1959, when about eighteen inches fell? We were trapped in our dead-end coulee for three days, and since we were low on food, we celebrated my sister Sandy’s fourteenth birthday with candles on pancakes.

My mother was ready for a change, and in November of 1959 we moved to 1016 Redfield Street, which the family would call home for forty years. City living! It didn’t take long to get adjusted to indoor plumbing and the neighborhood. It was mostly young blue-collar families like ours, with lots of kids. We went to Holy Trinity School, and, being the right age, I began to notice all the pretty girls. I also wanted some money in my pocket, so I did what most boys did in those days, i.e., stop at the La Crosse Tribune office. There was no regular route available, but I was told I could be a “corner boy,” and sell papers downtown. My corner was across the street from the Hollywood Theatre. I was given twenty-five papers to sell for ten cents apiece. I could keep four cents of every dime. I usually spent about four hours getting rid of my papers, and if business was a little slow, I’d go into the bars and sell the last few to drunks. I was making five to six bucks a week and living the good life!

My mom and dad, for some time, had been active in the political arena, but it wasn’t until we moved to town that I got the bug. In 1960, a Catholic, Democratic, pro-union, U.S. senator from Massachusetts ran for President. My political baptism began when I handed out my first piece of campaign literature for John F. Kennedy. I saw Kennedy at the airport in La Crosse. Later, I would meet Ted and Robert Kennedy in that famous Wisconsin Primary.
was twelve years old in 1960. I was a much less naïve twenty in 1968, when my candidate for President, Bobby, was assassinated. I was a thirty-two-year-old state representative in 1980, when I was a Ted Kennedy alternate delegate to the Democratic National Convention in New York City. I was, and still am, an admirer of the Kennedys, and all they stood for. I don’t care what the revisionist historians write.

I was a student at Aquinas High School when Pope John XXIII dramatically changed the face of the Catholic Church. This hero of mine gave me a great sense of mission and a burning desire for social justice. I didn’t even know any Black people (or Negroes as they were called then), but I knew I cared deeply about civil rights, and Martin Luther King Jr. became another hero of mine. They killed him, too. I was becoming an activist in my spare time, when I wasn’t going to school or working.

To be sure, I needed to work if I wanted money in my pockets. I scrubbed dirty ovens at La Crosse State College, stocked shelves at Ziebell’s IGA, worked as a union laborer for Ebner Construction Company, summers, to pay my way, and to help with the needs of my family. Allis-Chalmers closed in 1968, and, for a couple of years, it was very hard to make ends meet at home. My Grandfather Ben died in 1969 at the age of 83. I was very close to him in his old age, taking Grandma Clara and him to church, the grocery store and the tavern. But he was ready to die.

To a large extent, it was the decade of the sixties, with its Camelot start and body-bag ending, which set the course for my life and still is a major influence today. I am, for better or worse, a product of the sixties. And what a decade it was! After high school, following the footsteps of only a handful of Medingers, I went to college. My best buddies joined the Marines or the Army. I got involved in the local peace movement. Two of my high school classmates, and my best friend’s brother, were killed in Vietnam. I wore an Army fatigue jacket to school each day and got drunk with my buddies when they came home on leave. They smoked a lot of pot. It seemed to many of us, and most certainly to our parents, that in this time of war, riots, Johnson/Nixon, assassination and confusion, the world as we knew it was coming to an end. It was the dawn of a new era.

The decade ended. I was working on my master’s degree in teaching. I had not served my country in the military, but I still felt a need to serve. So in 1972, I joined Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). I was sent to southern Virginia, Prince Edward County, to fight in the “War on Poverty.” It was an interesting year to say the least. I lived with a Black couple, the Matthews, and their eight children, for about six months. They were very good people, but once when a drunken Jimmy was beating up his wife, Lucille, I attempted to intervene. After that, I knew it was time to find another place to live. I moved in with some other VISTAs, or “outside agitators” as the locals called us, and drank a lot of beer, while they smoked a lot of pot. Once, I felt my life was threatened when a White man confronted me as a “nigger lover.” Another time, I thought I was in deep danger again when a Black “superfly” type confronted me inside a “Black” bar. In my time there, near Appomatox, where Lee surrendered to Grant, I worked in Head Start, taught high school dropouts and did some civil rights work. There are many stories I could tell about this part of my life, too.

Returning to La Crosse in late 1973, I looked for a full-time teaching position, to no avail. Thankfully, I wound up once again working for and with my dad at his gas station, Don’s Texaco, on the north side of La Crosse. Later, I managed his other station, Bridgeview Texaco. Life was very good and I was happy. But the political idealism and sense of altruism was still there. I ran unsuccessfully for the La Crosse School Board in 1975. In 1976, the bicentennial year, I started on the road that has led me to today. Paul Offner, a one-term state representative, vacated his seat in a try for the Wisconsin Senate. It was time to throw my hat into the ring. Seven of us ran that fall, four Democrats and three Republicans. I narrowly won the primary election, and went on to gather 56% of the vote in November in a surprising victory over a well-respected and well-liked opponent, Chuck Whaley. I believe more people voted for me because they liked my parents than due to my own efforts, but we got the job done, with a total family effort. I was only twenty-eight years old.

I would go on to serve eight two-year terms in the Wisconsin Assembly, with only a gut-wrenching, narrow defeat in a special election for the State Senate in 1984, against Brian Rude, to tarnish my perfect record. I loved my years in Madison, and I felt fortunate to be able to serve the community I loved, to work on the issues that my constituents and I cared about, and to meet so many interesting people. One of them was my roommate Bill Rogers from Kaukauna. (His wit often reminded me of...
Will Rogers. It was his often-spoken belief that almost everyone in politics was either a “fool or an a—hole.” I often think that he may have been right.

About halfway though my time in Madison, I met the female administrative aide of a colleague of mine, Dick Shoemaker, of Menomonie. I had dated many women over the years (just ask my buddies), and had never once come close to marriage. But this time was different. Our relationship continued to grow, and in July of 1982, at the age of thirty-four, I was wed to Dee. She had two sons from a previous marriage, Christopher and Justin, but I wanted children of our own. In 1984, we adopted Emily, a Black girl only a few days old, and flew to Waco, Texas, to pick her up. In 1985, we adopted Johnathan, a bi-racial boy only a few weeks old, and flew to El Paso, Texas, to bring him home. Life got even more interesting, with marriage and parenting challenges. The children have given me great joy and some sadness, but we have survived until this day, and I look to the future with optimism.

Growing weary and somewhat cynical about political life in Madison, and desiring to spend more time with my family, at the end of 1992, I left the state legislature, and decided to look for a teaching job in La Crosse. I found none, but as fortune would have it, my good friend Russ Feingold was elected to the U.S. Senate. I asked him for a job and spent the next four years as his western Wisconsin regional coordinator, covering twenty-two counties as his eyes and ears, and specializing in veterans and Native American casework. It was a good job. But in 1997, the position of mayor became vacant, after the incumbent of twenty-two years, Pat Zielke, announced his retirement. It was time to once again throw my hat into the ring. I had thought about running in 1993, at the urging of my father, who wound up serving thirty-two years on the city council, but having just left the Legislature, and being a little burned out, I decided against it. Seven of us ran for mayor, and I received fifty-one percent of the vote in the primary and coasted to victory over a very nice young member of the City Council, Dan Herber, who was actually to the left of me. That campaign was about issues.

The next four years, being more recent history, will not be dealt with in depth here. But they were very difficult, especially the first two, as the “old conservative guard” tried over and over again to undermine me and put me in my place. I worked very hard, stayed close to the people, built coalitions and survived. In the most recent election, the conservative forces in La Crosse, led by my general election opponent, Jerry Every, tried every trick in the book to get rid of me, even dragging up old myths about me from the sixties, but to no avail. This campaign was not about issues, but was basically a concerted effort to get rid of me. In the final tally, I received almost seventy percent of the vote. This city is now charting a new course for the future. The old days and the “old guard” are gone. A new future of high-tech economic development, neighborhood revitalization, cooperation with our other local units of government, affordable government, and respect for diversity are the goals I have set. La Crosse has changed in many ways since I was a young boy selling newspapers on a street corner. Presidents, vice presidents, and presidential candidates have visited often here in recent years. But the idealism and optimism that got me this far are still alive in me. I have a foot in the past and a foot in the future. I am a bridge-builder.

One final note: So many people have helped make me the person I am today. Some of them I may want to curse, but most of them I want to thank. Hopefully, all of you know by now who you are. But most of all, there are Don and Audrey Medinger, my parents. In more ways than one, they made me who I am today. I've never stopped believing in myself and the American Dream because of their encouragement. And for that, I am eternally grateful. ☺
She was shaking, so the trowel dropped from her hand to the paving stones with a sharp clang. Kneeling at the edge of her impatiens bed, she picked out tender shoots of unwelcome grass and weeds and delighted in the dirt's filling her carefully manicured nails.

As she jabbed at a bare spot with the trowel, she felt a stone fly into her glasses, obscuring her sight for a moment. She picked a strand of straw out of her hair.

"Why am I so angry?" She felt the answer surging up at once.

"I want to be angry. That's why." This lack of logic was accompanied by a sharp pain in her right temple. Her heart was pounding furiously.

"Serve him right if I die right here in the middle of the garden!" More lack of logic.

"Cora," the call came from the back door.

"Whatever is the matter?" Abner, old bathrobe tied
loosely beneath his paunch, plaintively called out to her. “Cora, come on in. Your eggs are getting cold.”

“Good! I love cold eggs!” This lie carried venom she didn't know she was capable of feeling.

“Cora, it isn’t right. You come right in here!”

“Ah, here it is. I’m his slave. Well, I’ll be damned if I’ll go back in there.”

Abner slammed the screen door. She could hear his old slippers whistling over the wooden floor. Then the door into the kitchen slammed.

“I wonder what he’ll do now,” she mused. She sat back on her heels suddenly, and fell backward, cracking her head against the corner of the weed basket. Any blood? No! Too bad!

She rubbed her head with her dirty hands. Mercilessly, she began pulling weeds, trying to quiet her rapid heartbeat. At the same time, she relished a release of the last five days’ tension.

Now she heard the screen door open and quietly close. Steps approached. Squeezing her eyes shut, she ignored the body standing next to her.

“Cora, please tell me. What’s the matter?”

She looked up into Abner’s troubled face. What am I doing to him—to myself? She wanted to touch his unshaved cheek and say, “Little Boy, you are the matter.” But she still didn’t trust herself to speak.

Dramatically, she rose to her feet, threw down her gloves and walked down the driveway.

“Cor-r-r-a?” Abner’s worried voice followed her. By the time she had walked four blocks, her breath was a bit labored.

“Only five days,” she muttered. “How am I going to stand it?”

She looked in at the porch of the McDonalds’ house. Poor old Jerry—already out on the porch in his wheelchair.

“Hey, Cora,” he called brightly. “How’re you doing?”

“Fine.” She lied, waved, and hurried on.

Six blocks brought her to the shopping center where they bought groceries. She read the week’s prices on lettuce and chicken legs in banner-sized letters across one window. Then she realized she had no money with her and strode on, oblivious to startled glances of people looking at her dirty slacks and smeared face.

Ten blocks along, she turned around.

“Better get it over with. What can I say? Retirement is the rest of our lives!” She walked more slowly, trying to think of a zippy comeback to counter the complaints Abner had been voicing. Nothing came.

“How dumb! It isn’t as if I haven’t thought about this,” she cautioned herself. “I really knew there would be some adjustments.” Four blocks from home, she felt a sudden calm.

When she walked in the back door, she expected Abner to be watching Regis and Kathie Lee. Silence.

She rinsed her hands under the faucet and dried them on a paper towel. “Might as well get it over with.” She straightened her back and walked into the living room. There was Abner, huddled in her favorite chair, his head in his hands.

“Oh, Abner!” She dropped to her knees beside the old rocker.

“Cora, what did I say?”

How much he looked the way young Mark, their now-grown son, had when he was being naughty. She gave him a hug.

“Abner, it isn’t so much what you said. It’s the way you keep telling me how to do things.”

Bewildered, Abner looked up at her. “I was just trying to be helpful, Cora-mio.”

Please, God. Don’t let him divert me. We’ve got to talk. Cora counted to ten under her breath.

“Abner, you’ve got to stop telling me how to fix the eggs and the way to make our bed. I’ve been doing it for forty-five years now. I know how to do a lot of things.”

Abner looked so forlorn, she could feel her anger melting away. His wonderful brown eyes were enough to soften the hardest heart.

“Cora, I don’t know what to do with myself. You have to let me do something. You’ve got to change, too.”

“Oh, I know, my dear one. We weren’t supposed to be facing retirement like this, were we?”

He pulled her down on his lap. “These five days have been hell, Cora-mio. I feel as if I’ve lost something and don’t know where to look for it.”

“Well, for one thing, let me change my clothes and we can go out for lunch. I’m starved, and cold eggs don’t appeal.”

“And then,” he coaxed.

“Then, we’ll sit down at the kitchen table and think about how we want to do things,” she offered. “After all, we never had many problems when we sat down in the kitchen and talked things out.” She gave him a kiss designed to cure the most damaged feelings. And after that, she pulled him with her into the bedroom... an even better place to settle marital issues.
Editor's Note: “The Geode” won Michael a coveted local writing award, the Golden Scroll Award, a few years ago, and we think it fits well here.

It was a mall restaurant—a cut above a McDonald’s but not fine dining. It had a bar. It had a lot of varnished wood. It had tables and booths situated so you could see the shoppers if you cared, or you could sit in relative seclusion.

The steady flow of Christmas customers kept Kelly busy that noon hour. She was tallish, blond, blue-eyed, lots of leg and proportionately gorgeous everywhere else. A freckle or two on her face might have been considered a “flaw.” In actuality, these added to her beauty and wholesomeness and would allow her to keep her youthful look long past her years.

On her finger was a rock—not an engagement ring—a rock. It was beyond ostentatious. The number of carats would be difficult to estimate.

The hostess showed a later-thirty-something man to a booth. As he lumbered to it, head down, a faint smell of aftershave and the alcohol it tried to cover lingered. Kelly spread out some white paper as a tablecloth in front of him. His clothes were wrinkled and worn, but had been quality materials at one time: a blue pullover, casual slacks, and a long, black coat, none of which seemed to fit particularly well. His loafers were split in the front and very worn. He had brown, slightly disheveled hair and deep circles under his eyes. He might have shaved this morning, but his five o’clock shadow was already at quarter past six. He was a functioning, but broken, man.

He set down gloves, car keys, and a worn checkbook held together with a rubber band next to the napkin holder and condiments. There was also a cupful of crayons intended for the younger patrons, to keep them occupied on the white paper tablecloth while waiting for their food.

He appeared confused. He looked up into Kelly’s face and noted her beauty.

She aloofly went through the motions of her job, greeting him with a well rehearsed, “How are you doing today?”

The rock caught a glimmer of the dim light as she took his order.

“What can I get for you today?” she asked, not bothering to look up at him from her order pad. She glanced, in a manner just above contempt, as he stared down at the menu before him. It was quite obvious that she wanted to limit her conversation to what was absolutely necessary to fulfill her obligations.

“Uh, I’ll have the soup of the day and a tap of Miller;” he said in a rough, first-words-of-the-day voice. At that moment, she did look up at him from her order pad, and their eyes locked. She was startled, as if she had just noticed he was sitting there.

She glanced back at him as she slid the order into the kitchen. He stared vacantly out at the mall, his chin resting on his folded hands. She was frightened by him.

And this disheveled man, old before his time, thought: Why would she possibly want to get married so young? She doesn’t even have a clue about herself yet, let alone about anyone else.

He imagined her boyfriend. He was probably big, strong, dark, and dumb. He put that stone on her hand as a warning, lest any man dare approach her. God, how pitiful.

She came back with his soup, and he fought back the urge to say something. She must have caught the expression in his eyes, because she fidgeted a bit uneasily.

“Is anything wrong?” she asked timidly.

“No, no, it’s fine.” He swallowed his thoughts with the soup.

She quickly dismissed herself again to wait on other customers. The man ate his soup and drank his beer. He stared out into the mall full of milling shoppers. After a time, she came back.

“Will there be anything else?”

“Yes,” he said firmly, spilling out the cup of crayons in front of him. “Sit down.”

Kelly was panic-stricken: Oh boy, another weirdo at Christmas. Where’s the manager? She looked all around, but there was no one there to rescue her.

The Geode
Michael R. Vande Zande

She had noticed the deep blue of his eyes. They were wild and staring, yet in contrast to the rest of his appearance, they were quite beautiful. They were deep and looked very out of place.

“Miller Lite OK?”

“Fine,” he said.

Unsettled, she quickly excused herself to regain her composure.

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Kelly was panic-stricken: Oh boy, another weirdo at Christmas. Where’s the manager? She looked all around, but there was no one there to rescue her. Rocks, Ice, and Waves, 2000. Lake Superior, near Duluth, at Grand Marais, MN (by Gwen Sikkink).
But the man’s tone softened. “Please,” he said, as he motioned to the seat across from him.

Very uneasily, she complied, sitting erect.

And the man’s fingers flew across the tablecloth. Expertly, deftly, the image of her face, hair, and shoulders appeared in light blues and pinks and yellows and maroons. He worked furiously and precisely, glancing up for small moments, looking every bit as mad as a hatter, with his sunken eyes and bold crayon strokes. But in a matter of three minutes, tops, he was done.

He put down the last crayon, fell back into his seat, and waved his hand over his creation.

She stood and turned slowly; she was genuinely impressed. She moved around, stood next to him, and viewed her own countenance staring up from the tablecloth, next to a small soup stain and some cracker crumbs. In the picture, however, she wore a white dress with a veil, and her hand, with its diamond ring, was near her face. A single blue drop was by her eye.

“That’s... that’s me, isn’t it?” she asked, astonished.

“Mm-hmm,” said the man, while grabbing his coat and things.

“In a wedding dress?”

“Yes.”

“You’re really very good,” she said.

“It’s yours,” said the disheveled man, handing her the money for his check and quickly walking past her to the entrance, leaving her standing, admiring his work.

“But why am I crying?” she asked after him.

He turned and said, “I hope it’s for joy.”

Then he was gone.

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The Greatest Generation: A Vignette

Ann Morrison

Editor’s Note: This vignette is a cautionary tale regarding the gap of understanding that can exist between members of different generations. Each generation claims both heroes and villains; heroes are rarely perfect, villains are not always irredeemable, and often the two co-exist.

Julie walks past the kitchen table and her father holds up a magazine. “What do you think of this?” he enquires, with a smug look. This arrogant girl, he is thinking, she needs taking down a peg or two. His generation fought for this country’s freedom.

Now, people like her think this country, his country, owes them something. Julie looks vaguely in her father’s direction but not straight at him. This is the indirect, noncommittal glance she reserves for the strange men who call to her on the street in the big city to which she has escaped. Those men whisper, “Hey blond girl, do you want a toke off this joint? Do you want to party?” The impending discussion with her father on “current events” will be far tougher than running an ordinary gauntlet of creeps on the street. In the city, she has learned how to walk by trouble and not get drawn in. Don’t make direct eye contact, and feign deafness. Encouraging or confronting is not good.

She tries this new skill out in her old home. The house is too small. The men on the street are easier to avoid. She is trapped. “I asked, did you see this magazine?” he persists. He holds up his monthly copy of U.S. News and World Report. When she glances at the picture, Julie blushes to the tops of her ears. It is of a topless girl on the campus of a state school. The girl is involved in some kind of half-hearted mid-eighties demonstration. She is more than likely objecting to something that someone like Ed Meese, Caspar Weinberger or some other Reagan cohort must have done—Julie isn’t sure. She feels shame in sharing a look at an unclothed girl with her father.

Her stomach does a flip-flop and her blood runs cold. She says, “That’s got nothing to do with me, Dad, and I don’t want to have this discussion.” What she thinks is, I hate you, old man. Why do I ever come home?

“So you don’t want to talk to me, do you?” her petulant father then asks. “Well I don’t want to talk to you either.”

Julie slips past him and spends the rest of the evening at a tavern with her friends. She goes back to her college in the big city early the next morning, and doesn’t come back home for several months.

When she does come back, he is talking to her again. This is one he has been saving up. He offers his opinion on Amy Carter and her radical politics. He asserts that she is a shameful embarrassment to her parents, or should be (if they had one ounce of patriotism in them—which, in his opinion, they don’t).

Julie asks, “Is this your way of telling me how much you dislike me?”

“Surmise what you will.” He smirks.

A pause. She looks deeply into his eyes to convey her thoughts: You know what, old man? I could take you down, if I wanted. I may be a woman, I may be your flesh and blood, but you’re old and I could hurt you.

Later, she regrets her violent thoughts. She doesn’t really want to hurt him. She just wants him to shut up. This old man is her father. She wants to love him. She wants to respect him. He lived through the Great Depression. He fought in World War II. He was a hero. He deserves respect, doesn’t he? His entire generation deserves respect. They lived through hell. They were a generation of heroes. They saved the world. The world owes them for that.

Julie then realizes that the people who deserve respect and should receive love are those who give them to others.
Art Imitates Fiction
Mel Loftus

You are always reading those detective stories, Arthur. Could you go do some detecting and find these dolts?" It was Father Charles Watson, headmaster of Saint Joseph’s School and my good friend, asking me, Father Arthur Walsh, to determine which students had committed this year’s spring prank.

Father Watson continued, “It’s not like the time they put the salami under Father Taylor’s pillow and he didn’t discover it for a week—he keeps his room so junky. This time that siren blared in the middle of the night caused considerable inconvenience.”

I smiled, as I thought of Father Taylor breakfasting alone, as other faculty members were driven away by the gamey smell.

I drew my thoughts back to the present problem. Father Watson loved the students dearly, and the spring prank had never bothered him in other years. After all, it was only once a year, and the spontaneity was infectious and seemed to renew the students’ enthusiasm for studies, chapel, and work. As a veteran of forty years running a prep school, however, Father Watson was ready to retire, and he wanted the bishop to think Saint Joseph’s ran a tight ship.

“I know all that, Arthur, but those detectives are fictional; this is real, and we have 235 students, any one of whom could have set off that siren on the construction site.”

Brushing aside my objection, Charles said, “You always say that you can spot the telltale clue a hundred pages before the end.”

“Even if I read detective stories,” I responded, “I am still an English teacher and just an ordinary priest, not Father Brown.”

“I know all that, Arthur, but those detectives are always solving puzzles, and you read them all. Treat the siren problem like a whodunit. I can’t let such a breach of discipline go. Some neighbor who had his sleep disturbed even called the bishop about that midnight siren blast. And you know whom his Excellency called right away.”

“How is Archbishop Moody?” I teased.

“Not pleased, Arthur. Not pleased. He says he has larger problems in running the diocese than a practical joke at Saint Joseph’s to worry about. Enough of this bantering. I want you to give me a hand with this. Do something like return to the scene of the crime, look for clues, check fingerprints, or something. Find out who these fellows are.”

“Okay, Charles, Father Arthur Walsh, a real life Father Brown, is on the job. I’ll detect, but I think you’d better pray.”

“I’ll pray,” said Charles smiling, “like everything depended on that, and you detect like everything depended on that.”

The next day after classes, I locked myself in my classroom and began trying to solve the mystery of who turned on the siren. I took out a fresh spiral notebook and wrote on the first page, “The Mystery of the Midnight Siren Blast.”

Then I didn’t know what to do. Do I question suspects? There were at least 235 of them. Where was a good legman like Archie Goodwin when I needed him? Do I use the scientific method? What principle do I test? I should have read more closely when Sherlock Holmes discussed deduction with Dr. Watson. Do I look for informants? I didn’t have any. Oh, Sam Spade, where are you? Do I wait for loose tongues to wag? The siren went off two days ago, and none had wagged yet. Phillip Marlowe was always good with the terse dialogue. Do I follow someone? I didn’t know whom to follow. Thomas Magnum, please call in.

I was quickly exhausting options. I decided to rely on my strengths. That is what my fictional models used, whether it was the power of observation, underworld contacts, tenacity of purpose, or superior resources. As an English teacher, I decided to describe the event as best I could. In my notebook I wrote, “They left their rooms about midnight on Monday, left the dorm building, and sneaked around the outside of the school’s new wing, which was under construction.”

I looked at my first sentence. Why had I begun with the plural “They”? Why did I assume more than one was involved in setting off the siren? “Human nature,” I said to myself. “Young people don’t do this sort of thing alone. You have to have someone to discuss your plan with, to warm your courage, and to laugh with. Yes, at least two students set off that siren.”

Not bad for a beginner. I had a theory—well, maybe the germ of theory—after one sentence.

I wrote on, “The culprits headed for the construction superintendent’s trailer, found the pole on which the noon siren was mounted, and jammed the siren’s plug into the power cord. The siren wailed loudly and began waking up everyone on the school grounds. The culprits ran back around the refectory on the other side of the school complex, making a full circle, and came in the same door they went out. If they wore pajamas, they could join the rest of the

Y
The Last Run
Don Dean Bennett

Sonny looked up into the dark-bright Wyoming sky, a sky that seemed to be alive with stars and other things, mysterious things that danced across it with celestial beauty. Maybe they were top-secret military aircraft flying test flights, or extra-terrestrial craft—it didn’t really matter, they were just a part of the beauty of the big sky.

Roy coughed and shivered next to the dying fire, and Sonny snapped out of his reverie.

“You doing all right there, Roy?” Sonny asked, even though he knew Roy was dying. Roy didn’t answer; he just smiled and gave Sonny a wink. “It’s almost sunrise, Roy. We’d better get you up so we can get out of here. Let me check and see how you’re doing.” Sonny peeled back Roy’s flannel shirt and took a look at the wound. “Damn, Roy, why did you have to get hit?”

“I’m all right, Sonny. Let’s go.” Roy pulled himself up, obviously in pain but doing his best to hide it. Sonny helped him into the bullet-riddled pickup. Sonny didn’t know if the gas tank had been damaged by the bullets or by riding down the side of the...
mountain, but it was only a quarter full, and it didn’t matter. He pulled a couple of cigarettes out of the crumpled pack on the dash, lit them and gave one to Roy. Sonny took a long drag on his before starting the truck and heading down the dirt road.

The thing about Roy and Sonny was that even though they chose to make a living by doing things that were illegal, they weren’t bad men. They got started in the smuggling business because it paid better, and was safer, than working in the oil fields. Most of the stuff they hauled was legitimate; they just didn’t own it. They made a lot of trips running guns to extremist groups; the wide-open spaces of Wyoming proved to be an ideal place for their work. The sparse population and lack of police and other authorities helped them keep out of trouble with the law. But there were plenty of other troubles.

The sun was just starting to rise, turning the barren wasteland into a scenic garden of pink and purple shades. By noon, it would be a drab, dusty, desolate place, but now it was beautiful. “Hey, Sonny, do you remember the time we went to Vegas and blew all that cash? That was crazy—we should do that again.”

“Roy, just concentrate on keeping your blood in your body. Sure, I remember that trip. Who could forget it? Now, you just shut up and quit bleeding.”

Sonny glanced down at the fuel gauge, on which the needle was slowly sinking.

“Hey Sonny, do you remember that bartender at the Silver Dollar in Jackson?”

“I thought I told you . . .” Sonny stopped and smiled, “She was something else, wasn’t she?”

“She sure was,” sighed Roy. “It’s too bad those bikers weren’t a little more friendly.” They both laughed heartily, thinking of the night they got caught in a fight between some bikers and cowboys. Roy got a couple of teeth knocked out; Sonny was cut by a beer bottle that had been smashed over his head.

“If it wasn’t for those bikers knocking your teeth out, you never would have had that intimate moment when she handed you back your teeth.”

“I should have asked her to come up to the room. It’s too bad I was so drunk when I asked her to marry me. I really meant it. She was beautiful, and not just on the outside. What kind of woman would find some stranger’s teeth, pick them up with her bare hands, and give them to him? A jewel, a queen, that’s what kind of woman she was.”

“I’m glad you left it where you did. It showed you have class,” mused Sonny. The fuel gauge was creeping lower. “You know, Roy, when we run out of gas, we’re going to have to hoof it.”

“Yep.”

Sonny grabbed and lit a couple more cigarettes and handed one to Roy. “I told you those skinheads were nothing but trouble,” muttered Roy through his cigarette.

“You’re just as bad as they are, being so judgmental. What are you, a bigot now, Roy? What happened?”

“Well, you don’t like bikers, you hypocrite.”

“Yeah, but that’s different,” retorted Sonny, as a shudder ran through Roy. The truck coughed and sputtered. They were on fumes. “She’s about had it, Roy.”

“We may as well get out and walk now, huh?”

“We’ll wait ’til she’s dead, Roy—no pun intended.”

“You’re a real comedian, Sonny.” The truck coasted to a stop in a rut. Sonny hopped out of the truck, grabbed the smokes, and limped around to the other side. Roy coughed. “What’s the plan, Sonny?”

“Well, I figure there’s a ranch around here somewhere. Once they get a look at you, they’ll be more than happy to help get you patched up.”

After hobbling for a while, they decided to have a smoke. It was warm, but not hot. They leaned up against a ditch and slid down until they were sitting. The sweet smell of sagebrush hung in the warm air as it drifted through the hills and valleys of the rough landscape. “Hey Sonny . . . Hey Sonny . . .” Roy turned to look at Sonny, whose glassy eyes were staring blankly out in front of him. Roy noticed the blood creeping out the corner of Sonny’s mouth. He glanced down at the bloodstained shirt, and noticed how the drops were trickling down Sonny’s arm and side, forming a little pool in the dust. It was always like Sonny to keep quiet. With tears welling up in his eyes, Roy smiled, lit a smoke, and leaned back to wait.
Simply Ketchup

(An old folktale with a new twist)

Rose Marie Schaper

Author's Note: There is something unexplainable, but quite magical, about a campfire. To watch the flames leap and dance as the colors change from orange to gold, to yellow, and then to red, is akin to being captured and held against your will. Almost afraid to move, you sense the campfire casting a spell about you; and when the roaring flames quiet down to a slow, lazy rhythm, you blow on them and stoke them up with a long stick, lest the spell be broken and the fire die out before you are ready to flee its hypnotic, invisible hold. Within this magical speck of time, the spirit of storytelling is unleashed and allowed full rein. As your attentive ears listen, you withdraw deep into the center of your being, where unseen eyes see the story unfold, and unbidden emotions sneak to the surface and emerge fresh and bold. You keep and cherish the stories like precious gems until they escape, only to be told again and again and again. Here is one of my favorite campfire stories. It derives from an old Japanese folk tale, but has been altered by me.

In a small village in Italy, there once was an exquisite restaurant named Luigi's, which served the most delicious Italian dishes one could ever imagine. On the second floor, above the restaurant, in a tiny, one-room flat, lived a very poor young couple, Maria and Roberto. They were energetic and had hopes and dreams of a better life. They worked very hard, and they also worked long hours; and because they were unemployed, they had no choice but to go to the local magistrate who, not knowing how to handle this unusual complaint, sent him to state his claim before the Honorable Judge Anna Francesca.

News of the dispute spread quickly, and the courtroom filled with local villagers eager to know its outcome. The judge listened first to Luigi's accusations and then to the young couple as they admitted inhaling the enticing and tantalizing aromas from Luigi's kitchen. Then, the judge said to Maria and Roberto, "This is a most unusual case, for which I find no precedent. However, this court will make a ruling that it considers fair and just. Maria and Roberto, by your own admission, you have deliberately breathed, on a regular basis, the savory aromas that come from Luigi's kitchen. Therefore I must rule in favor of the plaintiff, Luigi." As Luigi beamed, the villagers in the courtroom gasped in disbelief. Then, Judge Anna Francesca said to the young couple, "Maria and Roberto, have you any money saved?" "Just a few thousand lire," said Roberto. "It's in a savings account at the local bank." The judge then replied, "I order the local magistrate to accompany you to the bank, where you will withdraw all of your savings and bring it to this courtroom in silver coins." No one could believe what they were hearing except, of course, Luigi. "How unjust! How unfair!" the villagers shouted. But the judge struck her gavel hard and called for order in her courtroom; it became so quiet that not a pin dropping could be heard.

A short time later, the sad young couple returned with a bag of silver coins, their life savings. Then, Judge Anna Francesca said, "Roberto, pour the silver coins onto the table in front of Luigi." Luigi grinned from ear to ear as Roberto poured the coins onto the table. "Now, Luigi," said the judge, "place the coins back in the bag." Luigi was happy to do as he was told. After the coins were in the bag once again, the
Mrs. Bissett and the Insistent Present
David W. Johns

Editor's Note: Part essay, part fictionalized short story based on fact, this intellectual tale suggests why and how good journalists are made.

At the start of my junior year in high school, I was a teenager without focus or ambition. Most of the classes I'd taken the previous year were uninspiring. I was unable to relate what I had learned to the “real world,” outside the red brick walls of Harry S. Truman High School in our central Missouri town. The brutality of the Vietnam War, which had recently ended, and the ongoing Watergate hearings gave me a healthy dose of skepticism for American institutions—educational as well as political and military. Most of the teachers, I believed, were proponents of a system that perpetuated the ongoing sins against democracy, humanity, and nature.

Encouraged by an English teacher, I signed up for journalism class. On the first day, the teacher introduced herself. Mrs. Bissett, an attractive woman in her late twenties, was a former political reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and a graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism. I was immediately impressed by her vitality and enthusiasm. As first semester progressed, I would come to appreciate her dynamic teaching approach, which combined lofty idealism and down-to-earth practicality. Her class gave me a sense of direction and changed my attitude toward school and other American institutions. On some days, I actually looked forward to school, which I came to view as a rich source of news and feature stories for the high school newspaper.

Mrs. Bissett's journalism class was solidly rooted in Alfred North Whitehead's idea of the “insistent present.” All the skills we learned in her class had direct applications in the “real world” as it existed then—in 1978. As a result of Mrs. Bissett's instruction, my classmates and I became proficient interviewers, researchers, writers, editors, and analysts. Our grades were based entirely on our ability to transform her verbal guidelines into a high-quality, profitable, eight-page tabloid. My fellow students and I published the school’s weekly newspaper, the Purple & Gold. As the news editor, I was responsible for developing a list of potential news items, assigning stories to reporters, editing news stories, and writing my own news and feature articles. While students in other classes suffered through the ordeal of absorbing “inert ideas,” we newshounds were free to roam the halls in search of a scoop. If not in the hallway, I could be found pounding out a story on an antiquated Smith-Corona manual typewriter, laying out pages, counting headline characters, pasting galleys onto production sheets, or interviewing news sources in the school’s malt shop. The hard work paid off; the Purple & Gold won first place in a statewide high school newspaper competition. And due to the advertising staff’s diligent efforts, the paper finished the year in the black—for the first time in a decade.

In addition to skills we learned through her class, Mrs. Bissett instilled in our young minds a sense of inquisitiveness. A good journalist takes nothing at face value and questions everything. An insatiable curiosity propels a reporter to search for answers in the never-ending pursuit of truth. The only things we had to memorize for the class were the five W’s (who, what, where, when, and why) and the H (how). Whitehead would not have disapproved. "The mind is never passive,” he wrote. "It is a perpetual activity, delicate, receptive, responsive to stimulus.”

During her occasional lectures on newspaper production, Mrs. Bissett often interjected her views on the role of the press in American society. The mass media, she explained, play a major role in shaping (and reflecting) public opinion. In a sense, the media define the insistent present by telling the public what is current, what is relevant, and what is in vogue. "Inert ideas,” as Whitehead refers to irrelevant, isolated bits of information, cannot survive the light of day in the

honorable judge said, “Luigi, I want you to return the bag of coins to Maria and Roberto.” “What?” questioned Luigi. “Did you say give them back? What? Why? This is my payment!” he insisted.

Judge Anna Francesca looked sternly at Luigi and said, “Since Maria and Roberto have admitted they were guilty in inhaling your restaurant aromas, this court declares that your just recompense for such a crime shall be the sound of their money. I hope you listened well to those silver coins as they spilled onto the table in front of you, Luigi, for this is all that you shall receive for your selfish, self-righteous accusations. This court is now adjourned.”

Everyone left the courtroom chuckling and laughing at the decision of the court—except, of course, Luigi, who promptly went out and purchased the largest, most expensive exhaust fan he could find. Maria and Roberto? Well, Maria continued to cook ketchup cuisine and pray to the angel of the breeze, who despite the new exhaust fan in Luigi's kitchen, managed to blow those gentle breezes as usual. The Honorable Judge Anna Francesca? Ah-h-h... the story of her courtroom justice has been told and retold in homes throughout all of Italy. And she became known as the Judge of True Justice exercising the Wisdom of Solomon.
newsroom of a newspaper, magazine, or TV station. By their very nature, newspaper articles must be current and in touch with the lives of the readers. Embedded in the ink of a newspaper are dozens of stories competing for the reader’s attention. Those articles handicapped by inert ideas are fated to the trash heap of journalism.

Educational inertia, according to Whitehead, stems from “ideas that are merely received into the mind without being utilized, or tested, or thrown into fresh combination.” The classroom next to the Purple & Gold editorial office was overflowing with inert ideas. Mr. Ernest Seymour, a middle-aged man with a perpetual cowlick and a penchant for polka-dotted bow ties, taught Calculus I. While Mrs. Bissett’s journalism class was a launching pad for vital ideas, Mr. Seymour’s Calculus I class was a haven for inert ideas. As he scrawled his sacred quadratic equations and theorems on the blackboard, I was scribbling ideas for the next week’s issue of the Purple & Gold onto a small notepad tucked neatly inside my calculus book. I could see no possible relevance of the information dispensed by Mr. Seymour. He was unable or unwilling to connect his nebulous mathematical knowledge to any other fields of study. How does the ability to calculate a cosine or tangent relate to any tangible activities outside the classroom? I wondered. Apart from mathematical eggheads, who uses this stuff? In retrospect, I realize that Mr. Seymour could have brought the class to life by applying calculus to engineering applications. He could have explained that calculus is an invaluable tool used in thousands of projects worldwide, from submarine x-ray tomography to geostationary satellite communications.

Unlike Mr. Seymour, Mrs. Bissett was driven by the need to instill a sense of purposeful idealism in her students. During the Watergate era of the mid-1970s, journalists came to be viewed by the public as watchdogs, over the questionable activities of politicians and businessmen. For one class period, Mrs. Bissett arranged a speakerphone interview with the distinguished Washington Post reporter Bob Woodward, who teamed up with Carl Bernstein to break the Watergate story. We spent an entire hour on the speakerphone with Woodward, asking him questions and listening to his views on press power, which he called the “Fifth Estate.”

To help readers understand the events of the present, Woodward said, journalists must provide historical background. A good article puts current events in perspective by explaining the processes that led to those events. Woodward would probably not disagree with Whitehead on at least one point: “The present contains all there is,” wrote Whitehead. “It is holy ground; for it is the past, and it is the future.” Journalism has a connection to the past—through history—and a link to the future—through its ability to influence public opinion.

Mrs. Bissett and Whitehead both believed in the cross-fertilization of ideas. No idea is an island. Instead of isolating ideas, they should be “thrown into every combination possible,” wrote Whitehead. There is virtually no field of study outside the realm of journalism. Journalists must be prepared to write knowledgeably on any subject—from city hall politics to the mating habits of Peruvian salamanders. As the news editor for the Purple & Gold, my journalistic skills were combined with my knowledge of school politics (for an analytical piece about a student council election), psychology (for a feature story on cheating), and science (for an article about an award-winning solar energy project).

Despite his emphasis on curricular cross-training, Whitehead stressed the imperative of educational specialization. “Do not teach too many subjects, and again, what you teach, teach thoroughly.” In the field of journalism, there are generalists and there are specialists. As the news editor, it was my responsibility to know a little about a lot of things. The sports editor, on the other hand, had his own niche, his own area of expertise. He quoted Vince Lombardi verbatim and could predict, often successfully, the opposing basketball team’s game plan. Whitehead would probably hold the specialist in higher esteem. “The general culture is designed to foster an activity of mind; the specialist course utilizes this activity,” he wrote. “Specialist training takes place—or should take place—at a more advanced stage of the pupil’s course.” Nevertheless, all the members of the Purple & Gold staff were experts in one specific area—journalism. In other areas, our levels of expertise varied.

Mrs. Bissett’s journalism class prepared us well for the “real world” outside the fortress of Truman High. Many of us went on to pursue careers in journalism. Others became lawyers or marketing experts. In line with Whitehead’s emphasis on practical education, we learned how to apply knowledge in meaningful ways. Whatever career path we chose, the skills and attitudes we acquired from Mrs. Bissett’s class would serve us well.
At 6:30 P.M., the crowd began to gather. It was made up of the city's and state's most powerful people. There were mayors, the governor, the ex-governor, state senators, city supervisors, both bishops—Catholic and Episcopalian—fire and police commissioners, newspaper people, big governmental administrators, board chairmen, business executives, labor bosses, diplomats, the famous and mildly famous of the city. There were even a few who made their money on the illegal side of the law. Three hundred in all had been invited, and most planned to come—even at $75 a head, most of which was to be given to the Firemen's Widows and Orphans Society.

It was a tough ticket to get, for it was a retirement dinner for Father Vincent Wahl. "Old Railing Wahl" had been on the city scene for fifty-two years, and his life and battles had touched many. In the late forties, he had led marches to force employers to share jobs and spread jobs among more workers. He had stood on picket lines for the longshoremen—a stance that got him dubbed by a city policeman. (Many wondered how a newspaper photographer happened to be so close that he got a finely detailed picture of one of the "city's finest" dubbing the young priest.)

Before going off to be a chaplain in the Korean War, he forced the federal government to improve public housing for shipyard workers by inspiring a blistering newspaper campaign showing the workers' and their families' poor living conditions. (The wags of the time said the bishop sent Wahl to be a chaplain so the bishop might have some peace during the war.)

After his return from Korea, Father Wahl had won battles that improved conditions for Chinese piecework seamstresses, that improved conditions in the county jail, and that reined in gouging employment agencies. Lately, he had been railing against pornographic book stores.

Now, here he was retiring. An interview in the Examiner, several days before the party, revealed Father Wahl's motives. It seemed that Father Wahl wanted to try his hand at writing—something for which his priestly duties didn't allow time. The good priest thought that he had something to say about change and power, and besides, he wanted to put the record straight on some old issues.

If one read the interview critically, other insights about Father Wahl could be discovered. One was that he was worn out. In his battle with city supervisor Dan Kelley over the pornographic bookstores, Wahl was not the fighter he once was. He argued that the shops were outright evils, hurt the city youth, and were a violation of community standards. He wanted them closed, but there was no mothers' march, no newspaper pictures of youths looking open-mouthed at a centerfold, and no accusations that Kelley, as rumor had it, owned some of the buildings that the book shops rented. Wahl just did not muster a good fight. City Supervisor Kelley took the view that harsh measures against the pornographic bookstores violated the First Amendment to the Constitution. In the showdown at the city council, Kelley's view prevailed. The vote was 7 to 0.

The press viewed Father Wahl's defeat on the issue as a minor incident—just one of the many Kelley had given his old adversary Wahl, for Wahl and Kelley were frequently on the opposite sides of issues. Wahl had frequently claimed that a fireman's widow had little chance of getting a full pension unless a Kelley-approved lawyer was hired, and he also claimed that Kelley took bribes from gamblers. When it came down to it, Wahl could prove none of these charges.

In the Examiner interview, Father Wahl's attitude of weariness came across when he said several times, "I'm just too tired to fight anymore"; and again when he said, "The rest of them can fight city hall; I just want to remain chaplain to the fire department. Ah, that's a job I love, out there with the young lads who risk their lives. At fires, issues are black and white. Those firemen keep me young."

The other insight of the interview was that in his old age Father Wahl had turned garrulous. He just loved to reminisce about the old days—how it was to be a young priest, how naive he had been, and how much he had learned over the years as a political activist, a man of God, and a fighter for change. He recounted a long story about how he had taken pictures of the poor conditions at the county jail—the broken toilets, the overcrowded cells, and the meager medical and recreational facilities—and had badgered the editor of the Examiner for weeks to send a reporter to the jail and do a series of articles that produced improvement. Father Wahl even loved to talk about his battles with the young Kelley, even though Wahl had lost most of them. Wahl had first met Kelley when Kelley, as a young man of twenty-four, took control of the longshoremen's union after its previous president had been murdered. (There were rumors at the time of Kelley's involvement, but nothing came of it.)

During a long and bitter strike, Wahl and Kelley were on the same side, but still became adversaries. It was Wahl, with nothing to gain, standing up to the police nightsticks and, with a sign, demanding fair hiring practices and safe conditions, that won sympathy for the longshoremen and sufficient support for a successful general strike. After the strike, Wahl claimed Kelley was in the owners' pocket and not negotiating for the best interests of the rank and file. Such bitterness led to their break. Three times in the six-column interview Father Wahl reminisced about the early days. He seemed to enjoy the reflections greatly.

The time was now 7:30 P.M., and all three hundred souls had gathered—even those who had planned to
be fashionably late. But Father Wahl, the guest of honor, had not arrived. The crowd was growing restless. They could quaff drinks and be pacified with finger food only so long. Several of the people who had worked all day were eyeing the dining tables longingly. As one young man sidled up to a table and filched a dinner roll, a uniformed fireman walked into the hall. He looked out of place in his black suit, gold buttons, and white cap amid the tuxedoed men and finely dressed women. He quickly sought out the mayor and spoke with him.

Soon the newspaper columnist, who was to act as emcee, was at the microphone inviting all to dinner. He stated, “Father Wahl will be late. Apparently, there is a fire on the other side of town and ‘Firehorse Wahl’ is answering the bell one more time. He wants us to start dining, and he will be here soon. While we are eating, perhaps there are some in the crowd who would like to tell an anecdote about Father Wahl, or as they call him when he’s not around, ‘Old Railing Wahl.’” None were brave enough to take up the emcee’s offer. It seemed more appropriate to wait for Father Wahl, and who wanted to compete with the eating?

Dan Kelley, though, wanted to say something about his old adversary. Kelley never believed in kicking a man when he was down, and he had bested Wahl so often he could afford to be kind. Besides, once Wahl arrived, no one else might get a chance to speak because Wahl talked so much.

Kelley, dapper in an evening jacket designed to lessen the impact of his expanding middle, approached the mike. He said, “Even though Father Wahl and I have been on opposite sides of many issues, I respect him greatly. Why, when he was a newly ordained priest, he was first assigned to our parish. I remember the first time he met a panhandler at the priests’ house. The panhandler told Father he was hungry and needed money. Father had only fifty cents, which he gave the fellow. Then he made the panhandler two peanut butter sandwiches, the same thing Father had had for lunch. And as the young priest watched out the window, the departing panhandler quickly pocketed the coins, but threw the sandwiches into the bushes near the house.”

Then Kelley turned serious. “As I said, Father Wahl was just a new priest when he came to our parish, and I was the first, the very first, to go to him for confession. I guess you could say I was his first confession. And he was as kind and gracious then as he is now.”

With that Kelley sat down to polite applause. Taking courage from Kelley (many said it was typical since the mayor took so much from Kelley), the mayor told about the first time the pastor was away on a Sunday, and young Wahl was in charge of counting the collection and getting it ready for the bank. When the pastor returned, he found Wahl tied up with his priestly cincture and the collection taken by a robber.

As the laughter died, the distinctive siren of a fire engine could be heard drawing closer. Soon Father Wahl entered the hall. All stood and applauded the old priest, who still held his peaked fire helmet under his arm. He was a tall, lean man who walked with a stoop. He had a bald pate with a fringe of gray.

As the mayor waved him toward the head table, he said, “Welcome, Father Wahl. Come here and say something.”

“I am sorry to be late. There was a fire on the south side of the city. Soon, I will be retired as the chaplain of the fire department. So this was sort of my last hurrah. I just had to go. I just love to be with those fire fellows; they are so brave and resourceful. I know I’ll miss it.

“Thank you all for coming. It’s a great pleasure to see so many folks I have worked with and shared causes with. It has been a long march.

“And I have learned so much: I was so naive at the start; I frequently did not know what to do or say. Why, the first time I was in the confessional, the very first penitent said he was involved in a murder . . .”
An Explosion in the Land of Morning Calm

David W. Johns

Editor’s Note: The basic events described in this story are factual. Extraneous details, though, have been semifi cionalized. David Johns and co-editor David Marcou worked together for Yonhap News Agency, in Seoul, in the mid-1980s. David Johns also worked then part-time as a journalism instructor for Hanyang University. Both journalists graduated from the Missouri School of Journalism in 1984. Violent protests were, and still are, very much a part of the South Korean scene.

Korea was dubbed the “Land of Morning Calm” by historians because of the sense of peace and serenity evoked at sunrise, when the sun’s young rays reflect off the East Sea into the nearby mountains. The pursuit of tranquility and order is an integral part of Korean culture, which has been shaped, in large part, by the neo-Confucian virtues of inner peace and order. It can be misleading, however, to embrace generalizations about a country or its people, as I discovered during my second week as a reporter working for Yonhap News Agency in Seoul. On a hot and humid July day in 1986, my prejudicial views of Korea were shattered by two violently contrasting events. The first incident reflected the profound Korean reverence for tradition, decorum, and regimen. The second episode was a youthful eruption of rage against the strict authoritarian structure that has defined Korean society for several millennia.

At the end of my second week as a reporter working for the International News Desk at Yonhap, the government-controlled news agency of Korea, my boss invited me and six other reporters to join him for a drink at a nearby bean curd house. Inside the restaurant, we took our unofficially assigned positions at the table, sitting cross-legged on the floor. General Park, as the intense but affable International News Desk director was called, sat at the head of the table. The seating positions of the reporters were determined by their birth dates—the oldest ones stationed nearest the head of the table and the youngest ones relegated to the opposite end. As a foreigner, I was invited to sit in the honored position next to General Park.

“Miss Lee, bring us a flask of soju and a plate of snacks,” barked General Park. Miss Lee, a demure, doll-like girl of about seventeen, bowed politely and returned to the table with a plate of dried squid and a flask of soju, a potent potato whiskey. According to the neo-Confucian tradition that has ordered Korean society for nearly six centuries, it is the “privileged duty” of females to serve males, of sons to serve fathers, and of youth to serve the aged. A girl, even if she is firstborn, is morally obliged to serve her younger brother. When twins are born, the firstborn twin (male or female) is immediately given the higher social ranking—both within the family and within society as a whole. The neo-Confucian rules covering social rankings are embedded within the Korean language. When a person of lower rank (e.g., young or female) addresses a person of higher rank, the former must use the honorific conjugation of verbs. The expression “hello,” for example is anyong-hashimnika in its honorific form and anyong-haseo in its informal form.

In following the time-honored Korean ritual of drinking, General Park took the soju flask in both hands and lifted it above my ceramic cup. I naïvely raised my cup with my left hand to receive the clear Korea firewater. Mr. Kang, Yonhap’s chief economic reporter, reprimanded me: “Never use your left hand to receive a drink in Korea. It is bad etiquette and bad luck.”

During the soju drinking session, General Park dominated the discussion, telling stories and offering his opinion on a variety of subjects. My Korean language ability was sufficient to grasp the basic concepts of his oratorical delivery. The other reporters maintained eye contact with him and nodded respectfully whenever he emphasized a point. General Park was the undisputed leader of the group, and it would have been disrespectful to speak out of turn or to start a secondary conversation on the side.

In the two-way dialogues with General Park, the older reporters were the least reticent. The younger reporters, stationed respectfully at the opposite end of the table, remained silent during the entire drinking episode.

My visit to the bean curd house confirmed my preconceptions about Korean professionals—that they are a highly disciplined and reserved people with minimal expression of emotion. My ideas about that Korean way of thinking stemmed largely from images of Orientals displayed in the American media and from my encounters with Korean graduate students at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Popular novels, such as Shogun and Tai Pan, depict East Asians as a fiercely loyal and highly regimented people. The Korean journalism students I met at UMC were quiet, introspective, and respectful of the deans and professors.

My views of the Korean mentality were forever shattered on the streets of Seoul soon after I bid my farewell to my colleagues and left the bean curd house. A few yards down the street, I got on a bus with the intention of returning to my apartment for a restful evening. It was about 6 p.m., but the mid-July sun continued to radiate a sweltering heat on the city’s concrete and asphalt infrastructure. When the bus had gone three blocks from the bean curd house, I heard a loud explosion, and the bus driver brought the vehicle to a halt. Thirty feet in front of us stood the skeletal remains of a car engulfed in flames. Seconds later, a rock crashed through the bus window next to an elderly woman two seats in front of me. Her face covered with blood, the woman shrieked, “Eiiiiii-go, hak-saeng!”—an untranslatable Korean expression of contempt, in this case directed toward students. Her
high-pitched scream counteracted the effects of the soju, bringing my mind to an immediate state of sobriety. A little girl at the front of the bus began crying at the top of her lungs. The driver, recovering from a temporary state of shock, opened the bus door and urged the passengers to get out and seek shelter.

When I left the bus, along with the other terrified passengers, it became apparent that I was in the midst of an anti-government demonstration. I was trapped between rock-throwing students on one side and federal police—armed with shields, gas masks, batons, and tear gas launchers—on the other. A cloud of tear gas hung in the air like a heavy fog. My lungs burned and my eyes were nearly swollen shut. Nevertheless, I was able to observe what was happening around me. Some of the students, wearing tattered blue jeans and headbands, carried signs or banners made from torn sheets. One poster proclaimed, “President Chun is the Butcher of Kwangju!” Another exclaimed: “Down with the authoritarian regime!” The Korean president at the time, Chun Doo-Hwan, a native of Kyongju, a rival city, was blamed for the massacre of about two hundred student demonstrators in a southern city in May of 1980. Before he seized power through a coup d’etat later that year, Chun was an army general in charge of the troops stationed in Kwangju.

As the students and police did battle, the students yelled anti-government slogans mixed with obscenities. One student, his face twisted in hatred, threw a molotov cocktail at the police line, but the flaming bottle bounced off a police shield and detonated on the ground. Most of the rocks hurled by the students bounced harmlessly off the large plastic shields carried by the advancing police. Unlike the disheveled students, the police maintained a sense of order during the struggle, advancing forward in a neat line. Although the students outnumbered the police two-to-one, the police were better armed and confident in their ability to quash the demonstration. I watched in horror as two policemen captured a student, twisted his arms behind his back, and dubbed his rib cage with batons.

As the cloud of tear gas became heavier, my instinct for survival prevailed over my journalistic desire for a scoop. I ran through the throng of students and retreated to the sanctuary of the nearby campus. Hanyang University is located in the heart of Seoul on a hill overlooking the business district. I climbed to the top of the hill, my lungs burning with each breath from the sulfur-based tear gas. I stopped next to a statue of the neo-Confucian scholar Kim So-Whan, who wrote a famous treatise praising the virtues of order and respect for authority. I then looked down on the riot below as another molotov cocktail exploded onto a police van, setting it ablaze.

Just Horton
Doris Kirkeeng

It was September of 1888. The leaves comprised a colorful rug, crunching under foot and step. Horton, a tall but slightly bent man, walked with the help of his cane, made from an oak tree branch. His left leg bowed outward with each step, causing a definite limp. He had fallen from a train when hitching a ride as he labored at supplementary jobs to help support his family of seven children. They and his beautiful wife assisted with chores on the small farm. His pride and joy was his team of Belgians, which pulled the wagon as Horton and his family pitched the hay and led the plow to prepare their garden.

His bald head was fringed with faded brown hair, and often was covered by his weathered, wide-brimmed, brown felt hat. It was plain and sweat-stained, with no dressy band. His pants bagged at the knees and were held up by frayed suspenders. The sleeves of his shirt were haphazardly rolled halfway to his elbows. Everyone knew his face by his large nose, the thick bottle lenses in his glasses, and his cookie dough moustache, which he often parted with his work-stained fingers. His lifestyle revealed him to be a caring, sensitive father and husband—a man of great integrity. He quietly talked to his dog as he limped along: “Shep, over here, That-a-boy, Shep.”

Looking across the field, he wondered why smoke was rising above the Stetsons’ little home. It wasn’t cold enough to build a fire in their pot-bellied stove, but the air was being tainted by the familiar odor of burning wood. He focused his eyes on the small log cabin. Orange-red flames were rising high, and black smoke engulfed part of the house.

Horton took off toward the house with Shep at his side, running the best he could. His stride was a long step and a big hop, over and over.

He heard frantic cries as he approached the house and saw that flames blocked the entrance. The only side of the house not yet reached by the fire had a window. Hobbling to it, Horton beat down the approaching flames with that old hat and broke open the window with his cane. He helped a girl and young mother squeeze through. Much to Horton’s surprise, the remaining young man thrust an infant in smoldering blankets out at him. The man enlarged the opening by kicking and pushed himself through, across glass and wood splinters, while Horton tore the blanket from the baby and stomped it free of potential fire.

Age and exhaustion led him to half collapse, sitting on the ground, holding the baby, watching someone’s home and belongings disintegrate. His heart pounded and burst with neighboring, love-initiated tears, which rolled down his wrinkled, tanned face. Shep laid his soot-covered paw on his master’s leg, looked up at him, and licked the salty residue from his face.

The thought that he was a hero never entered Horton’s mind, but he was.
The Orchard

Kent K. Hebel

I was not going to lose everything I had because of something that happened ten years ago. I would not let it happen. I rammed the clip into my stainless steel government model pistol. I dropped the slide, chambering a round. My thumb lifted the safety, and I slid the forty-five into its holster. The holster went inside my waistband, warming me with its security, yet chilling me to the bone.

My number one rule when going into a gunfight is to have a gun.

I stuffed the two spare magazines into the pouch on my belt. I carefully made sure the magazines were where my left hand could reach them when the action started. I stuffed two more magazines into the pocket of my leather jacket. Black and soft and heavy, the jacket was another friend from the same era as the pistol.

I did what I did back then. It wasn't pretty. It was not anything I would ever proud about, but I could not change the past. I suppose those ghosts from my past had a right to come back to haunt me. Why was it happening now, though? I had a wife and child who needed me now; I didn't back then. But now, with everything to lose, I was going to have to take my chances and dance this waltz with my past.

Why couldn't my sins have stayed hidden?

I laid the leather jacket down and walked around the room in my T-shirt and jeans, trying to remember how to walk without telegraphing the pistol in my belt. No one but a streetwise cop would suspect it was there, but that was the least of my worries tonight. I put on the shoulder holster and attached it to my belt at my hip. I hefted the tiny 9mm pistol into the palm of my hand. I rammed a clip home and made it ready to go. I put it in its shoulder holster.

Rule number two of gunfighting is if you need one gun you may need two.

I put a black wool sweater on over the guns and slid the leather jacket over that. To some, it would seem like a lot of clothes to go through if you really needed a gun. It wasn't, though. I figured that when I realize I need my pistol, it's because someone is shooting at me, or about to. In that instant, I'll be moving for cover, then reaching for my weapon—not the other way around. The reason for the clothes is to avoid the inadvertent flash of a gun. It is better to have your pistol with you and a little difficult to reach than to leave it behind. Wisconsin law does not allow its populace to carry concealed weapons, and permits are not available. So the best recourse for people who feel the need to go armed is to not get caught. Most people are not expecting the average person to be carrying a pistol. Forget about two.

Two days before, I had found a business card under the wiper blades of my car, which was parked at the office. I glanced at it and saw that it belonged to my old friend Jack Terrence, from his insurance salesman stage. Back then, he had tried every line of business there was to make money except actually working for it. The card was old and soiled. Where had it come from? Jack was long gone. I turned the card over, and on it, in handwriting that looked like Jack's, was only one word: Orchard. Jack had showed up in town as a drifter. In his early twenties, he had a charm to him, and he made friends easily. We became good friends, and I hunted with him quite a bit on an old ridgetop farm near the Mississippi River that we called the Orchard.

I hadn't thought of that place in three years, but subconsciously went long miles to avoid it. The business card suddenly brought everything back. That evening, while I was sitting at home contemplating it, the phone rang. When I picked up the phone, no one spoke, but I could tell someone was there. Jack.

Why was he doing this now after ten years? Why couldn't he let it be? We had been friends once. Until I found out that he had killed the Johnson girl, Irene, that is. I did not find out by accident, either. Sheriff Dorman had come to see me about Jack. He had deep suspicions about Jack, and he had photos of Irene Johnson's body. He said that Jack had been seen with her a time or two, and that he had tracked down other towns Jack had lived and there were dead girls in them, too. He had me hooked. Then he reeled me in.

I received another call the day after I found the card. Then, today, I got a call, and one word was whispered in the silence.

Orchard.

That was enough. I packed up my wife, Laura, and told her that it was time she and our little girl, Tia, visited her parents. She didn't hesitate, she just went. It must have been the look in my eyes. I hoped she would come back to me.

I drove to the Orchard. I needed to be there by midnight. It was exactly ten years ago tonight that I saw Jack there for the last time. He had to be there, of that I was sure. My car bumped down the long, winding lane that was washed out, eroded from disuse. I didn't think anyone had been here recently. I had made the last turn into the clearing when my headlights picked up a mound of dirt and a shovel. I stopped the car and got out. I walked into the headlight beams and, next to the dirt, I found an open grave. The clearing and the grave looked like they did ten years ago—the night I killed Jack and buried him here in this clearing.

I looked into the grave, and my deepest fears were realized. In the bottom of the pit, I saw my wife and daughter, bound and gagged, looking pleadingly at me. They were not able to make a sound. Under them, I could see that some of Jack's bones had been
unearthed, and his skull was smiling at me. 
This was something that should have stayed buried. I hadn’t wanted to kill him ten years ago. I had only wanted to confront him and tell him that I knew about the girl and that he should leave. When we met here then, the grave was already dug, and Jack had been standing over it waiting for me. Then, the strangest thing had happened. He had confronted me. We fought, and he swung the shovel at me and missed. I drew my pistol and didn’t. I buried him in the grave I assumed he had excavated for me.

“You came.” Not Jack’s voice, but another from ten years ago cut the silence. “I’m glad. This can be done with now, and then I’ll be able to sleep again.”

I turned and there was Sheriff Dorman, looking thirty years older instead of just ten, leering at me. Dorman grinned: “I sucked you two in back then, didn’t I? Jack and you … you each thought the other had killed the girl.” He paused, and then smiled. “You don’t know, do you?” He was holding a short, mean-looking pump shotgun.

Rule number three of gunfighting is that a shotgun in the hands beats two pistols under a sweater.

My face must have had a quizzical look. My reeling mind was catching up quickly, though. Dorman had convinced Jack and me that one of us had killed the girl. “You dug the first grave then?” I asked, although I already knew he had.

Dorman just laughed. “It was getting too close. I had to find a scapegoat, and a missing Jack or a missing you would work well. When Jack disappeared, I only had to put my suspicions in my report; the state police and the feds did the rest, looking for someone they would never find. I was here and saw the whole thing. I even got rid of Jack’s car after you left. Not much of a criminal, are you?”

“Why are you doing this—now, I mean?” I did not really care about the answer. I was stalling, making him talk so I could think. Maybe he would let his guard down long enough for me to draw.

“My son died a week ago.” Dorman looked sad. “He had killed the girl. I set this up with you and Jack to save him and my career, too. I put him in an institution so he wouldn’t hurt anyone else. Since he died, I’ve had nightmares that the truth will come out. That would kill his mother, and you’re the only one who could figure it all out.”

My plan formed, I cried out, “I can’t believe you used Jack and me as pawns. How could …” My feet slipped on the edge of the grave and down the wall. As I hit bottom, I slumped back, hoping not to injure my wife and daughter. I felt them give a little, but there was no crack of bones. I drew the forty-five as I hit bottom. Dorman came running up to the edge of the grave, and I shot him twice in the chest. He sat down hard, and I shot him again in the forehead. Laura’s eyes were wide. I pulled the gag from her mouth and cut away the line binding her hands. She didn’t say anything. She had heard the exchange. She didn’t understand all of it, and I would have to tell her everything if I got a chance. I told her to take Tia and drive my car home. She told me her car was in the parking lot on the edge of town. I would get rid of Dorman’s vehicle, which was parked where I expected, and meet them at home in a few hours.

When they left, I rolled Dorman into the grave, over Jack. I felt bad about that, but he would have done the same. As I filled in the hole, I realized that Jack and I were the same. If he had killed me that night ten years ago, he would have been filling in this grave, over his friend and the man who set him up.

“‘I had to find a scapegoat, and a missing Jack or a missing you would work well. When Jack disappeared, I only had to put my suspicions in my report; the state police and the feds did the rest . . .’”
Think for a moment, about the human capacity to remember. One’s memory is filled with stories of things that have happened—profound and silly things, important and unimportant things, just and unjust things, mad, glad, and sad things, and all the rest that fill the gaps in between. And as much as we might sometimes like to, we can never go back in time and change what has happened. But we can understand these events in newer, more insightful ways.

When a poet ponders and relives these stories, they seem to take on new life. They long to be expressed through words that flow like a melody spoken, not sung, sometimes rhyming, sometimes not. These imaginative and powerfully written words of poetry take careful aim, then trigger new insights. Perhaps they will strike a chord of familiarity with you; perhaps you will read, then smile, or nod your head. Perhaps you will shed a tear, or sense your heart stir as the words express life as it is, or, maybe, as you might want life to be. Just look around—you’ll find poetry waiting to be expressed.

Poetry
Rose Marie Schaper
Sportsmanship
Yvonne Klinkenberg

Don’t boo the other team,
No matter how you feel,
What if they win a point,
Or second base they steal?
They’re only kids who are learning
To do their very best.
For you don’t know what they’ll be
Before they’re laid to rest.

Say sincerely to the other team,
“You tried” and give them a friendship grin.
Someday they will be lawyers,
Or doctors treating you.
So take your winning with humble pride,
And remember: a game it’s meant to be.
It’ll make you a better person . . .
Then you can say, “I’m Glad That I Am Me!”

Why Do I Write?
Rose Marie Schaper

It seems there’s much inside of me
That yearns to be expressed.
Those thoughts and words
Come seeping through
At times I least expect.

I tell myself
There’s books galore
That are already written.
Book shelves bulge—and stores divulge
Volumes of wit and wisdom.

But, then I sigh,
And lift my brow
A deep breath cascades free.
The spirit Muse—whispers the news:
“My Words seek life through Thee.”

She’s got the blues in her bones,
Slow dancing to the blues, her eyes sparkling like jewels,
Wailing guitars, shivering my soul.
She’s got the blues in her bones!
Close your eyes, breathe a sigh, let your body swing and sway.
Come on, let’s play . . . She’s got the blues in her bones!
Feel the beat in your feet, blues brings the heat.
My heart aches . . . crying guitars make my heart break!
Bodies close, slowly weaving, passions high, music flowing . . .
A tide of rhythm washes over me,
Blues get me rolling like the waves in the sea!
She’s got the blues in her bones!
The saxophone calls out in dreamy moans . . .
Yeah, she’s got the blues in her bones!

The Editor
Yvonne Klinkenberg

He—She grabs stories and poems,
Looking at each line.
Aside goes a clumsy one,
Here’s one extra-fine.
So soon, eyes get tired,
Rest them for a while;
Then a thought comes to mind,
And his—her lips become a smile:
A word misspelled, a line incomplete,
To study them all, a mighty feat;
A note put there, “Let stand the same,”
A new writer, trying to gain some fame.
She—He’s wanting to keep them all,
Hating to see any writer fall.
Got enough for a book,
Better yet, check, another look.
Here is one I’d better use,
His—Her desk collects those refused.
Time to print the “best,”
Sorry for the rest, it was a test.
Now to start another stack,
Hoping this time none need go back . . .
Mother Teresa's Hands
Yvonne Klinkenberg

Hands folded in prayer,
What is she holding
With such tender care?
Is it meant for the forgotten soul
Or the memory of a child
She met once, who is now fully grown?
Is she praying for peace on earth . . .
No more wars by hatred to be borne?
Is it hope for things unseen
Or a blessing for flowers this earth adorn?
In Her Holy, folded hands I see...
She's praying for LOVE,
Thus, gently holding
Many prayers to send to the Holy Family above.

Mother Teresa, 1985. Anyang, Korea
(By David J. Marcou).

Understanding
Yvonne Klinkenberg

Can you reach out
To grip another hand?
Does it come from the heart:
"Brother, I understand"?
Or do you see the colors
That are born with his race?
Can you forget all of that,
If tears come to his face?
Maybe that's the reason,
God's pictured in many hues,
So each of us can turn to Him,
When we all get the blues.
So do not look at colors,
If someone needs a hand,
Because someday you may hear:
"Brother, I too (do) understand."

In Praise
Orval Lund

Reprinted from the author’s Casting Lines, with his permission.

Mrs. Hoffman, young blonde wife of the dentist-mayor, who taught me to read “See Dick run”;
Miss Bechtel, raven-haired and beautiful, who’d chase me across the football field after I’d drop a May basket at her door;
Mrs. Berkeland, dark mother of my classmate, Marlys, teacher who inspired me one day when I was joyously romping about the room by saying, “Someday you’ll grow up to be a clown” (haven’t yet—still hope);
Mrs. Wallenberg, with dark-brown, matted wig, large bones and voice, ambitious for us beyond our parents, who pronounced the dictator of Russia Krozchhoff!
I sing their praises—and hers, the one who led our recalcitrant boneheads through Julius Caesar our sophomore year:
Miss Ramstad, up in northern Minnesota where we’d get a few new teachers every year (she only stayed the one), where lives must have seemed locked like January’s rivers, who inspired my first love poems, barely disguised, read them and praised them far beyond their merits and handled me delicately as a cracked egg.
I want to praise them all, all of them, these lovely women. Teachers.
War to Peace
Doris Kirkeeng

So you disagree, becoming hostile,
You won’t offer reconciliation.
So hatred with conflict is your will,
Soldiers, wars are your sensation.

Exhausted, shattered, weary and spent.
Strategy, negotiations, strife end;
Officers, leaders, treaties are sent.
Rebuild, accept, repose and mend.

Broken families, broken hearts,
Crippled men and death result.
Leaving nations wondering, apart;
Which enemy’s action is at fault?

Quiet, tranquil, peace returns,
Emotional, spiritual freedom stays.
Love, joy and happiness churns
To treasured, calm, serene days.

Retired Farmer
Marjorie Walters

He is out inspecting his garden,
As summer’s sun comes over the hill.
He is now a retired farmer,
And in his soul, he farms still.

He lovingly looks over each green row,
As he hunts down every weed.
He thinks when the radishes are gone,
He will plant some parsnip seed.

His fingers long for deep black dirt.
His eyes see ripe fields gone by.
While in his backyard garden, he raises
An abundance of winter’s supplies.

He dreams of days on the farm,
Cultivating acres of wheat and corn,
He and the boys pitching hay into the loft,
Trying to beat the coming storm.

He sees once more in the morning dew,
In the light of the rising sun,
The meadow heavy with clover,
Where the bubbling spring did run.

He feels again the call of the land,
At his heart the tug of the wind,
The rich dark dirt around his feet,
And he seems like very close kin.

He recalls in memory the brown cows.
Their familiar names fall from his lips.
Peace fills his weathered, wrinkled brow,
As on the old milk stool, he sits.

As he rests, he dreams he is tilling the earth,
With his horses instead of a hoe,
That once more he is harvesting crops,
As he watches his garden grow.

The Million Dollar Smile
Judy Fox

Have you ever relaxed, late afternoon, in a small, neighborhood restaurant?
One of those places where the food is homemade,
And the farmers, truck drivers and local cops haunt.
In one, I have my coffee and watch as the customers
Trudge in, worn-out and blue.
They plop down in the comfortable chairs to order the special:
beef stew.
Then out from the back kitchen, hopping and bouncing,
Comes the waitress with the deep brown hair piled high on
Her head, her lips, bright red.
She’s humming, whistling and calling out, “Hey Tom,
Hey Fred!”
Calling each person by their name, she soon has the whole
Place smiling, talking, and laughing out loud!

She does a little hop and jiggles her shoulders to the music on
the radio.
Everyone watches her, because she’s made their day flow.
Her giggles and laughter can be heard, as she buzzes
by each table,
Joking with the guys with that million dollar smile,
when she’s able.
She flirts and blushes, then winks her eye . . .
She’s the toast of the town, serving coffee and pie.
Every café should have a waitress like this gal,
Their business would flourish; everyone would bring their
pals . . .
But maybe they already do,
In many places like this, saying “hometown” to me and you.
Two Children

Arjorie Walters

Little one, sleeping in a cradle,  
Wrapped with a blanket, soft and white,  
Dream of a baby in swaddling cloth,  
Sleeping in a manger, one long ago night.

Little boy out in the workshop,  
Playing around your father's knees;  
There was another boy in a carpenter's shop,  
With his father just like thee.

Dear little child, gentle and mild,  
Rocks with mother, as she sings;  
Another mother sang sweet and low  
To her child, who was Christ the King.

Oh, little child, all that you are,  
All the dreams and games you play,  
Were the thoughts of a child long ago,  
Who lives in your heart this day.

Two children, mine, one sleeping here,  
Rocking in the cradle at my feet;  
But the other one grew up to die,  
Leaving Mary to silently weep.

I thank you, child, who came from heaven,  
Who was a baby, a boy, a man;  
Who knows how a mother and child feels,  
Who cares and understands.

Mom Cares Too Much?

Judy Fox

What on earth do you say  
When told your child has cancer?  
You feel like the bottom has fallen out of  
your world . . .

Like someone has punched you in  
The belly . . .

Like someone has torn your heart  
out . . .

Like screaming to the world . . .

It's not fair!!!! No! No! No!  
My son is a part of me, just barely  
Grown up. His mom is supposed to save  
A son from hurting.

Just starting his marriage,  
Just promoted in his job,  
Just purchased land to build  
His home in the woods . . .

Just beginning!  
Now he has to face fighting the  
Wicked Monster, which he will!  
Hundreds of friends and family  
Behind him, cheering him on, and  
Me, of course!

Someone said to me, you care  
Too much . . .

Don't visit your son too much . . .

Don't show you're scared,  
Don't show your fear,  
Don't cry in front of anyone . . .

Don't, above all, cry in front of him,  
Don't, Don't, Don't . . .

Well, I'm his mom, I love him, and he is  
my son!

I'm stifling my screams of rage,  
I'm holding back my tears, my fears . . .

I'm only calling twice a week,  
Visiting only once a week,  
Showing the outside world I'm brave,  
ha!

Strong and not crushed to a thousand  
Tiny pieces . . .

Because my son has cancer!  
He is doing great.  
The tumor is shrinking.  
The chemo took his hair,  
His strength!

But it's working!!  
His friends are still cheering him on.  
His mom stands back in the shadows,  
Praying a thousand times a day  
To God, to take that evil cancer away!!!  
We moms have to let our boys be free.  
That's hard . . .

They have to be strong to the world . . .

I can understand that, I've raised  
four sons . . .  
And . . . I will try real hard not to be  
Too much of a mom!

But . . . I would love to hold him in my  
arms and say,  
Like long ago . . . "It'll be all better . . .

Mom will make it all better.  
Mom will make the hurt go away!"

Columbine

Deborah L. Ringdahl

Dawn almost
strange silence
in the wood.
Sensors acute to foe.
The buck
with darkened coat
startles,
dodging noise thrush,
leaving spotted fawns
falling,
to misdirected bullets.
Save the children.

The school yard rings.
midday,
a deafening communal fear
silenced by the shooters.
Crawling for haven
in hidden closets,
and desks upturned
their shattered mates
surround them.
Slaughtered rage
triggered by
Misguided minds.
Save the children.

The unwelcome Albanians
flee inhumation,
shedding their timeless lives, and
package each other
to escape oppression.

Founding of tents
on the shore of bondage,
driving kindness lost,
falsely safe.

Friendly fire
collapses their exile,
their hope,
Misintended bombing.
Save the children.

In the forest
wild flowers bloom
to mark the young doe's lives.
Garland sprays
are worn on manicured graves
for fallen students.

Mass entombments
are carved by stone masons
in captured land
where blossoms again will rise.

Save the children.
**The Blossom Days**  
*Mary Lou Ryan*

Editor's Note: This poem was begun on May 6, 1978, and revised and finished on July 12, 1999.

Gently pass the blossom days, when forty years and five laid their furrows on the lady's face.

So simmer soul within the shell of skin and cells and scar tissue, from years of bearing, stretched and worn. Simmer softly, simmer slow.

Outrage bursts through years of stress, subservience strips her soul of self, and screaming lava words erupt to cover blossoms' peaceful glow.

Then blossoms burst to fiery red, twist, pummeled by hail and rain, withstand and hold their beauty briefly, promise fruit and summer's harvest.

Soon fading, fading, rusting, falling, with diamond drops upon the petals, fading, fading, dying, falling, rain erodes the blossoms' promise.

_Hibiscus, 2001. La Crosse, WI (By Rebekah Garner)._  

**Wild Goose**  
*M arjorie Walters*

The cry came from high above, or perhaps from deep within. It seemed to be a wild goose, making southern journey again.

I thought he called, come along. In the garden where I stood. If I had had his mighty wings, my heart might've replied, I would.

I could not see him in his flight; only hear his restless call; or maybe, I thought it was he, because he cries to me each fall.

He calls to tempt my heart away; when the leaves are no longer; to the place of summer days, the call keeps growing stronger.

So as he cries, hurry, come along; I know I cannot go; I have to dig the end of summer's garden, before the winter's sleet and snow.

So whether he cries from high above, or from somewhere deep within; I have to curb my gypsy ways, to keep them safely locked in.

**Who Is That Lady?**  
*Aggie Tippery*


Who is that lady out shoveling snow, just when the thermometer is at ten below? She'll shovel even though she is out of wind, that's my mother, dear friend.

Who is that lady making a quilt? on a quilt frame that her grandfather built. She's making it for one of her kind. That's my mother, dear friend.

Who is that lady who is out with the young? if you say she is old, just bite your tongue. To her, old age is “around the bend.” That's my mother, dear friend.

Who is that lady mowing the lawn? She started at it just after dawn. She'll be done before ten. That's my mother, dear friend.

Who is that lady who helps when we're ill? She'll do washing and dishes and give us a pill. And sit by our side when the night has no end. That's my mother, dear friend.

Who is that lady who packs the apples, and don't give a damn, she'll pack till they come to an end. That's my mother, dear friend.

Who is that lady who packs the apples and don't give a damn, she'll pack till they come to an end. That's my mother, dear friend.

Who is that lady at the euchre table? She has a good time and is very able to get a hand that'll win. That's my mother, dear friend.

Who is that lady with the snow-white hair? Who had me for a child, what a cross to bear? But I know she'd do it again. That's my mother, dear friend.

Who is that lady who never even owned her own bicycle? She rides around with a grin. That's my mother, dear friend.

Who is that lady that's known as “Granny”? Who can Indian wrestle and put you on your fanny. She'll flip you end-over-end. That's my mother, dear friend.

Who is that lady who is so bent and so small who's my mother, dear friend!
Harmony
Rose Marie Schaper
I drove
It was dark
I was tense
I was hurried
The light was red
I groaned
Then stopped
I looked to the left
His car was next to mine
I saw his face
He was intent
The light turned green
He sped away
I caught a glimpse
Of my reflection
I was intent
I, too, sped away
Now there was a question
What’s it all about?
Life, day after day?
Is there a purpose?
Is it work? Survival?
Is it family? Or ministry?
What am I really caught up in?
Why am I here?
Am I called to something?
What is the deepest call of God
In my life?
I wrestled with the question
I slept with it
I awoke with it
I ate with it
I worked with it
The intent look
Of the face in my car
Haunts me
I prayed
The answer came
It settled over me
Quite unexpectedly
With depth and truth
Then, I knew
The deepest call of God
For me and for you is
To live in harmony
Yes, to live in harmony
Simple? Simple!
The best—Usually is!

Saving America
Orval Lund
Reprinted from the author’s Casting Lines, with his permission.
I was twelve. We were at war in Korea. I did my part, climbing a ladder of unpainted lumber up through a closet and trapdoor I hadn’t known existed and out onto the roof of Lancaster School. I could walk its flat tar to the north edge and look down on my own house where Ma and Dad and sister Mary slept or over to the west edge and look down on Grandma and Grandpa Lund’s house. I was protecting them from the Russians: my family, my teachers, the Standard Oil man, the white-haired preacher at our church, the postmistress, the one-armed bartender, retarded Gene Swenson, my best buddy Bobby Matson, and all the girlfriends I’d had in my life. For I was a Civil Defense watcher. Armed with binoculars and book of airplane silhouettes and telephone in a plywood booth, I’d scan the night skies for bombers coming down over Canada to kill us all. I had bad dreams in those days of mushroom clouds, of Japanese children with skin like loose wallpaper and two heads. We had drills in school where we were taught to get under our desks when, on and on, the bell rang Russian bombers overhead. General Ike became our president with Richard Nixon just behind him. Joe McCarthy ranted against Reds on the radio.
My world wore a five o’clock shadow. Yet in every house were people I could name, so at night in the cool dark I watched and watched. And I watched. But I never saw anything but moonglow and starglitter, and in the birdsong dawn, flying away, my fear.

Contrasting Oneness
Barbara Tatzel
Separate ears that hear one voice,
And separate voices that sing one song.
Separate minds, but just one thought,
And separate thoughts, with one desire.
Separate souls, but one in spirit,
Yet separate spirits that share one love.
Three Big Game Hunters and Three Tribesmen
Deborah L. Ringdahl

Drawn by a wooden-wheeled oxcart, Keeling on ancient terrain, In the bush of Botswana, Africa, The three tribesmen, barefooted, Having never worn shoes in life, Lumber toward the makeshift camp, Walking hours since dawn, To begin their daily labor As hunting trackers, For the white supremacists, The apartheid founders, Who are beginning their holiday, On this private game farm, Surrounding the Limpopo River, 10,000 acres, Reserved for the reigning lords.

The native men, baptized Pete, France and Hitler, who will bathe only twice in their lives, at birth and at death, traveled from their wilderness village, of grass and reed huts, untouched by laws of civilization, governed by laws of survival, yet instinctively bred to serve the white man.

The bossmen arrive by Land Rover, arrayed in tailored hunting garb, the one corpulent white man, with manicured nails and fleshy palms, fingers his Rolex, and shouts directives to the tribesmen to raise tents and dig trenches, to keep cool the gourmet food, and the imported wine.

The bushmen were curious of the woman hunter, and found her perfumed scent odorous and offensive, and her shelved bosom and raucous laughter barbaric. She won their favor, by offering American cigarettes—they had never heard of America, although they revered Muhammad Ali in their village.

The days of hunting were marked by the skilled agility, sight sense and scent of the true hunters, to ferret out the wild game, and lead the master race to raise their Browning rifles and claim their unearned trophy.

And on this last night of the hunt, the kudu and impala dressed and dismembered, the white tribe dares to visit the camp of the black men, yards away.

In more than a conciliatory gesture of recompense, they offer their Rand cigarettes and scotch and the coveted liver of the catch.

The native men share the tripe they have boiled on an open flame—usually distasteful to the cultivated palate, yet on this evening, strangely palatable.

And in unified Afrikaans tongue, they laugh and converse, as though communal members of an elite club.

*Fisherman's Game,* the photographer's husband and his catch, 2000. La Crosse, WI (By Denise Havlik-Jensen).

What I Was Doing New Year's Eve
Orval Lund

For Michele
Reprinted from the author's Casting Lines, with his permission.

Didn't want to work the traditional jigsaw, no sleeve to brush against, didn't even stock up on champagne with only one nose to tickle, turned on the radio, heard Sinatra, swallowed a beer, turned on the stereo, tried saxophones (but you floated through), slammed back a beer, clicked on the TV, nursed another beer, watched lovers curl, clicked around the remote, nothing but bodies, sipped a beer, tried reading a book, the story was of lovers, sipped some wine, flipped through a magazine, the ads were for my heart (you were everywhere and nowhere), slurped another wine, stared out the window at the night, smoke streaming from houses, busy crematoria, stars slicing down the arteries of trees, kissed the cold window, left frosty lips, tossed back some rum, till filled with booze and loneliness, stumbled to bed, buried my head beneath blankets, dreamt of snow, waited for you to come back home to me.
The Parents of Poets

Orval Lund

Reprinted from the author's Casting Lines, with his permission, for his parents.

You imagine them on pillows, wondering about these children, unexpected as giant puffballs in the back yard, or exotically flowered thistles.

Helen asks Herb if he thinks the child is happy. Herb grunts, thinks awhile, grunts again, supposes so. But he wonders in the dark if it is so, if Bob is happy—or contented, which is what Herb has come to feel the chief good, but wonders how he can be when he stands in front of folks, and reads words about sex and death and things like that. The kid never did much like working on the car, never really did take to that '55 Chevy he bought him and worked with him on. Oh, he learned to change the oil, grease it, wash it, but that was about it. It seemed a joy to him as a teen, but just to chase skirts from town to town and drink beer. After that, mere transportation.

In the adjoining bed, Helen wonders, too, wonders how she could have been so lucky to have birthed a poet, wonders where those wonderful words come from, words she loves if not always understands, words inside a cover with her own child—think of that, her own child's name on. She's always been a reader, always been a lover of books, always loves to lose herself in some faraway place, but she doesn't always get her baby's words, words that baffle her sometimes in their shifts and starts, their whistles and bangs, almost—what shall she call them?—almost before words, like Bobby's still a baby in his crib. She went to a reading once, alone—Herb stayed home—and Bobby introduced her, said—she remembers the words exactly—said, "Here is the woman who made me a poet," walking back to where she sat and lifting her to her feet by her arm. She felt shy, but proud, too. Then he said, "The man who made me a poet is home watching TV," and everybody laughed. She wonders why. She wonders why Herb never came with her, why this gap between them. Well, she hopes Bobby's happy, happy with his words. She knows she never could stand up like that in front of people and use words like "sex" and "death" and "breast"—he actually names body parts, and he swears sometimes, too. She remembers how she winced at "s—t." They never used words like that when she was a schoolgirl—not in poetry—but she guesses they do now.

In another bed, in another place, Robert wonders, too, as he recalls a time out riding in the family car and a picnic where they all sit down by a lake, staying to watch the full moon shimmer across the water, a family, and he wonders about this distance grown between his mother and his dad, between them and him, and he wonders what this has to do with poetry, figures maybe it's all about poetry, and wonder.

For Mary O.
Barbara Tatzel

The weathered wood of the rural Wisconsin barn, Splintered by wind and rain, Shelters a frame, straight and strong, Surviving tornado and time.

The loft, pregnant with harvest wheat, Baled hay and bedding straw, Which nourishes cow and calf, Silently heaves and groans.

Red paint and whitewash, like cosmetics, Deceive Sunday drivers passing by, On their way home from Catholic St. Pat's, On Oak Street in Sparta, Wisconsin.

Recent Visit to the Johnson Farm
Barbara Tatzel

The barn has a tin roof, Curled by storms, And gray, oak boards, With cracks that inhale sunlight. Mice plow through A wire mesh crib, Always half-full of corn, And bare cobs. Unwashed curtains Straddle dime-store rods, And ice cream, to the kitchen. As I get into my '98 Cavalier, And coast out the black dirt drive, Toward my college homework, I realize that, after thirty-five years, I have cultivated new crops.
Poetry Paints a Picture

Yvonne Klinkenberg

Poetry and writing
Are like a dream:
Words drawn on paper,
Like a small sunbeam,
Lighting the darkness,
With a thought,
Only the words,
On paper, caught.

Just Before Fall

Orval Lund

Reprinted from the author’s Casting Lines, with his permission.

If I were a painter
I’d brush in a prairie
of tall grasses, waving
pale green-yellow across the frame,
add a light blue sky about halfway down
with clouds puffy enough
to ride the wind molding the pasture
into ocean swells. The sun
would be off somewhere else,
behind my back. Two hawks would circle above
two trees, their roots exposed in the bank
of a stream rattling east. Under one, I’d sit
filling my chest with clean air, rubbing
my back against rough willow bark, naming
sky, tree, hawk, stream, cloud, wind
and you, eating an apple beside me, stretched
out on the sinuous grass.

Jennie

Rose Marie Schaper
(In memory of my mother)

Tiny and peppy,
Grinning and stepping,
To music she could not hear.
Tipping and tapping, swaying and laughing,
Eyes glowing and
Moistened with tears.

She brags and she boasts
Of her trillion grandchildren,
How she was
The start of it all.

Married when young,
Now old, but still fun,
She’s going
And having a ball.

As I ponder and treasure,
Times gone forever,
Memories
Linger and twirl . . .
For locked in the body,
Of this nice old lady,
Is the heart
Of a very young girl.

My Grandparents

David J. Marcou

I loved my grandparents.
Maybe that’s a sin . . .
Today it’s hard to tell
what actually is “in.”

But I wanted to say it
before I forget the day
when they stood up for me
and let me have “my way.”

Kindly I recall
the nights I spent with them,
waking up so early
for Masses at 5 A.M.

And visiting them in the country
where beauty was all around—
the distance easily eclipsed
between warmly-then and now.

I cannot forget them;
They won’t let me forget them;
And I recollect them today
In a kindly, Midwestern way.

Country Doctor

Yvonne Klinkenberg

I miss my country doctor
And the way he took my hand.
He always knew my fears
And seemed to understand.

He came in his buggy,
Pulled by a horse of gray.
He always had the time
For coffee before he rode away.
Now you go to a clinic,
Where everything is white.
Everything is sparkling
And shining very bright.

It’s now, “Hello, how are you,
And what is it today?”
He doesn’t have time to talk
Before he hurries away.
Yes, I miss my country doctor,
For God took him away . . .
Maybe to assure the angels,
Who may need him up there today.
Night Sledding
Marjorie Walters

When the magic of midnight strikes,
We are once more home in our beds.
The full moon shines on a now-empty hill,
Put away are the skis and sleds.
The laughter is but an echo, left behind,
In the cold night air.
Our boots sit beside the warm wood heater,
Our scarves and coats hang on a kitchen chair.
The cocoa cups are washed, returned to the pantry.
Tomorrow, we will all meet at school,
But tonight, with stardust glistening on snow,
We play every snow game we know.
Our sled runners, waxed and shining, have wings,
Riding over the snow,
It seems we'll never fly faster—
When we're going as fast as we can go.
When our hands feel like they're frozen,
Our feet are as cold as can be,
We play on, until just before midnight,
Then home we hurry, you see.
In my upstairs bedroom window, looking out,
The snowy hill is quiet, it seems,
Yet it is as if children with sleds
Are tracking across snow in my adult dreams.

Liberty Enlightening the World
Doris Kirkeeng

A gift from France in 1884,
As a gesture of friendship and lighting for a door,
She is eloquently robed, gracefully to the floor.
A pedestal supports her, with poem, much adored.
Gustave Eiffel and Auguste Bartholdi
Committed to construction and design,
While Emma Lazarus authored
“The New Colossus,” each thoughtful line

“Give me your tired, your poor,
your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
the wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, the tempest tossed to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”

Left arm grasps tablet dated 1776, Fourth of July.
The crown’s seven points, worn like the rays of the sun.
Right arm holds a bright torch, raised high.
Beckoning to seven seas, searching masses come.
Properly named, “Liberty Enlightening the World,”
Known by the free, “Statue of Liberty,”
She stands, at her feet a broken shackle,
Overthrowing merciless slavery and tyranny.
Our lady, with dignity, she stands.
Spiritual and political choices sustain,
As immigrants come from all camps,
To a land where Freedom still reigns.

A Poem for Sara
Mary Lou Ryan

Sara
So beautiful
Sleeping in your polished walnut bed
Piled high with floral tributes
Sent from hearts full of love
Whispers from those left behind

Sara
So young. Too young to be
Sleeping under the vaults
Of gothic cathedral arches
“You have children, you understand”
Words and embraces and tears from
Grieving parents, standing sorrowful vigil

Sara
It seems that there should be
A prince awaiting in the shadows
Of the hushed cathedral,
Waiting to come forward to kiss your cheek
And wake our sleeping beauty.
Four and twenty. Much too young
For this eternal sleep.

Dancing in the Dark

Orval Lund

She was lithe and lovely, and lit up our days of depression and war. So what if Fred got all the praise for the way he danced and glanced down at his shiny shoes? And spats, the way he twirled his cane and tipped his hat, the way he crooned his tenor wit, the show-off?

I could imagine Ginger, for all her billowy gowns, for all her minkish coiffures, for all her sparkle and flip, in bed beside me, or dancing in my dreams. As she dances now, backwards, in six-inch heels, her glass slippers glinting, against the stars.

For John, Who Did Not Choose Baseball

Orval Lund

on the raised mound, the game spinning around you like a merry-go-round gone mad, the ball large and sour as a grapefruit in your hand, missing the plate pitch after pitch, I gripping the wire fence with white hands, the white-haired coach shouting angry words until he took you out, the bases loaded.

Now, at fourteen, out you go, like a thoroughbred garbed in blue silks, your baggy old-time hat tilted jauntily, your lean legs loping across open fields. I try to keep up but can’t, and marvel at the nervous grace of your long body. When I see you, the cemetery milestone turned, running back to me, you smile and wave your open hands, and I, yes, I garbed in my drab clothes of guilt and age, yes, I smile and open my hands to you.

Forever Home

Yvonne Klinkenberg

I hear the whispering winds, Through treetops sigh. I see wild geese, winging, Across the buttermilk sky. When I see and hear these things, Oh, how I want to roam, yet know I never can. I have to stay here at home. What is it my mind does hear, When everything is still? Why can’t I leave everything? What holds me against my will? Is it the children that I have, Even though they’re all grown up? Or is it a dog I call Sam, Though he’s nothing but a mongrel pup? Maybe it’s just my thoughts, Which only want to roam, And when they get tired, I’m glad I’ve got a place called HOME.

Historic bomber at Oshkosh Experimental Fly-In, 1990s. Oshkosh, WI (By D. Tony Kiedrowski).
My wife and I were enjoying a Saturday afternoon of leisure on a picnic on a small island in the Mississippi River. The weather was cool to ideal. Very few other boaters were out on the water. The sun was out. The shade where we had placed our blanket and lunch hit the spot. I had just settled back after my garden-fresh tomato sandwich with chips and a good book when my wife broke my reverie. “Honey, would you be really upset if I changed the furniture?” What a way to spoil a lovely, worry-free, romantic time with my wife. What was she thinking?

After the initial shock from the question wore off, I growled my usual arguments against such a waste of time. I told her I liked the feeling of knowing where things are, especially in the dark. I told her how I liked the TV where it was, because I can see it while I prepare and eat my breakfast. I told her I liked being able to sit on the love seat while I read and still be able to see out the window when a car goes by or just watch the dog chase a squirrel in the yard. I told her all these things, and when I was done, she looked half-puzzled, yet interested in something I couldn’t reckon.

The next day we both had busy schedules taking us separate ways until evening. Before we parted that morning, we agreed to have a bonfire in the usual corner of our yard with hot dogs as our evening meal. All day I looked forward to this special time with my wife. I expected a time of entertainment that we both would enjoy almost as much as a picnic on an island in the Mississippi.

I made sure to be home at the specified time. I parked the truck in the garage. I pulled the picnic table into position on the lawn. As I prepared to get the fire going, I noticed that something was not quite right. The front door was open and the coffee table was halfway down the front stairs along with the rug from the front porch. My momentum slowed, and as I turned the corner, my wife hollered, “Honey, I’m in trouble!”

“More than you know,” I said loudly in my mind. It took a moment upon entering the house to adjust to the chaos that filled our usually orderly home. “The TV doesn’t work,” she offered, as I surveyed the catastrophe before me. Nothing was in its usual place, and where “it” used to be was a collection of dust bunnies, cat hair, and other treasures of past eras. The antenna port had been twisted off the circuit board inside the TV. Trying to disconnect it, she had continued turning until the wire had broken off along with the antenna!

I grudgingly took the back off the TV and soldered the wire back together while she chatted on the phone with a friend who knows TVs. The picture came on, but it wasn’t clear. I had done all I could. I pouted to the kitchen and put two hot dogs in the microwave. I proceeded to the basement, where the computer waited for my participation in a game of solitaire. I ate alone.

My wife finally came to bed that night. My words of wisdom were from an old poem. I said to her, “Man works from sun to sun but a woman’s work is never done. The simple reason this tale is true is that you invent more work for yourself to do.”
Filling out Forms
Mary Claire Fehring

Editor’s Note: Robert, Mary’s husband of more than fifty years, died early in 2001. He was a warm and loving husband to Mary, and he is missed by many people. This story was composed before his death.

This is not about eating.
It just came—another form to fill out because I’m my husband’s caretaker. This time it’s from Social Security. I now have to keep track of what I spend on or for him. That’s to make sure I’m spending his monthly Social Security check properly. They do not recognize Power of Attorney, so I had to go to the Social Security office to be appointed as “Payee.”

All I’d need to record, I should think, would be nursing home bills. That item, after what the long term care insurance pays, is more than twice the monthly check. But it says “everything.”

The insurance forms have not been easy, either. First came the letter saying I should get the endorsed form filled out and sent in by the nursing home—but there was no endorsed form. So I called the local office and the agent said he’d bring one out. When he did come, he brought the wrong form. He said he’d send me some, as they are to be filled out every month. When they came, they were just more of the incorrect ones. So I wrote to the company about their not including one and even wrote about my tale of woe with the local office.

When I told the nursing home of my dilemma, I was told they’d send the bills and not to worry about the forms. They have all of the necessary information from the first one they filled out.

Now I have received what is supposed to be a revised one. What’ll I do?
I would dearly love to let the garbage pickup handle it, but I suppose I’ll have to fill out our part and take it to the nursing home. Then I’ll just forget about it until next month.

Another note from Medicare states that there may be “new facts” that will allow them to approve of part of the ambulance ride from La Crosse to Rochester. First they did not allow any of it, so I gathered all kinds of information to show them their reason was full of holes—then I received a letter saying the wrong reason was listed—and no other reason was given. Now I get this!

If I have to fill out any more stuff this WILL be about eating. I will eat to make me feel better and then my form will fill out. !
Keep off the Grass?
Duane Bennett

If the way is clear, I proceed without stopping. A yield sign at this crossroad would turn me from my rebel ways into a law-abiding citizen. The letter of the law cannot be changed, or can it?

I once got a speeding ticket for traveling sixty-eight miles per hour in a fifty-five-miles-per-hour zone. The same zone still exists. However, now that the speed limit there has been changed to sixty-five miles per hour, I can travel the same road with everyone else at seventy miles per hour and not get stopped for a violation. Nothing changed about the road or the basic circumstances of my driving. Someone just changed his mind about the letter of the law and enacted a higher speed limit. Well, you may ask, what’s the point? Is there a moral or a parallel to my musings?

We serve a God who gave us Ten Commandments. Not suggestions! The Ten Commandments are written in a negative manner. “THOU SHALL NOT . . .” The principle of not killing (committing murder) was explained further in a more positive manner when Jesus said that hating someone without cause was already committing the sin of murder. Honor and respect for others and their property is the underlying principle of all laws. Think about it. If each person would esteem and treat others as they would like to be treated, we could all live happily without any signs or trivial laws. Can you think of any signs that will be necessary in heaven—like “NO SINNING” or “KEEP OFF THE GRASS”? I think not. Join me there, will you? Heaven will be a wonderful place!

Christmas Letter
Joyce Clason

Editor’s Note: Joyce is the sort of person who deserves the presents she asks Santa for. You’ll have to check with her to find out if he replied favorably to this letter.

Sept. 25, 2000
Dear Santa Claus,

I am writing you this letter to invite you to my house on Christmas Eve. Don’t get too excited yet. There are some conditions associated with this invitation.

First of all there is the question of gifts (not for you, but for me). I would like you to bring me the following:

• A robot to do my housework and yardwork.
• Someone to exercise for me.
• Tasty nonfat, low calorie food, prepared by super chef Emeril Lagasse.
• No-calorie, safe alcoholic drinks.
• Decorating and entertaining finesse.
• A ski trip, neat outfits, and skiing expertise.
• Computer expertise—and put a RUSH order on it.
• Ability to sleep and still get a lot done.
• Nimbleness and gracefulness, etc., etc.
• People jealous of all my attributes!
• Finally, acceptance of what is and what will be.

Okay Santa . . . I know you must know me from bringing stuff for all our kids over the years. But do consider visiting me, too, this time. I sincerely believe in you. Your martini, macadamia nuts, and a big hug will be waiting. See you. You don’t have to get here too early, as I’ll be wrapping till the end!

Your devoted friend,
Joyce
SPIRIT OF AMERICA

Why I Hide My Honey’s Honey
Aggie Tippery

The definitions of “honey” in Webster’s dictionary are: 1. a thick, sugary material prepared by bees from floral nectar and stored by them in a honeycomb for food. 2. a term of endearment such as sweetheart, dear.

These facts about honey are in the Minnesota Honey Producers Associations (MHPA) newsletter: “September is National Honey Month. It is a time to honor honeybees and the delicious product they make . . . Honey. September was chosen because that is the time of the peak harvest of honey throughout the country. In addition, many of the country’s agricultural crops, some of which are harvested in September, would not exist without the honeybee at bloom time.”

The first time my husband put honey on his bread, I watched in fascinated horror. The honey jar was in the middle of our small table. He buttered his bread, then stuck the knife into the honey and pulled it out, dripping honey across the table as he put knife to bread. He repeated the process, and I watched as the honey ran off the side of the bread, down his hand, and onto the tablecloth. After applying several layers of honey, he began to eat the bread. All the while, the honey sought its own level, as liquids do—its own level being his shirt cuff, the tablecloth, his plate, the chair, and finally the floor. As he reached for another slice of bread, I shoved the honey jar closer to his plate, hoping most of the honey would find its way to the bread and into his mouth. Cleaning up the dinner table took a little longer than usual that night. I vowed to buy a honey pot with a honey server.

Meanwhile, I hid the honey in the back of the cupboard. The next time I put honey on the table it was enclosed in a fine pot shaped like a honeycomb, with a server in it. Again I was intrigued by his honey transfer process. He reached across the table, pulled the server out of the pot, did not twirl it, but transported it, dripping sticky stuff into the mashed potatoes, butter dish, and milk glass on its journey to the bread. Again, I had to wash the gooey substance off most of the kitchen.

I hid the honey in the back of the cupboard.

During a shopping expedition, I found honey in a squeeze bottle shaped like a bear. “Aha,” I thought, “a foolproof method of putting honey to bread.” So once again, the golden elixir found its place at our table. I was so confident that this container was sticky-proof that I paid no attention to the honey-to-bread process as we consumed our supper. But, alas, as I cleaned up the kitchen, my shoe stuck to the floor near the table. Oh, no! How could he possibly have spilled honey on the floor? I wiped it up.

I hid the honey in the back of the cupboard.

One more time, I decided to bring honey into our home. This time, I found spun honey. It exists in a creamy state and is much thicker than the regular kind. Surely this would be the ideal spread for this honey-loving honey of mine. Wrong! I watched to see how he could possibly mess things up. He put the knife into the honey. Then he laid the knife down on his placemat. It wasn’t long before his shirt cuff rested on the knife. When he stood up and pushed the chair back, his shirt cuff brushed the back of the chair. When I picked up his milk glass, it was stuck to the place mat. It was hopeless. If I put honey in any form on the table, I would have to unstick my kitchen after a meal.

I hid the honey in the back of the cupboard.

Over the years, I never purchased the gooey stuff again, but my honey brought honey home now and then. I put it on the table once or twice, cleaned up the sticky kitchen, then, exasperated by the extra work . . . I hid the honey in the back of the cupboard!

Last week, cleaning the cupboard, I learned that honey hidden in the back of a cupboard for a long time becomes sugary. Following a hint I found in the newsletter, I put it in the microwave to time becomes sugary. Following a hint I found in the newsletter, I heated it in the microwave to transform process. He reached across the table, pulled a server in it. Again I was intrigued by his honey transfer process. He reached across the table, pulled the server out of the pot, did not twirl it, but...

Hide the honey in the back of the cupboard!

Wool Underwear
Marjorie Walters

I jumped from beneath the quilts, As the icy floor greeted my toes, Ran over by the frosted window, As the icy floor greeted my toes, Grabbed up my shoes and clothes, As the icy floor greeted my toes, And was doing just fine, until I bent over to pull on my stockings, As the icy floor greeted my toes, Getting too close sure made a mess. As the icy floor greeted my toes, Only to break out into a red rash. As the icy floor greeted my toes. When I would get hot and sweat, Fortunately, the only thing burnt I put on my shirt and sweater, To dress from winter’s cold chill. And was doing just fine, until I jumped from beneath the quilts, To make . . . Wool. That old heater was cherry red. Pa had filled it with wood and coal. Raced down the stairs to the heater, That old heater was cherry red. I bent over to pull on my stockings, That old heater was cherry red. Getting too close sure made a mess. To make . . . Wool. I jumped from beneath the quilts, That old heater was cherry red. Pa had filled it with wood and coal. Raced down the stairs to the heater, That made me itch and scratch. To dress from winter’s cold chill. I put on my shirt and sweater, That made me itch and scratch. And was doing just fine, until I jumped from beneath the quilts, That made me itch and scratch. Only to break out into a red rash. As the icy floor greeted my toes. When I would get hot and sweat, Fortunately, the only thing burnt I put on my shirt and sweater, To dress from winter’s cold chill. And was doing just fine, until I jumped from beneath the quilts, To make . . . Wool.
After graduation from college, Gary, a younger brother of mine, enrolled in the Peace Corps. He was sent to the small, developing country of Lesotho, a landlocked nation surrounded entirely by South Africa. His station was a seven-day horseback ride from the capital city of Maseru. Living in a village so isolated from other Peace Corps volunteers, he became skilled in the language of the local tribe. After two years, he re-enlisted for another term, but had a home visit during the interim.

I met the woman who would become my wife at the “Registration Dance” held the first weekend of her first year of college. What attracted me most, I guess, is Barbara’s sense of humor. She attributes at least part of her personality to her Bohemian grandfather, who was fond of practical jokes.

Barbara got started with her own practical jokes at an early age. One day when she was about ten, Barbara’s mother asked her to keep an eye on her little brother, Robert, while she ran some errands. Robert was six. Ever the big sister, Barbara enlisted Robert’s help in making fudge. She had never made fudge by herself before, but she had helped her mother and grandmother make it.

Fudge-making is an art. Temperature is critical. Barbara’s fudge must have sugared or something, for it had a strange texture. Whereas some children would have seen it as a failure, Barbara looked at the strange fudge as an opportunity. Quickly, before it cooled too much, Barbara and her brother rolled the fudge into cigar-shaped cylinders. It tasted okay—perhaps just slightly burned.

Then Barbara took the fudge out to the front lawn and arranged the little cylinders into two or three piles so it looked like the neighbor’s dog had been a regular visitor. It was about two in the afternoon, and Barbara knew the mailman was due any minute. Barbara and her brother stood in the living room, looking out.

“Robert,” Barbara said, “when the mailman gets to our yard, I want you to run out and pick up a piece of fudge and eat it.”

Robert was a willing participant. He showed early signs of a skewed sense of humor himself. “Okay, I’ll do it,” he said.

Sure enough, about ten minutes later, the mailman came walking down the sidewalk, his bag over his left shoulder and several letters in his right hand. Just as he got to their walkway, Barbara opened the front door, and Robert ran out. Improvising, he greeted the mailman, “Hi!” he said. He then hurried over to one of the piles, picked up a piece of fudge and took a bite.

The mailman stopped in his tracks: “Little boy! Little boy! Don’t eat that!” Barbara recalls that he had a stricken look on his face. Robert took another bite, licked his chops, smiled at the mailman and went inside. The mailman turned around and hurried down the street.

When their mother got home, she wondered why no mail had been delivered that afternoon.

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I was living in Chippewa Falls at the time, pastoring a small parish and teaching at McDonell Central High School, and Gary paid me a visit. I invited a priest friend along for dinner one night; then we stopped at his rectory for the evening. He is Father Thomas Finbarr Crowley, and his middle name, that of the patron saint of Cork in Ireland, was a source of great pride to him. Finbarr asked Gary, “Well, what is it exactly that you do over there?” Gary explained that when he returned, he would continue building small round huts—rondos, he called them. Made of stone and cow dung with a thatched roof, they served as clinics in the outlying districts of the country. A British “flying doctor” service staffed the clinics with medicines and provided medical care. “How much do they cost?” asked Finbarr. “Actually,” Gary said, “I can build one with volunteer help for about $200.” Finbarr got up from his chair, walked into his office, returned with his checkbook, and wrote out a check to Gary for $200.

Several months later, I received a letter from Gary. In the envelope were some pictures of the rondo he built with Finbarr’s money. Over the entrance was a large sign in English that read, “The Father Thomas Finbarr Crowley Memorial Maternity Clinic!” Finbarr never expected to have such influence in the world. To this day he’s proud of the building that bears his name and would likely be as proud as a father of the children who have been born there!
Confessions of a Shower Singer
Alicia Burgmeier

I often wonder why singing in the shower is subject to such ridicule. I love to sing in the shower! It seems as though singing is usually an outlet in which one expresses joy, and what better time to practice than when being drenched in warm water? Many people don't realize the direct benefits of shower singing to one's health. It has been proven that baths and showers have a tendency to relieve stress and soothe the soul, which is reason enough to break into a rendition of “Oklahoma!” or a tune from Guys and Dolls.

And one gets the benefits from the actual singing as well! The calming of nerves, increased circulation through the face, clearing of sinuses, and exercising the lungs—all are benefits of song. Plus, most people believe they sing well, or at least well enough for private purposes. So belting out a song can give self-esteem a real boost—especially since showers seem to make even the coarsest voice sound clear and rich. When shower singers finally work up enough will power to turn off the water—or it turns too chilly—they feel awake, invigorated, and ready to take on the world!

For these reasons, I make it a definite point to sing every day during my 6 A.M. shower, no matter how much I have to put up with my family's wisecracks.

The Nature of Romance
Joyce Clason

Air, water, wood
Air, water, wood
The nature of romance is understood
In air, water and wood.

Air, water and wood.

Air you thinking of me, my dear?
Air you thinking of me?
Water you doing tonight, my dear?
Wood you go out with me?
Oh, air you thinking of me, my dear?
Air you thinking of me?
Water you doing tonight, my dear?
Wood you go out with me?

Air, water, wood
Air, water, wood
The nature of romance is understood
In air, water and wood.
Air, water and wood.

Air you thinking of me, my dear?
Air you thinking of me?
Water you doing tonight my dear?
Wood you go out with me?

An Excellent Entry in “The Best of Bad Hemingway” Contest
Mel Loftus

Editor's Note: The name “Harry's Bar” had to be included in each entry for this contest. The actual “Harry's Bar” was a tavern in Florence, Italy, which Ernest Hemingway used to frequent. The italicized portions in this contest entry are titles of Hemingway stories.

I was between the old man and the sea. I had to hold. I had to hold the flank. The key was Harry's Browning automatic rifle. I had to get to Harry's BAR. I had to put out a curtain of steel with that BAR.

“Harry?”
Stillness.

Harry was on my left across the river and into the trees. I thought he had got it—got it in the last attack. For Harry it had been a short happy life and death in the afternoon.

There was a small footbridge. I ran it. I ran right for Harry's foxhole. I dove in.

He'd taken a .30 caliber in the neck. On entering, the bullet had left a small hole, but on exiting had taken off the right side of his face. Harry had fallen over the rifle. The stock was under his belly. The intact side of his head was next to the forestock. I rolled Harry away from the BAR. He was done for—in another country; the killers we always talked of—too many of the enemy, not enough support, too bold a plan, and asking one BAR man to do too much—got him.

I had to get ready for the next attack. I had to hold the flank. The platoon had to remain undefeated.

I took the extra BAR magazines from Harry's belt. I noticed a .45 automatic in its leather holster. I took the automatic, too.

For Harry, it was a farewell to arms.
A musical education carries with it all the basic fundamentals of education. It promotes health, develops character, teaches leadership and promotes better use of leisure time. Most important of all, a musical education is proven to be the finest mind trainer one is able to acquire. In addition to these very essentials to your child’s education program, band will give your son or daughter popularity with everyone in the school and community. Therefore, your investment in time, money, and energy will be of lifetime value.”

The above paragraph is an excerpt from a letter that John Mainz always sent out to the parents of new and prospective band students in the schools where he taught. He felt strongly about the benefits of a good musical education. Music had been a driving influence in his life since he was a young boy. It shaped his life, and the lives of those he touched, in a positive way.

John F. Mainz was born on May 3, 1920, on a farm in Waukesha County, Wisconsin, near the small town of Mapleton. He was the youngest child of Richard and Annette (Nettie) Mainz. Although the Mainzes were farmers of modest means, they purchased musical instruments for their children and arranged for weekly lessons. John began taking lessons on the trumpet when he was seven years old. A local music teacher, Mr. William Smith, came to the house every week to give the children lessons.

John became very proficient on the trumpet, and when he was about fourteen, an opportunity arose for him to play in an area dance band. His mother reluctantly gave in to his wishes, but only on one
condition—immediately upon his arrival home after the dances, he was to go to her room and awaken her, if necessary, and give her a goodnight kiss. Needless to say, the solicited kiss had a twofold purpose. It allowed her to check on the time of his arrival at home, and, with a good matronly sniff, she could check his breath for any traces of demon alcohol. John upheld his part of the bargain and never touched a drink.

John played his trumpet in band and orchestra all through his high school years. Giles W. Brown, principal of the Hartland, Wisconsin, high school, wrote in John's yearbook: "Keep up the music!" John listened to his mentor, because playing music and teaching it were to become uppermost in his life.

The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the United States entered World War II. John Mainz was enlisted into the service of his country. Because of his extensive background in music and his proficiency on the trumpet, John was assigned to the 15th Special Service Company in the 9th U.S. Army. The army created Special Service companies of its soldier troopers—units of skilled, experienced men trained for both the footlights and the firing line. After spells of fighting and dodging sniper bullets, these musical units provided entertainment and a semblance of civilization to U.S. troops on the long battle lines to Berlin and Tokyo.

After the war, John took a training course offered by the C.G. Conn Band Instrument Company in Elkhart, Indiana. This was a high-powered course that made him familiar with every musical instrument, its history, how to tune and play it, how it is constructed, and, most important, how to promote and sell it.

John was hired by a music store in St. Cloud, Minnesota, to sell instruments, develop school bands where there were none, and service the needs and help the band directors of existing school bands. He was an excellent salesman, and in 1950, he was offered a better job, with Danny's Music Store in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

While at Danny's, in addition to selling band instruments and assisting band directors, he had the opportunity to give music lessons to children. Teaching and watching them develop their musical abilities gave him a feeling of fulfillment that no other career had. Unlike Glenn Holland in Mr. Holland's Opus (played by Richard Dreyfuss), who reluctantly became a high school music teacher, John seized the opportunity to teach wholeheartedly.

John married the author, who is from La Crosse, in 1951, and he and I raised five children. To supplement his income, he became a certified life insurance underwriter in 1957. In 1958, he was asked to take over band rehearsals and give lessons one day a week at Mindoro High School until a permanent band director could be found. The offer appealed to John. At the end of the school year, he received several notes from his students thanking him for his help.

"This year has been a very wonderful one for me. You are a wonderful teacher and I have learned an awful lot from you." David K.

"I've learned more this year than ever before, thanks to you, Mr. Mainz." Arlene G.

"Mr. Mainz, I think you've got a wonderful way of teaching kids to take more of an interest and learn. I have enjoyed this year of band. You have made us have fun by being a director." Unsigned.

"You sure have taught me a lot of things this year that are very important to me." Armin K.

In the following years, John taught instrumental music and directed bands one day a week at the Westby, Chaseburg, Coon Valley, Norwalk, and Ontario schools. In 1982, after retiring from the Westby School District, he taught music and band at Immanuel Lutheran School in La Crosse. He continued to give individual lessons at the music store and in his home studio. His bands and students nearly always received superior ratings in music contests. Working full-time hardly leaves time for anything more, but John managed to go back to school in the 1970s, attending classes at night, on weekends, and during summers, and eventually received his degree in music.

John was always watching for good buys on old instruments that could be repaired. These were given, or offered at a very low price, to parents who were not able to afford new instruments for their children. John's students and friends admired him, not only for his knowledge of music, but also for his high ethical and moral standards.

John took on all sorts of challenges. Whenever band directors had difficult students who needed extra help, they sent them to John. He was always able to bring out the best in them. One boy, who was told that he had no musical ability, came to John for help. He wanted to play the accordion. John worked patiently with him and the boy became quite proficient, and he went on to become a fine high school band director when he grew up. He thanked John for not giving up on him.

Another time, a deaf boy wanted to play the saxophone. With a lot of patience and persistence, John taught him to play the instrument by feeling the vibrations of different notes. Although the boy was never able to play in a band—he played too loud—he really enjoyed his saxophone.

A little seven-year-old boy, with a right arm only half its normal length and with only a thumb and two fingers on his right hand, wanted to play a musical instrument. John decided that a small violin would be a good instrument for him, and soon the little boy was making pretty music on that instrument.

Students came from as far as seventy-five miles away to take private lessons from John. A thirty-year-old man who never had a music lesson in his life drove a hundred-mile round-trip every week for saxophone and flute lessons. He worked hard and became very accomplished on the instruments. He organized his own band, and soon they were fully booked with playing engagements.

In 1983, John retired from teaching at Coon Valley and Chaseburg, where he had been teaching for
twenty years. Although diagnosed with cancer in 1987, he still continued to teach at Norwalk and Ontario, two days a week, until 1989, and at Immanuel School in La Crosse until the spring of 1990. He continued to give private lessons at his home studio throughout the summer of 1990. He could be feeling very ill, but when a student came for a scheduled lesson, John perked up as if a new surge of strength and energy had come upon him. On October 1, he requested that his remaining lessons be canceled. He had given his last music lesson.

John F. Mainz died on March 3, 1991. The eulogy ended with the words a daughter had written upon the death of her father: “He has taken his bright candle and is gone into another room I cannot find. But anyone can tell where he has been by all the little lights he left behind.”

Those little lights are the hundreds and hundreds of children John patiently guided through the complexities of learning to play beautiful music on their instruments. They will burn brightly for many years to come. W

“He has taken his bright candle and is gone into another room I cannot find.

But anyone can tell where he has been by all the little lights he left behind.”

Cars

Mel Loftus

How about those new cars? Are they expensive? I can’t decide whether to buy a car or assume the national debt.

Cars are so expensive that local venture capitalist J. Carter Blanding has taken to sending his new car sales staff to college graduations. He figures parents of graduating seniors are a receptive audience for new cars. First of all, after years of paying tuition, they are used to big payments. They’ve written checks with more zeros on them than their kids saw in calculus class. The term approaching infinity has real meaning for them.

Also they are used to financing things. When one parent was told the monthly payment would be $450, he said, “That’s a lot less than the monthly tuition payment I’ve been making.”

And those parents are ready for a new car; they haven’t been near one for four years. A salesman only has to open the new car door, let those parents smell that new car smell, and they will buy.

Despite their great expense, I love cars. My first car was a little white MGA roadster I bought used in 1962. The canvas top was unworkable, so the car had to be driven with the top down at all times. That MGA was low and lean, and its exhaust pipe sounded just the perfect note.

Besides, I lived in San Francisco. If one dressed semi-warmly, the lack of a top was no problem. I even bought a jaunty billed driving cap to keep my head warm.

When I roved about in my MGA, I was amazed at the number of people who tooted their horns and waved at me—even beautiful young women, a group with whom I could not speak without becoming tongue-tied. When I told a friend about this amazing fact—women actually waving at me—he said, “You dope! The local British motor car dealer is running a promotion about tooting one’s horn and waving when one sees a British sports car on the road.”

So much for my magnetic personality.

One Sunday afternoon, as I was returning from the library after my weekly struggle with calculus homework, I spied a large Doberman pinscher about a block ahead. The dog’s owner was working in the front yard, and the dog was frolicking about. As I approached, the Doberman started to run toward me. I paid little attention. What harm could a dog, even a Doberman, do to a car? But I had forgotten how low-slung the MGA was. My car’s speed and the dog’s angle of attack brought car and dog together at the driver’s door. To my amazement, I was looking up at the Doberman’s large, white teeth. He snapped at my head; I pushed my foot down hard on the accelerator. The MGA responded, and I sped away, but the dog’s jaws had closed on the bill of my jaunty cap and torn it from my head. I considered going back for it, but I did not. Instead, I bought a bill-less watch cap.

The first experience with cars that really made an impression on me occurred when I was in second grade. My friend Bob invited me for a ride in his new family car. Bob had seven brothers and sisters, so the family car was a taxi-like DeSoto, one with jump seats like those one sees only in limos now.

I was riding in the jump seat on the driver’s side. Bob’s father, the driver, snorted and turned his head to spit out the window. Bob yelled, “Duck!” Being more experienced than I was, all of Bob’s family ducked. I, however, had never been in such a large car before, nor had I ever had the need to duck in a car before. The spit hit the slipstream, came in the back window, and nailed me on the cheek.

Maybe that first experience with a big car is why I bought a small, low-slung MGA for my first car. W
Doc West: Trempealeau's Medical Mystery Man
Steve Kiedrowski

It wasn't exactly the wild, wild west, but pretty close. Dr. Lester Charles West, M.D., of Trempealeau, was a legendary medical doctor in the 1930s and '40s. Patients came from all over the country to see Doc West do his medical magic. His style was unconventional, but successful; as the people of Trempealeau still say, "It was Doc's way."

West came to Trempealeau in 1932 and stayed until 1947. During that time he became famous for his folksy family cures. The Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, wanted to have him, but Doc West said, "No, I belong in Trempealeau." In 1932, he set up his medical practice on Main Street in the Trempealeau Hotel. He started with thirty-five cents in his pocket after losing everything in the 1929 stock market crash.

When the doctor was established, he moved his business up the street and across to the other side of Main Street, between what is now the Sportsman Tavern and Bob's Beauty Bar. He was there only a short time, and then he moved to Second Street, only half a block away. That's where Doc West ate, slept, and lived medicine twenty-four hours a day. His home remedies and therapeutic healing became renowned throughout the country. The residents of Trempealeau said he worked wonders from his small house on Second Street. To this day, the house is called the Old Doc West.

The house, built in 1860, is now a tribute to the legacy of Doc West. Jenkins said, "Restoring old buildings has been in my blood for a long time, and a lot of people still remember Doc West. I feel there was a lot of hidden integrity in the Doc West House."

In the 1930s and '40s, people in Trempealeau saw cars from five states at once, including California, parked outside West's office. When someone was sick, Dr. West would grab a handful of his special homemade pills and say, "Try these, they work." If you went to pay him, and all you had was firewood, eggs, or cream, that's what you paid with.

When the medical man got off the train in Trempealeau in 1932, not many people knew much about him. Lester Charles West was born on June 26, 1887, in Hopkins, Missouri. He received his medical education in Chicago. At one time, he was a physician for the Burlington Railroad and was chief surgeon for American Steel Foundries. During World War I, he was a first lieutenant in the Medical Corps, serving in France, England, and Germany.

In 1931, a doctor friend from Pepin, Wisconsin, told Doc West about a small village on the Mississippi called Trempealeau that was in dire need of a doctor. The population at that time was 300. (Today it is just over 1,000.)

When Doc first set up his practice in the Trempealeau Hotel, he met Esther Berzinski. He hired her to be his assistant, and she stayed with him during most of his tenure in Trempealeau. She later married and became Esther Sharrow.

One of Doc West's sayings was, "Always buy the best." When it came to apparel, he did: he shopped in Chicago for all of his clothes, wore tailor-made suits with white long-sleeved shirts, neckties, sterling cuff links, and British walking shoes.

Medical records? He kept everything in his head. His patients were his family and function in life. He may have lost a fortune in the stock market crash, but in the 1930s, he re-invested in the market and regained his financial wealth. And many memories of Doc West are still strong in the minds of the inhabitants of Trempealeau. John and Eleanor Welch recall going to the good doctor. Eleanor said, "He claimed he could tell if you were in good health by feeling the resilience of your hair. I was wearing a hat with a tassel on it, so Doc West felt the tassel and said, 'Girl, you are a mighty sick person!'"

For arthritis, Doc West contended that he had a cure. He used a combination of oils, vitamins, exercise and heat to rid Elaine Delaney of arthritis. The Centerville resident said, "I developed arthritis in my feet when I was a freshman in high school. Doc West treated me and had me walk a mile every day for therapy. It worked!"
One unusual story had the doctor talking to a woman on the sidewalk on Main Street in Trempealeau. She kept coughing as they conversed. Finally, Doc West asked, “How long have you had that cough?” She replied, “All my life.” Right on the pavement he retrieved instruments from his medical bag and removed part of her palate, curing her of the cough right then and there. The wild, wild, Doc West style!

Doc West was a great kidder. My mother, Margaret Brom, of Centerville, remembers when he did the blood test for her marriage to her first husband (my father), Art Kiedrowski. She said, “I weighed only 85 pounds, and Doc West looked at me and said to Art, “Are you going to marry that bag of bones?”

Doc West bid Trempealeau farewell in 1947, after his retirement. He moved to Milwaukee to live with Esther Sharrow and her husband, Carl. He left behind a multitude of friends, a few girlfriends, and many people who owe their lives to his skills. He left behind a legend, but took with him a deadly heart condition. Doc West died on August 29, 1952, of arteriosclerotic heart disease. He was brought back to Trempealeau to be buried in the Trempealeau public cemetery. Two of the pallbearers were John Welch and my father, Art Kiedrowski.

They buried the man, but not the myth.

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**Slip of the Tongue**

**Ross A. Phelps**

**Editor’s Note:** The names of the subjects of this story have been changed to protect the innocent.

Because every public defender in Rochester, Minnesota, had some type of conflict of interest, I was assigned to represent a notorious alleged gang member and drug dealer named Raymond McPherson regarding four separate serious drug charges, with one of them—alleging conspiracy to sell crack cocaine in the first degree—being the most serious of Minnesota’s drug crimes.

Raymond McPherson was a muscular black man in his mid-thirties. He was born in Brooklyn and raised in Philadelphia and Chicago. He was reputedly the kingpin behind both prostitution and drug dealing in Rochester, allegations which he denied.

I got along well with McPherson. He was intelligent and polite. His background was interesting. He had two years of college, and had worked with his father as a carpenter. He had eleven children—by ten women. He supported them all. He had never married. He was facing twenty-one years in prison under the sentencing guideline if convicted on all four counts. It was an important case.

I met with Raymond many times while preparing for trial. I reviewed several hundred pages of police reports. Raymond McPherson’s street name was “Bullet.” He said the nickname was given to him by his father when he was little. I listened to tape recordings of intercepted calls to Bullet’s cell phone. I learned that virtually all of his past girlfriends have the word “Bullet” tattooed on their bodies.

The trial was scheduled and rescheduled four or five times. Finally the case was tried before Judge Birnbaum. Ignoring my advice to dress conservatively, Raymond showed up at the trial dressed in “gangsta” style. It was winter. He wore a leather top hat. It was as tall as the top hat Abraham Lincoln wore, but instead of a brim it had a leather bill. He wore a matching knee-length leather jacket and designer denim trousers. His hair was fixed with many little braids that looked similar to those worn by football star Ricky Williams, a Heisman Trophy winner. Quite frankly, he looked a lot like a drug dealer.

I thought the case went pretty well. I was able to cast doubt on some of the state’s evidence and on the informers and previously convicted drug dealers who testified. McPherson waived his right to remain silent and testified on his own behalf. He did a pretty good job. He told the court that what was overheard on the wiretaps were conversations concerning a shoplifting ring, not drug dealing.

During my final argument, I inadvertently brought some levity to the proceedings when I misspoke. I had planned to say: “It is my privilege to present a final argument on behalf of my client, Raymond McPherson.” Instead, I said, “It is my privilege to present a final argument on behalf of my client, Mr. Bullet.” Maybe this wasn’t too bad: not only did Judge Birnbaum and the prosecutor get a chuckle out of it, my client thought it was pretty funny, too.

All in all, the trial went quite well for Mr. Bullet. He was acquitted of the most serious charge, and rather than receiving twenty-one years in prison, he was sentenced to six years, meaning that, with credit for time previously served and earned “good time,” he should be released in about three years, perhaps earlier, if his pending appeal is successful.

“Curiosity Times Three,” 1993-96. La Crosse, WI (By Matthew A. Marcou).
It was my first night in a small town high in the Rocky Mountains. Magnificent white snowcaps circled the town, making me feel like I was inside a flocked wreath at Christmastime.

Late in the afternoon, I strolled down the main street, which was lined with gaily painted storefronts. I entered the bookstore to buy postcards. Two elderly ladies sat chatting near the cash register. “Just look at those terrible children across the street,” one said, intending for me to hear. The boys were playing hackysack, tossing a small, soft ball back and forth with their feet. “Look at the trousers they’re wearing,” she scoffed about the long-waisted trousers of the idle lads. “I’m ninety years old and taught school for forty-four years. If they come into this store, I’ll take down those trousers and give them a good spanking!”

A postcard caught my eye, displaying the town’s favorite historical character, Baby Doe Thayer, a nineteenth century prostitute who married a local millionaire. She is now the stuff of legends. I already knew the answer, but to make some mischief I asked the ladies, “Who is this Baby Doe that’s so famous around here?” The same lady said, “Oh, she was a great lady. Did an awful lot for this town, I’ll tell you. The people of her day thought a lot of her.”

I decided to bring the inconsistency of her judgments to her attention in a very mild fashion. “You seem easier on the owner of a brothel than on those boys across the street!” “Well,” she answered, “those boys are lazy.” It was then I realized that confusion over the difference between popularity and character is not limited to any generation.

The “Perfect” Crime
Ross A. Phelps

Editor’s Note: The name of the subject of this story has been changed to protect the innocent.

Copper is a valuable commodity. Several years ago, local scrap dealers were paying about ninety-five cents per pound for it. Larry Jenkins figured he could make some good money selling scrap copper—if he had any.

At least three sets of railroad tracks pass through Winona, Minnesota. Jenkins knew the telegraph poles along the tracks west of town were strung with copper wire and that the railroad was no longer using them.

Larry had lost his driving privileges for failure to pay fines. One morning, he rode out of town along the tracks on his bike. In a secluded area, he climbed several poles and cut the wires with wire cutters. He then took the strands from between each set of poles and coiled them. He got six or seven rolls from each pair of poles. Each coil weighed about fifty-five pounds.

One by one, he carried the coils close to the nearest railroad crossing and hid them in the weeds. He collected fourteen coils of copper wire altogether.

Next, he rode back to town, cleaned up a little and called a cab. He instructed the driver to take him to where he had left the wire. He loaded the wire into the trunk, but there was room for only ten coils.

He asked the cab driver to take him to Winona Scrap and Metal and had him wait. Jenkins unloaded the coils one by one and took them inside. He had over five hundred pounds of wire and received a check for some $450. He then took the cab home, stopping on the way to cash his check so he could pay the fare.

A day or two later, a railroad security guard noticed the missing wire. The wire used by the railroad is a unique gauge not available for other uses. The guard went to the salvage yard, the only one in town, and found wire of the proper gauge. The dealer noted that he had paid $450 for the wire and that the receipt had been signed by Larry “Lundberg.” He did recall one key fact—that Larry had arrived by taxi.

The railroad detective called the cab company (there is only one in Winona) and learned almost immediately who the passenger was. An arrest for this perfect crime followed shortly thereafter. Larry Jenkins pled guilty to theft.

The thing that bothered Larry the most was that he didn't get a chance to get the other four coils of wire that wouldn't fit in the cab. When he went back to get them later that same afternoon, they were gone. Later, he learned that his brother had picked them up, and Larry considered that his brother had stolen these four coils from him.

When his brother sold these coils, he, too, was arrested and pled guilty to receiving stolen property. Using a taxi to commit “the perfect crime” is not recommended.
It was August 1963, and Stan “The Man” Musial had announced his retirement from playing for the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team. There would be a front office job, but this would be his last year as a Cardinals player.

I had been a Cardinals fan for most of my baseball rooting years. At an early age, I had read a book on the Gashouse Gang—Pepper Martin, Ducky Medwick, and Dizzy Dean—and my allegiance was initially caught. But what had really cemented my loyalty was Stan Musial’s hitting and his ability to spray line drives to all fields—line drives that led to seventeen .300 seasons and seven batting titles. Even after the Giants came west to my hometown of San Francisco in 1958, I remained a Cardinals fan. In San Francisco, there were Willie Mays, Jim Davenport, Harvey Kuenn, Orlando Cepeda, and Juan Marichal to capture a fan’s heart, but I had previously given mine to St. Louis and Stan Musial.

Now here he was retiring (his hitting had slipped some in recent years—.255 in 1959, .275 in 1960, .288 in 1961, but .330 in 1962) and I realized I had never gotten to Seals Stadium or Candlestick Park to see Stan play. Work, school, football, the Marine Corps, or some other pressing task kept me away when the Cardinals visited San Francisco.

There was still time. Stan had given his announcement on August 13—sufficient time to make one more swing around the league. Monday, August 26 appeared to be the best day to see him play. The game itself held a lot of promise. With nineteen wins, Juan Marichal would be trying to be the season’s first twenty-game winner; the Cardinals’ starter, right-hander Ernie Broglio, was on his way to an 18-8 season, and the Giants and Cardinals were neck-and-neck for second place, behind the Los Angles Dodgers.

I took the day off work and headed to Candlestick Park. I bought the best seat I could, a box on the third base side for $3.50, which was a lot then for a graduate student and part-time playground director.

Besides the high-kicking Marichal on the mound, the Giants featured Mays in center, Cepeda at first, Will McCovey in left, Harvey Kuenn at third, and Ed Bailey catching. The Cardinals started Bill White at first, Curt Flood in center, Charlie James in left, and George Altman in right. Musial was not starting, but I was confident that with a right-hander of Marichal’s excellence on the mound, Manager Johnnie Keane would bring Musial in to pinch hit.

That is the way it went. Marichal shut out the Cardinals for six innings, and Broglio was almost a match for him, being nipped for two runs in the sixth on a single by Kuenn, a force by second baseman Chuck Hiller, an error for McCovey, and singles by Mays and Bailey. In the seventh, the Cardinals showed signs of a rally. Cepeda made an error at first to put Altman on, second baseman Julian Javier singled him to third, and catcher Tim McCarver grounded to first, where Cepeda held Altman at third and made the out at first with Javier advancing to second. Pitcher Broglio was due up, with runners at second and third. It was time for a left-handed pinch hitter, and manager Keane responded with Stan.

I had seen him in the on-deck circle and stood up and yelled, “Go get ‘em, Stan.” Since it was an odd time for San Francisco fans to be cheering, people looked at me peculiarly. But the crowd stood and cheered as the public address announcer broadcast, “Now batting for Ernie Broglio, Stan Musial.”

Stan strode to the plate and coiled into his stance, which was reminiscent of a boy peeking out from behind a tree. He looked the dangerous hitter I had read about—ready to lash a line drive over the second baseman Hiller’s head and drive in two runs.

It was not to be. Giants manager Alvin Dark called for an intentional walk. Ball four and Musial was trotting to first base. Officially, he had not batted yet; he was 0-for-0 so far. But it was only the seventh inning; perhaps he might get another turn to bat, I rationalized.

Again it was not to be. Johnny Keane called for a pinch runner and Mike Shannon came out to run for Stan. As Stan trotted back to the dugout, I stood and cheered. Someone shouted at me, “Go back to Budville,” but I paid him no mind and cheered until Stan disappeared down the dugout steps.

The Cardinals got one run in the seventh, two in the eighth, and three in the ninth to win in 9th, 6 to 3. It was not to be.

Someone shouted at me, “Go back to Budville,” but I paid him no mind and cheered until Stan disappeared down the dugout steps.

The Cardinals got one run in the seventh, two in the eighth, and three in the ninth to win and foil Marichal’s attempt for his twentieth win. But I no longer cared about the outcome. I had left after the seventh.

I was depressed. It seemed the gods were against me: I had come to see my hero play and got only to see him trot to first base. I was angry at myself for the missed opportunities of past years—the times I could have seen Stan play and had not.

You have to take time to see your heroes when the opportunity comes; there are pinch runners everywhere.
The Struggle
Barbara Tatzel

It seems strange to me that I have known this blossoming young person since her birth, know her likes and dislikes, the historical and statistical “stuff” about her, and yet I am often amazed at her fortitude and her commitment to the welfare of others. I have lived with and near Sara for twenty-three years; I have watched her grow, change, and struggle with problems that would have made many young adults simply succumb to the pressure of well-meaning adults. I watched as a stunned, scared, immature, teenage grew into a mature, selfless young adult, able to do what was best for herself and for a child she could not properly provide for.

At age seventeen, Sara thought she was in love with a boy she had been dating for over a year. Pregnancy resulted. One evening, Sara and Evan came in from outside holding hands. Evan said nothing, but looked nervous. Sara looked scared, hesitated, then stammered, “Uh—Mom, we need to talk to you.”

“Okay. What about?” I asked, dazed as to what they were going to tell me.

“Mom—uh—uh.”

“Tell me, is something wrong?” Sara blurted out, “Mom, I’m pregnant!” She began to cry. Evan put his arm around her as he looked at me with big puppy dog eyes that seemed to ask what he should do.

Shocked and angry, I said, “I think you’d better leave before I say something I’ll be sorry for. I need some time to think.”

“What time do you want me to come home?” Sara asked.

“By ten o’clock, like always.”

They left, Sara crying and both of them trembling and looking lost.

At ten o’clock, Sara and Evan returned. They sat down and told me she was already three months along, and they still didn’t know what to do. They had considered marriage, but they both knew they weren’t ready. They had also considered adoption, but remained undecided.

Over the next few weeks, everyone who needed to know was told about the pregnancy. Both families assumed Sara and Evan would be getting married. When they said marriage was not an option, and that they were considering adoption, many relatives just stopped talking to them. Evan’s mother stated emphatically and indignantly, “You cannot give away ‘my’ grandchild!” She reminded them that this was “their” grandchild they were “throwing away.” His father just drank beer and remained silent.

Every time Sara came home from Evan’s mom and dad’s, she was crying. Often, she would say, “Mom, I need a hug.” When I hugged her, she would say through her tears, “Why do they have to act like that?”

After lots of talking and crying, Sara and Evan decided on open adoption. They wanted to give the baby to a couple who could give him or her everything they could not: a safe, loving home, healthy food, proper medical care, parental time and affection, and emotional security. They opposed everything their families believed to do what was best for their child, and they suffered the criticism and rejection of people they loved and respected to ensure their baby a good life.

As Sara got bigger and the pregnancy became very obvious, people at church, especially the elderly, would stare at her with condescending disapproval. But Sara continued to go to church to find the strength to do what she felt was best.

One evening Sara and her younger sister, Jeri, were in the living room doing homework and watching television. The phone rang. I heard Sara talking, but could not hear what she was saying or to whom she was talking. Suddenly, my bedroom door burst open, and Sara ran in. She sat on the edge of my bed, trembling and crying.

“Sara, what’s wrong? Who was on the phone?” I asked.

All she could say was, “Why does Grandma have to be that way? She told me that if I give away this child, she would never talk to me again.”

On October 27, 1994, Sara delivered an eight-pound, four-ounce baby girl who would become a member of another family. I saw the uncertainty, pain, determination, and love in Sara’s eyes as they weighed and measured Mercedes and took her to the nursery. shortly after Sara’s vitals were stabilized, an orderly wheeled her to another floor—the surgical floor—to recover from the delivery. Confusion and shame hung like ghosts on Sara’s tired face as we questioned the hospital’s reasons for moving her from the maternity floor. A nurse replied, “The hospital feels it is best for ‘these mothers’ to be moved, because it will make separation easier.”

Sara was left on another floor, with sad, sick people, when what she really needed was to be near her child for as long as possible. The efforts of the hospital only made Sara feel more ashamed and alone.

After a two-day hospital stay, Sara went home. A few days later, Mercedes went into a foster home, where Sara and I visited her many times. Each time, Sara struggled to keep her distance, emotionally, from Mercedes, while feeling a need to know that her baby was well cared for. I saw her touch the tiny fingers and feet of the baby she would not be seeing after a few more weeks. I looked out the rear window of the car with her each time we drove away from that ranch style home south of La Crosse.

On the day of the hearing, when Sara and I arrived at the courthouse, lawyers and social workers were there to greet her. They took her aside and instructed her about what kinds of questions to expect. They
reminded her to stay calm and answer all questions as honestly and straightforwardly as she could.

Just before the hearing began, someone closed the blinds of the courtroom windows to protect her privacy and identity. Social workers were called to the witness stand to testify that they had interviewed both Sara and the adopting couple and that both parties had chosen this option without pressure from the state. The new parents, Jean and Carl, were then called to the witness stand to swear that they had freely chosen to adopt this child, that they would take care of her needs, and that if the health of this baby changed, they would not attempt to have the adoption rescinded. Sara, the last to testify, swore that she was the birth mother of this baby, that she had not been pressured, and that she was aware she could not come back to court in an attempt to get Mercedes back. Sara sat in the witness box silent, red-faced, and solemnly looking out toward me for reassurance.

Finally, the judge said, “Before I strike this gavel, do you understand that you can never go back into a court of law and try to regain parental rights? Do you understand that you can never have this child back?”

Sara, focused and determined, answered “Yes.” The judge said, “I commend you for your actions today. It is a difficult thing you have done.” He hit his gavel on the desk, and it was over.

After a few months, people stopped talking about Sara. She stopped going to church, though, because people there would not talk to her. Sara’s maternal grandma and aunts had gone to the hospital to see her and the baby, but Grandma L. did not go to the hospital, and, for three years, did not call or visit her.

I was proud, and am proud, of Sara for recognizing her inability to care for Mercedes. I am proud of her for standing up, not only to peer pressure, but also to the pressure of well-meaning adults, for enduring the court process, and most importantly, for doing what was best for her child.

Sara is twenty-two years old today, and married, not to Evan, but to a very supportive man who understands the choice she made. She is working a full-time job and attending evening classes at the local technical college. She receives pictures and letters from Jean and Carl at least twice a year and sees Mercedes once a year.

Mercedes, now six years old, is healthy and well cared for. She lives in northeastern Wisconsin with loving parents and two other adopted sisters. She knows that Sara is her birth mom and thinks of her as a family friend.

**There Are Good Excuses—and There Are Bad Excuses**

Ross A. Phelps

**Editor’s Note:** The name of this story’s main subject has been changed to protect the innocent.

Many times during my career, I’ve been called upon to represent someone charged with possession of marijuana. Normally the possession of a small amount (that is, less than half an ounce) of marijuana, or “pot,” is categorized in Minnesota as a “petty misdemeanor.” Under the Minnesota scheme of things, a petty misdemeanor is an offense that does not involve the possibility of jail time. The maximum penalty is a fine of $200. A parking ticket is a petty misdemeanor. In contrast, a “misdemeanor” carries a possible penalty of ninety days in jail and a $700 fine. However, a second conviction for possession of a small amount of marijuana is treated as a misdemeanor rather than a petty misdemeanor. In other words, a second-time marijuana offender can go to jail.

A sizable group of young people in the eighteen-to-thirty age group are regular users of pot. In Winona, where I do much of my lawyering, the marijuana crowd probably numbers a couple of hundred. Members of this unofficial group are well-known to the police and court personnel.

About two years ago, a Winona police officer watched an older, dented sedan, carrying four young men roll through a stop sign and squeal its tires as it sped down Huff Street. The officer pulled the car over and walked up to the driver’s window. When the window was rolled down, the officer smelled the unmistakable odor of burning marijuana. He also recognized the driver, and at least one of the passengers, as known members of the pot-smoking crowd.

While the officer talked to the driver, his backup arrived to assist. My client was seated in the backseat on the right side. The backup officer talked to each of the passengers one at a time in his squad car. Before starting to question the passengers, he patted down each of them in turn for officer safety, according to standard protocol, to make sure no weapons were present.

Jason Stolie, my client, was the last passenger asked to step back to the squad car and the last to be patted down. As Jason was being patted down, the officer felt a bulge in the right front pocket of his jeans that he suspected was a plastic baggie of a green leafy substance, probably marijuana. He fished out the baggie, and sure enough, it looked and smelled like what the officer thought it was, pot. (Subsequent tests proved him correct.)

“Well what about this, Jason. Is this your pot I just pulled out of your pocket?” the officer asked.

Thinking fast, Jason replied, “These aren’t my pants.”

Later, after I was appointed to represent Jason for Possession of Marijuana (Third Offense), I explained that I didn’t think the jury would believe that the pants he was wearing were not his, so he decided to plead guilty.
Winter on an Island in Lake Superior
Nelda Johnson Liebig

On a bright September day in 1931, a twenty-nine-year-old teacher and her six-year-old son, Bob, boarded the ferry in Duluth, Minnesota, bound for a small island in the northwest quadrant of Lake Superior. She had a contract to teach the five children of Mr. and Mrs. Holger Johnson, who had a fishery on Isle Royale. Dorothy Simonson’s duties included not only teaching but carrying firewood, cleaning the school, and heating it with a barrel stove, even at forty degrees below zero. She received $65 a month, but she did not know until later that she was to pay the Johnsons half of it for room and board.

On October 28, the worst storm in years buffeted the island. This was followed by more than three inches of snow. But that was only the beginning of the most severe winter in decades on Isle Royale.

After supper, Dorothy and Bob joined the Johnsons around the radio to enjoy dramatic plays and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Also, the adults were fans of commentator Lowell Thomas. Dorothy used the news to teach her four high school students government and citizenship. It was a presidential campaign year, and the radio waves were dogged with political speeches, which often usurped regular programming. She was an avid reader, and received shipments of books from the Michigan State Library. She wrote a column about life on Isle Royale for the Detroit News, which she sent by radio. In her diary, she recorded day-to-day events and expressed her emotions, which rose and fell depending on the weather, supply boat delays, and isolation. Her descriptions of the island ran from “magnificent” to “a hunk of mud.”

Dorothy’s hobbies included quilt making, rug weaving on a loom, and creating gift items of birch bark. She enjoyed hiking and gathering cranberries and mushrooms with her students until irate moose, deep snow, and bitter cold hampered her sojourns up the steep hill behind the school. A favorite weekend afternoon activity, for teacher and students alike, was sliding down the steep hill behind the school on flattened cardboard boxes.

On February 10, the mercury dropped to negative forty-two degrees, but school continued, with carpets and blankets over the windows and door. The snow depth was ten feet in the woods and six feet around the buildings. Some nights the temperatures fluctuated as much as sixty degrees.

By the end of February, the Johnsons’ supply of vegetables was almost gone. The diet was moose meat and potatoes. Ringworm became a problem. A bucket was all Dorothy and Bob had for both bathing and laundry.

On April 5, the same date the boat Whinyah had returned the year before, Isle Royale experienced the worst storm of the winter, with three feet of new snow, and it continued falling thick and fast into the night. The Johnsons were now out of kerosene, butter, coffee, and yeast.

At last, the mountain-high pile of ice in the harbor moved out during a lake storm, and the Whinyah returned to Chippewa Harbor on April 15. Dorothy was sad at the thought of leaving. Her students had done well and completed their studies in less than eight months. Although she was willing to return, she longed for a teaching position on the mainland. She and Bob left Isle Royale on May 2, 1933, on the Whinyah. She never returned.

The little schoolhouse has settled several inches during the past seven decades. Inside sit three school desk seats, as though waiting for the teacher and her students to return. The spot where the old barrel stove stood is a reminder that one bitter day the teacher hauled out forty-eight scoops of ashes.

Dorothy Simonson not only survived the challenge, but she left her mark as an inspirational teacher and innovator on an island in tempestuous Lake Superior. She was an avid reader, and received shipments of books from the Michigan State Library. She wrote a column about life on Isle Royale for the Detroit News, which she sent by radio. In her diary, she recorded day-to-day events and expressed her emotions, which rose and fell depending on the weather, supply boat delays, and isolation. Her descriptions of the island ran from “magnificent” to “a hunk of mud.”

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Within just eighteen short days in late summer of 1997, we suffered the loss of three great people who had a high regard for humanity and tried to make their part of the world a better place.

Britain's Princess Diana was killed in a terrible car crash in Paris on August 31. The loss of the beautiful 36-year-old princess, one of the world's most popular women, broke the hearts of the British people and many others around the world. Though her life with the British monarchy was turbulent at times, and ended in her divorce from Prince Charles in 1996, she had devoted her life to being a good mother to her two sons, Prince William and Prince Harry. She campaigned hard to ban anti-personnel land mines, to help AIDS victims, and to garner public acceptance for lepers and help for cancer sufferers. Britain and the world mourned her loss with tons of floral tributes.

Six days later, on September 5, Calcutta's angel of mercy, Mother Teresa, died at age eighty-seven. The diminutive Catholic nun founded the Missionaries of Charity and dedicated her life to helping the poor and outcast. She helped the needy around the world, with more than five hundred missions in one hundred countries, from the hovels of Third World nations to the ghettos of New York. To many, she was a living saint. "The world, and especially India, is poorer by her passing," said India's prime minister, Inder Kumar Gujral.

Twelve days later, on September 17, Red Skelton, the gentle clown-comedian whose goofy humor and infectious grin worked their way into the hearts of millions of people, died at age eighty-four. Although the deaths of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa touched me very much, it was the death of Red Skelton that affected me the most, because I had met him and talked with him very much, it was the death of Red Skelton that affected me the most, because I had met him and talked with him, though for only a brief moment.

It was on April 24, 1991, at the Ridgeview Inn Supper Club in La Crosse, Wisconsin. It was my first public outing since my husband's death seven weeks earlier. I had read in the papers that Red Skelton was in town, but never dreamt that he, too, would be dining at Ridgeview that evening. I had been a fan of his since I was a young girl and I listened to him on the old Radiola radio.

My daughter, Karen, who was with me, mustered up enough nerve to ask Mr. Skelton for his autograph. He was his usual jovial self, all smiles and friendly even though his meal had been interrupted by several autograph seekers. Later that evening, I spoke with him and told him that his good, clean humor was like a breath of fresh air — so unlike the jokes of other comedians who think they have to resort to filth and smut to get laughs. Then I did something completely out of character for me. I asked him if I could give him a kiss on the cheek, sort of a "thank you" kiss.

"Why certainly, Little Lady," he answered as he bent down to receive the token kiss.

Karen purchased two tickets for the Red Skelton Show, and three days later we were sitting in the La Crosse Center wiping laughter-tears from our eyes as Skelton portrayed Clem Kadiddlehopper, Freddie the Freeloader, Cauliflower McPugg, and the Mean Widdle Kid. It was all good, clean fun. I felt twinges of guilt that I was enjoying the show so much so soon after John's death, but Karen assured me that it was just what I needed after the long months of caring for John's needs throughout his illness.

Red Skelton regaled the audience for three hours, not once taking an intermission break. I marveled at the stamina of that seventy-eight-year-old comedian. Throughout the show a band played beautiful musical accompaniments written and arranged by Mr. Skelton himself. Not only had he been a talented comedian since he was ten, but he was also a talented musician.

Red starred in forty-eight motion pictures and wrote nearly five thousand musical selections. In addition, he wrote at least sixty-four symphonies, which have been performed by the Las Vegas Symphony, Anthony Movella, Thomas Mancini, and the Palm Springs Desert Symphony Orchestra.

He created oil paintings and pastel pencil drawings in his spare time, and many of them feature clowns. After the show, Karen and I saw some of his paintings. I would have liked to purchase one of them, but they were very expensive, so I just took a couple of photos. My sister, Shirley, purchased one of the piano music books he wrote and she gave it to me.

Mr. Skelton was also a prolific writer. He authored more than four thousand short stories and published several full-length books. His narration of the Pledge of Allegiance won him forty-two awards and has twice been read into the Congressional Record.

It has been said that Red Skelton was as dedicated to comedy as the most dedicated monk is to religion. As he put it, "God's children and their happiness are my reasons for being."

As you always said in your signature sign-off, Red, "Good night and God Bless."
Though I had given aging some thought since retiring, its impact had sat lightly in some recess of my mind. I was a hale and hearty sixty-eight-year-old—or so I thought—and I was not quite prepared for being reminded of my age in such an overt way!

It happened twelve years ago in a posh hotel lobby in Santa Monica, California. I was visiting a good friend from my army days, and we were eating in a lovely dining room overlooking the blue Pacific Ocean. Never before had I had a luncheon date in such a splendid place! The joy of being together and remembering our days at Camp Hood, Texas (now Fort Hood), had us laughing and giggling our way through the delicious food and luxurious ambience.

As we were leaving the dining room, we approached five carpeted steps leading down into the foyer. Without warning, two beautiful teenagers appeared at our sides. Each held one of our elbows and helped us down the steps. I was bursting with suppressed mirth, as was my friend Alex, but we were able to thank them so they would disengage and allow us to go on our way. With attempted dignity, we walked down a vast corridor and turned a corner before we burst into laughter.

"Do we look as decrepit as that?" I gasped. "Is this a new service for the aged?" Alex sputtered.

I, who had been avoiding mirrors since I was forty, and Alex, only a year or two older than I, had left home that morning innocent of the fact that we were well into old age. It was then that a statement I had once heard began to make sense: You first view your age in the eyes of others.

When Did I First Know?
Betty Holey

It must have started when I received a cuckoo clock from the Black Forest in Germany. Son Steve sent it when he was stationed there in the army almost thirty years ago. Over the years, it has needed repairs many times, and it hasn't always been easy to find someone to repair it. One time I called a jewelry store first. It was the middle of winter and COLD. I was assured that it could be repaired there, but when I took it in, I was told that they didn't work on cuckoo clocks. I was furious. When I got home, I wrote them about it, and two days later, I had a call saying that "Mac" said he'd repair it. I was still furious and said I'd never go in that shop again. I haven't, either.

One day, when Steve found out how much I was paying for repairs, he told me he'd paid only $20 for the clock. That was hard for me to believe, as I thought mine was finer-looking than most of the very expensive ones I'd seen.

When my wind-up bedside clock was giving out, I wished for a prettier one. Of course, I made my wishes known, and soon received an electric one with numbers that glowed in the dark and lovely flowers on its face. I like that clock, too, even though the numbers no longer can be seen in the dark.

There was a time when I insisted on having clocks in all of the spare bedrooms. Once we were housing the overflow from a neighbor's family, and I overheard the neighbor telling her son to remind her to give him a clock, but he replied that it wouldn't be necessary, because there was one in his room.

A few years ago, probably ten, I saw a new type of clock in the clock shop on Second Street. It was called "radio-controlled," and it never had to be set. It would always have the correct time, because it was controlled from a place in Colorado. How I wanted that clock, but it was far too expensive. Every time I went into that shop, I looked, but it was still too expensive. Last fall, I saw one for $60 in a catalog. I couldn't pass that up. When it came, I put the battery in (it needs one to get its connection, I suppose), set the time zone, and then watched the hands turn and turn until they showed the correct time. It'll even change itself for Daylight Savings Time! What a treasure!

Last week, I had a call from our great-granddaughter's mother telling me how much 3½-year-old Hannah likes the clock we gave her for Christmas. She keeps asking, "What time does my clock say it is?" She's learning to tell time.

The only rooms in which I don't have clocks are the bathrooms. I wonder if maybe—well, I'll see.
The first time I met James Cameron—the man I admire most in Milwaukee—was almost fifteen years ago.

He was a lonely figure in the back of the room, setting up books on a hardwood table. The occasion was some sort of public function held on the north side of Milwaukee. The exact nature of the event has escaped me over the years; perhaps it was a political forum, or a public meeting about some issue of concern to the African American community. It happened so long ago, I've forgotten.

What I do remember was this smiling, white-haired Black gentleman stacking books for sale as the room cleared. He told me he was a writer who had published numerous essays in the local newspapers. He also was an author, and was hawking his self-published autobiography, *A Time of Terror*.

The book was the harrowing account of a traumatic time in the then seventy-something man's life. At the age of sixteen, Cameron was almost lynched by a rabid mob of Ku Klux Klan members in his hometown of Marion, Indiana.

According to *A Time of Terror*, Cameron was the last of three Black suspects arrested on robbery, rape, and murder charges in 1930, when a mob stormed the jailhouse in a bloodthirsty rage.

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*At 87, Cameron Embodies Strength, Grace*

Eugene Kane
Their intent was to exact their own brand of street justice: all three men were to be lynched—hanged from trees outside the jail.

It sounds terrifying, and it was. It happened during a time when Black men were lynched by mobs, sometimes on nothing more than a drunken whim, while law enforcement officials looked the other way. There are people still uncomfortable with that particular reality of not-so-long-ago American life, but it's true.

Cameron escaped death in a surreal fashion: he claimed that a voice came out of nowhere to calm the crowd. After hearing the voice, the mob dispersed and Cameron's life was spared. Even today, Cameron, a devout Roman Catholic, is convinced that he was saved by divine intervention.

Over the years, some have disputed Cameron's account of the near-lynching. But there's a famous picture that has been reprinted in numerous books and publications that validates his story. In the picture, two scarred black bodies are hanging from a tree while a crowd of men, women, and even children point fingers and smile for the camera. It's like they're having a picnic.

It is a picture of that night in Marion; Cameron was to be the third man hanged. It's all the proof anybody needs to know about how horrific it must have been.

Cameron served four years in prison for being an accessory to voluntary manslaughter; he has always maintained that he left the scene of the crime long before his childhood friends committed the deed. He was pardoned by the governor of Indiana in 1993.

He founded America's Black Holocaust Museum at 2233 North 4th Street in Milwaukee in 1988, after years of compiling information on violent acts of racism directed toward blacks. His mission: to legitimize his research in an official museum dedicated to the legacy of the lynch mob.

In the beginning, the museum was little more than a storefront filled with photocopied documents, reproductions of newspaper ads for slave-traders, and mannequins cloaked in Ku Klux Klan robes.

Today, the museum is housed in a gleaming structure of brick and glass, has a $1.1 million budget, and has been host to several acclaimed exhibits. Though it was once considered a peculiar oddity, there's now even a freeway sign showing the way to America's Black Holocaust Museum, just like the one for the County Zoo.

Cameron's dream is a reality.

For the past ten years, Cameron has remained active in social causes and has become a statesman for everyone concerned about racial tolerance. As an aging lion of the civil rights movement, he's been featured on national television and in publications, been awarded an honorary doctorate degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and has been invited to the White House to dine with President Clinton.

The reason I admire Cameron more than anyone else in town is that despite the evil he has seen in his life, he remains one of the most gentle and loving people I've ever met.

That terrible moment in his past could have motivated him to become the most hardhearted of Black men, but he's never wavered from a rock-solid belief in his mission or his message of spreading love, not hate.

As he once said: "I'm not mad at White people, or anybody. I can't afford to be full of hate; hate makes you sick."

Even when some questioned the museum's right to use the term "holocaust," Cameron didn't react with anger. Instead, he attempted to educate the non-believers as to why he thinks the term is appropriate.

Marissa Weaver, executive director of America's Black Holocaust Museum, works closely with Cameron. Since joining the museum in 1996, she's had a large role in the institution's evolution. Many in town credit Weaver's managing skills for helping Cameron bring the museum into the twenty-first century.

Weaver cites Cameron as her inspiration. "He's just an extremely spiritual person, patient and tolerant," she explained.

She said Cameron's dedication to examining the extent of institutionalized racism in America is unsurpassed. At the same time, his capacity for forgiveness is equally unmatched. "He has a perspective you and I won't have for decades," said Weaver, thirty-three. "Think about the things he's seen, the changes for Black people from the age of sixteen to eighty-seven. If I live that long, there probably won't be as much significant change."

Cameron recently turned eighty-seven, and his life and legacy will be celebrated next Sunday at a community birthday party at the Midwest Express Center. It's a celebration worthy of such an official civic venue, because Cameron has brought at least as much to Milwaukee as any other local figure.

Sadly, Cameron has also been diagnosed with terminal bone marrow cancer. But he remains vital. Cameron still drives to work every day; he recently bought an emerald green Cadillac.

According to Weaver, despite being praised by the president of the United States and Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison, Cameron's eyes twinkled the most when he was presented with his own parking spot at the museum. "Would you believe, he got the most kick out of that!"

That's the magic of James Cameron. Despite his lifelong battle against giant forces, it's the little things in life that please him the most. 
Badger State Games 2000 Basketball Champs
Sue Hildahl

It was a team Terry Erickson has said played with more heart than any other Badger State team he ever coached. One of the many reasons for this was that the players who started out in the regional tournament quickly turned into six dedicated teammates. They won the regional tournament and headed to Madison for the state championship.

Just getting to State, with only one man on the bench, seems an impossible feat to accomplish, but they did it. They played with more enthusiasm and teamwork than words can describe. The championship game came down to this Boys and Girls Club team versus the team called Team Wisconsin. The opposition was an all-star team comprising players from around the state, who, until this game, had remained undefeated, including their play in out-of-state tournaments. A number of their players were planning on playing college ball, and one of them is now enrolled at the UW-Madison on a full basketball scholarship.

The Boys and Girls Club team hoped to stay with the opposition throughout their game. They not only stayed with them, but also believed they could beat them—and did, 63-58. The team was so excited that they headed out to Camp Randall Stadium for pictures afterward.

In 1958, Wisconsin became the sixteenth state to join the rapidly growing state games movement, which now includes more than forty states. The games’ popularity has grown steadily, making it Wisconsin’s largest sports festival and one of the biggest in the United States. Needless to say, the La Crosse Boys and Girls Club 2000 basketball team will never forget the year they played in those games and won the state championship.

A Fan Reflects on Al McGuire, Ron Dayne and Other Wisconsin Sports Legends
David J. Marcou

Sports commentator Dick Enberg said today on CBS-TV, prior to the start of Super Bowl XXXV, that his former colleague, the legendary Marquette Basketball Coach Al McGuire, who passed away two days ago, wouldn’t have been one of the 150 million TV viewers who took in that Baltimore Ravens-New York Giants football game. Enberg said “Coach” would have been out in the Wisconsin countryside on his favorite motorcycle, a Harley, thinking about other things. Sports fans everywhere will feel his loss greatly, for many years. But his spirit, an authentic American one, will live on.

It seems ironic to this fan that 1999 Heisman Trophy winner Ron Dayne, of the UW-Madison, who grew up in New Jersey and was the Giants’ first-round draft pick this season, did not even take a handoff during today’s Super Bowl debacle (Ravens 34, Giants 7). He and Tiki Barber had shared the running duties equally during the season and most of the playoffs, but Giants Coach Jim Fassel decided not to effectively use his rookie star in the big game. “The Great Dayne” was in for a couple of plays, and was either a blocker or a decoy. It seemed a sad day for the Giants, Ron Dayne, and their fans, but maybe Al wouldn’t have cared—or would he?

I came of age watching Marquette teams beat the
UW in basketball on TV, and Coach McGuire seemed forever present and young—cajoling, hustling, humorizing, and, to be sure, blasting the referees who threatened to “lose games” for his young men. He learned about communicating as a boy in his parents’ bar in Rockaway Beach, New York. That great Irish-American truly had the gift of gab. Who else but Al McGuire would have called super-tall athletes with their giant wingspans “aircraft carriers”? (Many of his players, almost all of whom graduated, majored in communications.) He felt such fondness for the Irish that one day, as a young man, he even packed a lunch and some beer and began rowing “home” toward Ireland, only to be stopped by the Coast Guard near the Statue of Liberty, according to Roger Jaynes, the former Milwaukee Journal reporter who covered Marquette basketball during McGuire’s thirteen winning seasons there. Jaynes’s tribute to Coach McGuire, in the January 29, 2001, issue, has to be the finest eulogy the Milwaukee paper ever published about a basketball personality.

Once, I was even lucky enough to see Marquette battle the UW live, with my dad and some of my brothers. I couldn’t make up my mind whom to cheer for—my first alma mater or Marquette’s Warriors (led by Dean “The Dream” Meminger, a future New York Knick), both of whom I loved. The McGuire-led Warriors eventually won the NCAA basketball title in 1977, Coach’s final season. Two great coaches, then, Al McGuire and demigod Vince Lombardi, served up their best miracles for Wisconsin fans—as did Ron Dayne. All three of those stars came from the East Coast, and moved to the Badger State later. Vince Lombardi, who was born in New York City, was an assistant coach for the Giants before moving to Green Bay.

I’ve been lucky enough to see other Wisconsin sports heroes compete live, including baseball legends Henry Aaron, Eddie Mathews, Warren Spahn, and Robin Yount, but I never saw Kareem Abdul-Jabbar’s Bucks or Vince Lombardi’s Packers—starring Bart Starr, Paul Hornung, and Willie Davis—play live, though my son and I did meet and photograph Paul Hornung in La Crosse in 1995. (See photo on page 135.) And I’ve not seen current Packer MVP Brett Favre play live except in practice, but I hope to.

Also, my son, my dad, one of my brothers, and I did see Ron Dayne play one game live, versus Indiana in 1999. UW trounced IU, 59-0, and I photographed No. 33 on one of his longest touchdown runs ever. It was his senior year, and in his final regular season game for UW, he broke the NCAA Division I career rushing record, piling up 6,397 yards in four stellar seasons. UW
beat my second alma mater, Iowa, that day. The Badger football team didn’t play my third alma mater, Missouri, while the Great Dayne wore red and white.

Ron Dayne, coached by Barry Alvarez, led the Badgers to two straight Rose Bowl victories, two Top Ten finishes, and won the Heisman, which goes to the best U.S. college football player each year. He is a special athlete, a young man who puts team and family goals first and his own personal goals farther down the list. His irrepressible young daughter, Jada, accompanied him often in college. In the pros, hopefully he will figure more prominently in future Giant world title teams. Of course, if he were traded to Green Bay to lead the Packers to more world championships, few fans in Wisconsin would object.

Maybe it was even instructive for Ron Dayne to have had an off-day today, given Dick Enberg’s remarks about the very genuine Coach McGuire, who never could quite believe in his own celebrity and who loved circus downs as much as “great successes.” “Big games” and moral results can be won by various positive measures. For instance, that coach also took part in many charity events and loved mingling with all sorts of people—from Native, Irish, Italian, and African Americans to people from around the world. At the time of his death at age seventy-two, Coach McGuire was still very close to his wife and three grown children, too.

And whomever you are swapping stories with today, Al, we hope Ireland is nice this time of year . . .
one of the driving forces behind building a memorial in La Crosse to workers killed on the job. She has chaired the memorial committee, and has met with city officials to present plans for it and make the request to build it on city property. She has helped the other committee members with all aspects of bringing this project to fruition.

Kathy grins when she tells of a spring day last year when she stopped at the building site after work to see if she could get sodas for the guys who were leveling sand in preparation for installing some benches in memory of Dan Mueller: “I ended up lending them a hand—in a dress and high heels!”

The completed shelter, built in a park called Laborer’s Grove, was dedicated on April 28, 2001. Kathy said of the memorial that day, “This is something we just can’t let go by. There are still people being injured and killed at work. I sure don’t want a family member to be next on the list.” Kathy is quick to point out the tremendous efforts put forth by other members of the local labor council on this project; she doesn’t seem comfortable taking credit.

But she is comfortable taking the lead in union activities. “I guess I think that the only way people will be treated fairly is with the help of a union. Corporations are getting so powerful, and CEOs make billions and billions of dollars, but they ‘can’t afford’ to pay frontline workers a livable wage and decent benefits. The middle class keeps getting poorer, and people just aren’t treated fairly,” explains Kathy.

The next big project for Kathy and her union is an organizing push in the administrative support staff section of state employees. It’s a project that has been in the works for several years, and, of course, Kathy has been deeply involved. In 1996, AFSCME Council 24 sent Kathy to Washington, D.C., to learn organizing principles and techniques from some of the best union organizers in the country. She’s been eager to put that education to good use. “Right now,” says Kathy, “there are eight thousand administrative support staff in Wisconsin State employment. Only two thousand are union members. We are on the threshold of becoming a force to be reckoned with!”

Currently, she is a steward for 1449, is on the executive board of the AFL-CIO labor council, serves as secretary of AFSCME Council 24 (a statewide union office), is on the standing Organizing Committee for Council 24, and always serves on the Worker’s Memorial Committee for the local labor council, a duty Kathy “wouldn’t let go for the world.” After twenty years, Kathy still loves her job, and is very serious about her responsibilities at work. She also feels a responsibility for the well-being of the people she works with. In fact, she feels that American labor activists must take responsibility for all workers of the world—“I just feel that if unions are done away with, we’re going to see a sorry world.”

Kathy Hanratty lives a full life. She keeps busy with the things that mean most to her: family, church, work and union. Her values and her actions speak of typical Midwestern roots. She exemplifies an American Unionist in the Heartland.

My Second Chance
Bob Smith

Most people would probably say that a man’s best friend is his dog. Most times, this could be true; but I have always considered the horse, and especially the young colt, my favorite animal and best friend. This close animal friendship took a dramatic turn this past summer, and I discovered a new love to admire in place of the old gray mare.

In May of 2000, I was told I would need a new aorta heart valve, pronto. My main heart valve, after many years of good and faithful service, decided it needed a change. My choices to replace the old, worn-out valve were either a mechanical one or one of two types of tissue valves. My understanding is that tissue valves come from either pigs or cows.

Earlier in the year, I had heard about the recall of a very popular mechanical valve, so I immediately ruled that out. The last thing I needed was the “slim chance” of a recall. The next choice was a pig valve, which seems to be rather popular nowadays. However, the cardiac surgeon at Rochester’s Mayo Clinic recommended a bovine (cow) valve. With the possibility of little or no rejection, and hopefully twenty years of good dependable service, this was my choice.

I must admit—when I had to make this decision involving my heart, there were a few doubts and some hidden reservations in the back of my mind. What if a virus or some other disease is present? What if my heart rejects this new tissue valve? And, last but not
least, what if the cow came from England and passed along the dreaded Mad Cow disease? I relied on my good fortune, and “my” cow came from the Mayo herd.

I returned home from surgery to find more than three hundred e-mails waiting to be read. It took literally weeks to digest and answer this huge volume. I could write a story just about all the jokes and kidding regarding my new bovine valve. However, I look on the bright side today: I now have a new animal to admire, and I am sure the jokes are less distasteful than if I had to tolerate an endless supply of pig stories. Thank goodness for small miracles.

Fog and Idealism

Father Robert Cook

Fog, when it is thin, cannot be seen up close. But when you see a layer of it from a hundred yards away, its density makes it visible; there’s a milky look in the air.

Once, when we were young and on a family picnic, I was full of mischief. My brother Gary was about four years old. I was still in grade school, which excused at least a little of my guilt. Together, we looked off to the south. A blanket of thin fog, like a will-o’-the-wisp, seemed to hover a few feet off the ground, just at Gary’s height.

I knew it was thin fog, a kind of gossamer that disappears at close range. “Gary,” I said. I had a pickle jar in my hand. “Do you see that fog? Take this bottle and go get some for me.” He admired his older brothers, even when they were undeserving. He took the jar and walked south. He walked and walked. When he returned with an empty jar, the pleasure had gone out of the mischief for me, and it was replaced by shame.

But a broad smile covered my brother’s young face. I had sent him looking for gossamer. Somehow, he had returned with a substance I didn’t understand. Gary never lost his idealism—he always found substance in ideals that others thought empty.

Working for a government agency, Gary went on to eradicate German measles in Zaire, to bring a fresh water supply to villages in the Philippines, to strengthen bonds with citizens of America and Russia. Don’t tell me there was no fog in that pickle jar!
I

fan outsider were to judge the city of Arcadia, Wisconsin, by its population figures, he or she would get a very mistaken impression of the contributions this community of 2,400 residents makes to Wisconsin, America, and the world. If it is not quite New York City or Washington, D.C., it does, proportionally to its population, have as much impact.

For one thing, Arcadia almost never sleeps. Between three and four thousand employees (and Arcadia is not a suburb) can be found working at various times of the day and night, Monday through Friday, at its largest plants—Ashley Furniture Industries Inc., Gold'n Plump Poultry, and Supreme Graphics. As a result, there is more traffic on a typical night in the city than one would expect.

To protect people twenty-four/seven, police personnel like Kevin Ely and his canine partner, Nada, can be found patrolling, ensuring that residents and visitors alike are both safe and law-abiding. Nada, a Belgian Malinois brought in from Europe, and Kevin sometimes also assist law enforcement agencies in other areas of Trempealeau County as well as the Wisconsin State Patrol. In addition to her drug-detecting skills, the dog has been good for public relations. "A lot of people walk up and ask about the dog," Kevin said.

Typical of the spirit of Arcadia, the cost to purchase and train the dog—about $6,000—was paid through a gift from an anonymous donor.

Arcadia makes other major contributions to the world. "We really have a community spirit," said Mary Nelson, activities director at Franciscan Skemp Healthcare-Arcadia, still referred to locally as St. Joseph's Hospital and Nursing Home. "When something has to be done, it gets done. We have a lot of true and loyal people."

About 110 volunteers and hospital auxiliary members help at the nursing home, which is usually close to its capacity of 75 residents. "We couldn't do without the volunteers. They are important," said Cyndi Schultz, another staffer there.

Patsy and Richard Kamla are among city retirees who donate their time to the community. Richard is a volunteer reader to young students and helps out at the local food pantry. Patsy, a retired bookkeeper, volunteers at the nursing home, belongs to the hospital auxiliary, and helps with Communion duties and Mass as a pastoral care provider. "Some need help, and I like being there to help them," she said.

Moreover, Arcadia is down-to-earth. Mary Kay Hagen, who owns Mary Kay's Café there, said, "People love coming in to talk and shake dice. I like their different personalities and faces." She does most of the cooking by memory—no slips from the waitress. May Kay said, laughing, "I bought the business to be the boss, but all I do is take orders all day long."

Jerry Valk has been a barber for thirty-four years in Arcadia. "I raised five kids here, and it's a great town," he said. Jerry has seen many generations of families come through his front door on Main Street. He stated, "As it gets closer to retirement, the less I want to do it." (Retire, that is.)

Veterans Memorial Park in Arcadia also indicates residents' commitment to community values. A showpiece of patriotism that includes dozens of statues honoring those who served in the nation's wars, the park contains more tributes (more than twenty military statues alone) to America's military and pioneer past than any place this side of Washington, D.C.

One monument has special meaning to seventy-four-year-old Russell Severson: a replica of the famous flag-raising on Iwo Jima during World War II. Fifty-six
years ago, Russ was wounded on Iwo Jima while fighting with the Third Marine Division in what became the bloodiest battle in the Marine Corps’ history. “In my whole company of 220 men, there were just three who weren’t wounded or killed,” said Russ, who was hit with mortar fire by the entrenched Japanese on the eight-square-mile fortress island. Some six thousand Americans were killed there and three times that number were wounded in the month-long battle to take the island.

The idea of Ashley Furniture CEO Ron Wanek, Veterans Memorial Park began simply enough. “I was first going to do one in memory of Vietnam,” he said, because many residents he knew had served there. The project grew as he remembered friends and relatives who had served in other wars, too. All of the large statues in today’s park were developed from smaller clay models that Ron carved, and this gives him a special sense of pride. He did a lot of research into the uniforms and equipment worn by troops from the American Revolution to Desert Storm. Ron believes in the park so much that he has also contributed two million dollars to it.

A Winona, Minnesota, native, Ron is CEO of the fourth largest furniture manufacturing company in the world. Ashley’s furniture is sold around the world and has often been won by contestants on leading game shows. A winner of Pillar of Industry and City of Hope/Spirit of Life awards in his industry, Ron has also been named Wisconsin Entrepreneur of the Year and has been given many other awards. He contributes regularly to the VFW and American Legion and has also been named Outstanding Businessman of the Year by the Arcadia Chamber of Commerce.

Two things Ashley does to extend its billion-dollar business are to research and build cutting-edge, quality furniture and to maintain a precision-dispatched fleet of four hundred semi-tractors and a thousand semi-trailers to meet the challenge of transporting their furniture. Ashley promotes a team concept, but individual talents are also recognized. “Most of all, you have to find a niche,” Ron said about his company, team, and life. “If you don’t find something unique, you don’t grow.”

Other major employers in the city are Gold’n Plump Poultry and Supreme Graphics. Gold’n Plump has sales of more than $200 million annually. It began as St. Cloud Hatcheries in 1926, and after many name changes, became Gold’n Plump and bought Arcadia Fryers in the 1990s.

Supreme Graphics is a subsidiary of Blaschko Enterprises, which traces its origins back to 1955, and which publishes the Arcadia News-Leader, the city’s weekly newspaper.

Economically, philosophically, and emotionally, Arcadia is a “nice community to live in,” Russ Severson said.

Ryan Sheehy at City Hall summed up the Arcadia experience by calling it “a wholesome community. We are fortunate to have that hometown spirit.” Arcadia’s hometown spirit contains a lot that is in the American grain, and it represents the spirit of America well. Any outsider will discover that after experiencing the spirit of Arcadia.
The score was 50-52, with but seconds left to go,
When Kolstad called time out, and prayers were whispered low.
Nothing but a miracle could save us now, we knew,
But the fight was there within us, as our old anxiety grew.

We took the ball out, and dribbled it in the backcourt . . .
We stalled—as seconds grew so short . . .
Then all at once, Miller dribbled up the floor,
And as the bell was ringing, sank a two-point score.

St. Norbert's all went crazy, and the fact will still remain,
Of miracles that happen, for a miracle saved this game.
In our overtime, we were perfect, for we built up quite a score.
We were in the tournament now, and sure to win a couple more.

We took Aquinas the next night, with a fight up to the last,
And the final game crept up on us awfully fast.
St. John's marched onto the floor, averaging all of 6-feet-4,
But our team was tops and beat them, by a humiliating score.

And when the game was over, and we saw what had occurred,
We had barely won the first two, and easily won the third.
We were “State Champs” all the way, and glad as we could be,
That Regis took the trophy, for all Wisconsin to see.
Editor’s Note: Robert A. “Bob” Floyd died unexpectedly in spring of 2001. He was in good health in every way until the end, and his spirit is undying. He was a great man and a great writer, and what follows may be the best piece of writing he ever did. Bob truly was a man in touch with the spirit of God.

When I was in eighth grade, an unknown minister from New York City first published a book that was destined to make his name a household word. The book has gone through dozens of printings, had sold more than fifteen million copies by the time this author died in 1996, and is still in print. This book had the longest run of any book as the number one best seller on The New York Times book list—ninety-eight weeks!

While it was a great success with the general public—for whom it was written—it received mixed reviews from the author’s peers—fellow ministers and theologians. They said his book was “too simple,” “trite,” “a mockery of the Christian faith,” and “not theologically sound.” Nevertheless, the book quickly became a resounding success.


Peale wasn’t the first person to promote this concept. The Apostle Paul said the very same thing nearly two thousand years ago: see 1 Thessalonians 5:18-19 and Philippians 4:8-9. So why did Peale catch so much flak because of his book?

I think it was a matter of the “professional clergy” being upset that one of their kind was telling people they could actually take charge of their lives, by themselves, and have a spiritual influence on their own lives without “benefit of clergy.” In other words, it was a combination of professional jealousy and the fear of a loss of some of their power as clergypersons.

If you haven’t read Peale’s book, I recommend it to you. It’s a very easy read, but has some solid suggestions on how to go about improving your life within the framework of Christian faith.

The key element of Peale’s book is simply that our thoughts have an effect on our lives. Paul said the very
same thing, and so do some psychologists, as well as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Robert Schuller, and churches in the New Thought movement—Christian Science, Unity, and Religious Science. Perhaps one of the most articulate persons in this school of thought is Louise Hay, a laywoman who has figured out a correlation between our thoughts and specific physical ailments, over ninety-five percent of which have been verified by medical research. I share this additional information just to let you know that Peale wasn’t alone in his concepts.

Now let’s get back to the Apostle Paul. In the fourth chapter of his letter to the Philippians is a section of exhortations. He encourages two women in the church to stop arguing and encourages the church to keep them, along with others, in the fold. He encourages the faithful to rejoice always, to be gentle in their lives, and to take their requests to God in prayer.

Then he spells it out—whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things! Then “the God of peace will be with you.”

Let’s take a look at those categories:

True  Noble  Right
Pure  Lovely  Admirable

Anything That Is Excellent or Praiseworthy!

Do you see anything negative in any of those categories? Do you see any reason not to think about any of those things? Is there anything wrong with reminding myself that God is the source of my life, my peace, my health, or any other aspect of my life? Jesus told us to ask, seek, and knock. He told us to rely on God for everything we need. So what could possibly be wrong with reminding myself of those facts—along with affirming God as the source of my life—to align myself every day, several times a day, with God’s Spirit?

Books on prayer encourage us to start and end every day by reminding ourselves of God’s power and love, reminding ourselves to be grateful for events of the day that are over as well as being grateful for a new day and the events that await us. Isn’t that part of practicing the Power of Positive Thinking? Isn’t that thinking on things that are true and noble and pure and lovely?

I believe Peale was (and is) right. I believe we can literally change our lives through positive affirmations, and if we do so in a humble sense of reliance on God, then I believe it is totally correct to take responsibility for our own lives and activities by affirming positive ideas in our lives every day.

What happens when you think about negative things all the time? You all know people who do that. Do you like to be around them? All you ever hear is gloom and doom. All you ever hear from some people is the latest catastrophe they have encountered—we even have a name for it now—catastrophizing! Don’t ever try to mention a problem of your own to these people—they’ve always had something worse! You will never win a “woe-is-me” contest with a catastrophizer.

So give thinking on these good things a try, consciously and deliberately. Refuse to think about negative things (that’s called worry, and it doesn’t do one bit of good). Be specific about things you are grateful for. Write them down every day. Develop affirmations about what you would like to have happen in your life, and repeat those affirmations many times every day. Remember, the affirmation must be positive, and it must be in the present tense, like it has already occurred, because it really has, in your mind!

Here are some examples:

- I love and approve of myself, just as God loves and approves of me.
- The freshness of this new day vitalizes and heals my body. The balance and power of God is in this day.
- The beauty that I see is a part of all things, for I am a part of all things, just as God is in all things.
- This day I express love to each person I meet, for I know that I am truly lovable, and God is love in me and in every other person.
- The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.
- Today, I think only of things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. I focus only on things that are excellent or praiseworthy.
- The Christ in me greets the Christ in you.
- This day I see God in everyone I meet.
- God goes before me this day and prepares the way for me in all things.
- I am deeply centered and peaceful in life. It is safe for me to be alive and joyous.

Well, I think you get the idea. Pick some of these affirmations, or make up other ones. Repeat them first thing in the morning and then several times during the day. At night, write down things you are grateful for that happened during the day, and keep a log of those gratitudes.

Try it for a week, or a month. Then review your life during that time. Didn’t it work better to think only on the good things, as Paul advised? Didn’t it work better to think positively, as Peale advised? You make your own decision based on your own results. Don’t let someone else tell you that you shouldn’t be so positive, so happy, so Godly! W

“I believe we can literally change our lives through positive affirmations . . .”
The First of Fifty Chosen Persons: Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy Onassis

Gordon H. Hampel

In its December 1999 Millennium Issue, Biography Magazine featured a composite of the fifty most famous people in the century. Staff writer Janet Cawley chose her twenty-five men and twenty-five women on the basis of their faces being most easily recognized and most familiar. The first person presented, an icon, was Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy Onassis.

A color picture shows her in sports attire—a yellow, short-sleeved pullover and white beach pants—walking barefoot up the lawn from the beach on the Atlantic Ocean to the Kennedy Hyannisport home. She looks neither elegant nor sophisticated, distanced from her top-notch designer wardrobe then, but she was America's most glamorous First Lady. She showed her steel when her first husband, President John F. Kennedy, was assassinated, and in doing so, she pulled a whole nation together.

She lived and was schooled in a life of privilege from birth on. She had a sense of wisdom and cleverness that was barely hidden in her simplicity. Jackie loved her father. He and she were close before and after her parents divorced. She must have been devastated when he did not show up at her wedding—the society event of 1953—to walk her down the aisle.

Widowed at age thirty-four, she concentrated on raising six-year-old Caroline and three-year-old John Jr. Jackie once said, “If you bungle raising your children, I don’t think whatever you do matters very much.”

She also wanted to distance herself from the Kennedy family and establish a life of her own. She became a book editor, working for several publishing houses over a three-year period. As an editor, she was respected by the people she worked with and encouraged numerous writers and artists to publish and illustrate their books. Jackie had won over the American public when she spoke in her whispery, little-girl voice at government doings and political rallies in which she participated with her husband. She was fluent in Spanish and French.

After the assassination of JFK, Jackie was afraid her children would be assassins' targets and wanted to get out of the country. (See photo of JFK's gravesite on page 139.) She enjoyed a vacation she shared with her sister, Princess Lee Radziwill, on Aristotle Onassis's 315-foot yacht, Christina. Jackie found him exciting and unafraid of anyone or anything, and he was very rich! She was determined to bring both Caroline and John Jr. to Greece to meet Ari and his family.

She married Mr. Onassis, the Greek shipping billionaire, on the rainy evening of October 20, 1968. Jackie's children were not welcomed by Ari's children—Christina, eighteen, and Alexander, twenty. When Jackie arrived on the island of Skorpios, Ari moved out of the house and checked into the Hilton.

His children considered the marriage a disaster. The Kennedy family was not pleased with the marriage either. They asked Jackie to wait to marry until after the election of 1968, in which JFK's brother, Robert, was a presidential candidate.

The book The Onassis Women, by Kiki Feroudi Moutsatsos, speaks of the great love between Jackie and Ari. Was there such a great love when Jackie arranged to live in New York nine months of a year, so she could spend time with her own children, and three months with Ari in Greece? Aristotle Onassis was not welcome in New York society. Her marriage to him was decidedly unpopular with the American public.

His death in 1975, and her effort to redesign her life, resulted in her working as a book editor for several years. She also worked diligently to save Grand Central Station from demolition and worked with civic leaders on its restoration and on saving other landmark buildings. Much of her effort in public and private work helped her to return to public favor.

Her steady and lengthy relationship with diamond merchant Maurice Tempelsman was a lucrative and joyous one. He did much to see that she made excellent investments. Jackie enjoyed being a grandmother to daughter Caroline's children. She, like Greta Garbo, who was also a New York City resident, always managed to remain an elusive figure, forever guarding her privacy.

Jacqueline Lee Bouvier Kennedy Onassis died from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma at sixty-four years of age. Her story has been called “the greatest autobiography never written.”

Not long after her death in 1994, an auction of her effects was held, and the sale netted a cool $34 million.

Caroline Kennedy married an artist and has children. John F. Kennedy Jr. also married. A devoted son and loving husband, a man who strove hard to be a decent human being, he, with his wife, Carolyn Bessette, and her sister, were killed when their plane crashed into the Atlantic Ocean during the summer of 1999. The $34 million should well take care of Caroline Kennedy and her family, the remaining members of Jackie's family. W
The beginning of my Christian faith did not derive from sermons, but from the singing of hymns. While Methodists might not have sung with the gusto of the Pentecostals down the street, we did have annual revival meetings. Visiting preachers of the evangelical type would come for a week of preaching and singing. Usually they had loud, and sometimes fairly good, singing voices. Then we Methodists would raise the roof!

The choir at the Thayer, Missouri, Methodist Church stood behind the pulpit. Both of my parents sang in the choir after we three children were old enough to sit on the front bench under my father’s eagle eye. At one service, my brother James eluded his captors and managed to crawl under six or seven pews. Dad caught the movement. Rising in front of the congregation, he grabbed James by the seat of his pants and walked out toward the back with James yelling, “Don’t pank me, Daddy, don’t pank me.” This episode may not have imprinted the need to be quiet in James’s restless life, but I remember being good in church for a long time after that.

Certain songs became the backbone of my early theology. “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me” was one in which the solidarity of faith could be founded. I still remember the first verse of this and many other lovely old hymns we learned. Of course “Jesus Loves Me,” “I Want to be a Little Sunbeam,” and “Brighten the Corner Where You Are,” became cemented in my little head. It was great fun belting them out as we Sunday School children stood before the congregation.

My father told of hearing a band play “Jesus, Savior, Pilot Me,” as his troop ship was pulling away from the pier. He was on his way to help occupy Germany at the end of World War I. This hymn profoundly affected him as he lived and talked his faith.

There were other things that only children of choir members might overhear when parents got home from choir practice. One lingering memory of a choir member is the image of Mrs. Lark. A lark she wasn’t; she had been endowed with a high, piercing voice. When the sopranos “soared,” she soared higher than the rest, her eyebrows going up with the notes. I had a perfect front-seat view of her.

The song “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing” is a very straightforward hymn, yet I have an almost uncontrollable urge to giggle at the beginning of the second verse. “Here I raise my Ebenezer” is the first line. My dad once named his umbrella an Ebenezer, and would wink at me when the second stanza began. I still cannot get through this song without laughing to myself.

“Let the Lower Lights Be Burning” was a hymn frequently chosen for funerals. After a series of services at which this hymn had been chosen by the family, my dad, quite innocently, asked the choir members if this didn’t seem like a direct appeal to send the departed in the opposite direction from heaven. This broke them up into laughter, and they had to tell families that they could not sing this song.

“My Father’s Garden” was, and still is, a favorite for funerals. This tune is quite comforting and easy to sing. It is just that it has been slurred so many times. A poor rendition can set one’s teeth on edge.

Two favorites for today’s funerals are “On Angel’s Wings” and “How Great Thou Art.” At one funeral this past year, “On Angel’s Wings” was mangled by a woman with very uncertain ability to hit the right notes. Later, at the meal in the basement, it was learned that she had not been asked to sing, but had done so anyway. The daughter of the deceased remarked to her, “Barbra Streisand you ain’t, but thanks anyway.”

When I was overseas during World War II, the hymn that comforted me when I felt lonely was:

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come.
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

This may have been because I heard an organist at Westminster Abbey playing it when I was there. It
Encounter with Mother Teresa
Led to Letter Exchange, Return to Faith
David J. Marcou

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Mother Teresa wrote fifteen letters to me from 1989 to 1996. She often said that a letter was a small thing, because she was doing nothing more than being, happily, the “little pencil of God.” If she now knows how much her letters (and pictures) mean to my son and me, we will have thanked her properly somehow for her contributions to our renewed Catholic faith.

I first met Mother Teresa at her order’s convent in Anyang, South Korea, in January 1985. I went with one reporter and two other photographers covering her appearance there, and of course, I wanted the chance to meet the good sister from Calcutta, who loved loving the most unfortunate souls on God’s green earth (she is called the “Saint of the Gutters”), and to take my own pictures of her. Before the many other journalists arrived, we had a personal interview with her and photographed her. The Times Review and the Catholic Digest both used my happiest view of her in 1994.

When I left Korea, I returned to Wisconsin, where my son Matthew was born in 1987 and from where I sent Mother Teresa a letter in 1989, wishing her a quick recovery from one of her bouts with heart disease. I was pleasantly surprised when a typed reply soon came to me with her signature on it. Perhaps because I didn’t quite believe my good fortune, I didn’t write her for another year; but when I did, I received a second reply. As time went by, I shared more of my personal problems (e.g. my divorce) with her, and because many of them had to do with my dormant (for almost twenty years) Catholic faith, her replies became appeals. She wanted me to receive Christ in the sacraments again, and she was very happy when Matthew was baptized in 1993.

We continued to write until 1996, and I sent her one final card early in 1997. To be sure, if it had not been for her letters to me, addressing many of Matthew’s and my problems, I probably would not have come back to the church when I did.

Mother Teresa’s humility shone through every one of her letters and in the pictures I took of her in 1985. She may have been the “little pencil of God,” but what a great little pencil she was. She encouraged my son and me to continue earnestly on the path to heaven, and in many of the letters she sent, she also included the Franciscan Prayer for Peace.

Mother Teresa was a channel of God’s peace, for where there was darkness, she sowed light. Just as she and Princess Diana, her good friend who died a week before she did, had much to offer this world in life, so too do both women offer us much in death. Mother Teresa’s physical death from a heart attack may seem a sad note to some, but to those who truly believe in God, her heart’s dream is now fully realized due to the grace He bestows via that Missionary of Charity’s heavenly adventure.
It was my second trip to our sister city in Russia. The year was 1991, and my husband and I were there to do humanitarian work. While there, we worked in hospitals, orphanages, day care centers, and schools, and we visited the homes of pensioners. We also attended ballets and visited palaces and summer camps once operated under the guidelines of Stalin. Our goal, while we were there, was to distribute medications, seeds, Bibles, icons, and altar pieces from our local Lutheran churches.

This was another chance for me to observe the Russian people. I had seen them in many facets of their lives; now I could see them inside a Russian church. It was on a side trip, and most of the people visiting this holy place were common people who came seeking divine healing and favor with God. It seemed as though all who came here went away fulfilled and gratified.

As I stepped over the threshold, I pulled the required scarf up over my head, and our group of three moved in silence into the main room of the sanctuary. Immediately, I was overcome with the smells of the ancient building, people, and incense. The walls and floors had a musty, damp coolness that mingled with the sweat and wool garments of the pilgrims along with a pungent odor of myrrh. It was as if I'd stepped back in time, into the ancient temples of the Bible. This was a shielded world, and outside influences never dared enter its sanctity.

I moved to the right side of the room and from there observed the people. Groups—from very old women to young men—were interspersed throughout the main room. Women wore heavy, dark mid-calf skirts and knee-length black overcoats; traditional Russian scarves in bright reds, yellows, and greens—like large cabbage roses intertwined with scrollwork on the borders—served as shawls but were soon pulled up to properly cover the women's heads. Many of the women's bodies stooped with age, and they carried large cloth bags filled with slices of dark brown rye and molasses bread wrapped in white cotton, as well as empty bottles in which to carry home their cherished holy water.

Behind us stood a group of young men, singing, voices blending in perfect harmony. The men's voices were strong and unaccompanied by instruments. At times, a man would slip out and another would drift in, joining the chorus, the music continuing perpetually, with never a pause. An atmosphere of peace enveloped the parishioners' souls, lifting them to heights of euphoria most only dream of.

Walls stretched up into the darkness and blended into the vaulted ceiling. Pillars stood large and round, supporting the canopy of domed frescoes above them. Within the dome were colored stained-glass windows that filtered the bright sunlight into the dense smoke hanging in the air like fog, the sunlight finally disappearing as it tried to penetrate to the depths of the floor. Inside, the room looked as if dusk had settled, for the main source of light was a large golden candelabra that hung from the middle of the dome on a thick chain. A second source of light was a multi-tiered gold candle stand on the altar with hundreds of tiny yellow candles so thin they looked like wooden matchsticks. The light given off was that of a golden sunset. The room was bathed in amber light, and the warm glow on the faces of those close to the altar gave the entire scene an aura of contentedness.

A long line of people wound its way around the front of the sanctuary; most of them were women. In their hands, they carried unlit candles as they waited their turn to place them on the altar and offer up a sacred prayer for the souls of their loved ones, living and dead. After they placed their small candles on the stand, they moved into new positions. They passed in front of beautiful icons that reached from floor to ceiling. Rows and rows of them, stacked on top of one another, each in its own ornate golden frame, the colors now faded from years of antiquity and stained yellow.
from the thick smoke. On the right side of the altar was a large golden gate with ornate scrollwork and a curtain draped behind, blocking women from comprehending hidden secrets. It was called the inner altar, and only men were allowed to enter on High Days.

As the pilgrims neared to the end of the altar area, there was a large golden casket with a glass lid. Inside was the body of St. Zagorsk, so tightly swaddled in cloth it looked like an Egyptian mummy. There, the only sounds were those of shuffling feet, rustling garments, and the ever-strong voices of men singing. Each person stopped and knelt in front of the gold casket, kissing it with loving devotion. It wasn't an obligatory kiss, but one of gratitude and reverence. As they rose to their feet, they circled the end of the altar and a young priest wiped the lip marks from the glass. It was like a dance—bodies moving, pausing, kneeling and circling in unison. An elderly priest, robed in black, accepted small pieces of paper from those people who had written down the names of their troubled loved ones, and, with no more than a reassuring pat and a special blessing, they left in gratitude.

After watching, I moved to the back of the church, where the young men sang on. Turning to look back, I saw a long line of people that seemed never to dwindle. Faces were transformed from downtrodden into tranquil, trails of silent tears still evident. Concerns and needs were now in the hands of Almighty God, who had been there in the past as He was now.

Gratitude was also in their hearts, gratitude that even the poorest of humanity could access the answers they needed. They knew they would never be rejected for their lack of money or position in society. God was a “vice” even the poorest of peasants could afford, and this was the place they came to receive their free gift. Their love and devotion had made this a place of healing, a place where they could leave all their burdens and cares.

Reflections

Through an Artist’s Eyes
Joyce Crothers

I used to see through an artist’s eyes. That was when I was young, before I had the responsibilities of marriage and children. I had time to see and think and get completely engrossed in what I was doing. I could see a multitude of greens in trees and many colors in a sunset—many more than others would see.

Now my eyes don’t see as many colors. They are more concerned with seeing the problems and rigors of everyday life. I think that my writing, also, has become monochromatic. I still love to read descriptive writing, though, where the writer grabs you by the scruff of the neck and pulls you into a story and you live that story.

I can understand why artists and writers go off by themselves and live in remote areas to write or paint. One needs to get away from the interruptions of everyday life—away from phones, visitors, dogs that need to go out, and meals that need to be prepared at certain times.

Oh, to have peace and quiet; to have the time to spend creating to spend your all on what you are working on and nothing else; and to take an idea from inception to fruition. Somewhere in my mind, these are still great ideals for me.

My husband will be retiring in a year, and I am looking forward to it. Of course, we will always have mowing and other chores to do, but when they are done, we will have more time to do the things we like to do. I may even have time to walk in the woods and retrain my artist’s eyes to see the many colors in the trees and sunsets. I might even write them down, so you will see them, too.
Dylan Thomas in America, by John Malcolm Brinnin, 2000
Reviewed by David J. Marcou

If Dylan Thomas had been known for no other writing than the poem "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night," his reputation might still have been secure. In fact, though, he wrote enough quality poems, stories, and plays to assure his reputation as one of the true geniuses of modern literary life.

Dylan Marlais Thomas was born on October 27, 1914, in the Welsh seaport city of Swansea. He came to fame in 1934 with the publication of his first book, Eighteen Poems. Following the publication of more books of poems and his autobiographical sketch, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog, he wrote scripts for documentary films during World War II. After the war, he was a literary commentator for BBC Radio.

That Thomas raged "against the dying of the light," is clear to all those who knew him. His legendary alcoholism was spotlighted in Brinnin's biography, first published in 1955 and now reissued in the Prion "Lost Treasures" series with a new introduction by Drew Milne, a University of Cambridge lecturer.

When the great poet arrived in New York in 1950 for an American reading tour, this country did not know what had hit it. Angelic, devilish, immoral, charming, and pursued by an urge to drink far too heavily, Thomas was not what American academia expected. But he made friends with many American writers—from John Berryman, an alcoholic who eventually committed suicide, to playwright Arthur Miller.

Brinnin was Thomas's guide and patron for three years and watched with horror his slow descent, though the poet's charms and genius beguiled him. Brinnin also went to London and Wales and saw the poet's trinity was God, family, and the Green Bay Packers; but, though his extended family was key to him, his own family was less so. He spent little time with his wife and children, and his work triggered his wife Marie's alcoholism and depression. One baby died in the womb and another soon after birth. Marie died in 1982 of lung cancer and is buried with her husband and in-laws at Mount Olivet, New Jersey. The surviving children are good parents, luckily. Vince Jr. is a lawyer and motivational speaker. Susan Lombardi Bickham is a housewife.

Right or wrong, to his fans the coach has long been "St. Vincent." What set his teams apart in the chaotic 1960s was their devotion to him and to each other. Lombardi mined a tradition begun by coach "Curly" Lambeau, who had proudly led the Packers to six NFL titles. Future President Richard Nixon even wanted Lombardi as a running mate in 1968 until he learned
The Greatest of Saints
Father Robert Cook

The pilgrims from La Crosse took a side trip outside of Rome to visit the village of Assisi, the home of Francis. Apart from Mary, of course, and the Apostles, I have always thought of Francis as the greatest of saints.

As we drove north from Rome on a three-hour bus ride, we passed many small towns perched on top of mountains. Each village was built of the amber-colored stone native to Italy. Always, a church steeple dominated the high landscape, so it came as no surprise that Assisi is of the same makeup. I was unprepared, though, for its simple beauty, its narrow, winding streets, and window boxes sprouting red geraniums.

Francis isn't the only saint from the Umbrian region of Italy. One guidebook suggests that the beauty of the countryside played its own part in producing its saints. Could it be that the peace and harmony of the surroundings contribute to the inner simplicity and beauty of the soul?

While on pilgrimage I selected my three favorite quotations from the writings of Francis. The first two are real; the third is apocryphal. First, "Preach the gospel always; use words when necessary." This young saint's style of living was so revolutionary in its

Lombardi liked performers who weren't total saints. He didn't imitate Paul Hornung, but he saw his star halfback and playboy as a son, along with shrewd, squeaky-clean quarterback Bart Starr. The NFL suspended Hornung for a year for gambling on NFL games, though not on Packer games. The Notre Dame Heisman alumnus apologized and returned. The aging Packers eventually won Super Bowls I and II along the way, taking the famous "Ice Bowl" in late 1967 vs. Dallas, and the coach quit, remaining as general manager, in 1968. Owner Edward Bennett Williams named Lombardi leader of the Washington Redskins in 1969. Lombardi died of colon cancer in 1970.

Some may chide Lombardi's drive, which helped kill him, his Army chicanery, a WWII teaching deferment, or his opposition to players' agents. And Maraniss backs Vince's acceptance of brother Harold's homosexual activity, which may surprise many. But at least the coach loved St. Paul's nudge, "Run to win," went to Mass daily, and confessed his abuse and absences. Also, he loved humor, asking his pastor to move up Mass to fit his schedule, and fought racism (three of his black players—Willie Davis, Willie Wood, and Herb Adderley—are NFL Hall of Famers), making Ray Rhodes's Packer head coaching year possible. In addition, Lombardi's teams, despite high jinks by Hornung and receiver-friend Max McGee off the field, did not contain drug addicts or super-abusive men, as today's teams often do.
simplicity that he was the equivalent of a billboard for the gospel. His simplicity knew no compromise; his convictions no subtlety. In his homily at the Basilica of St. Francis that day, La Crosse Diocesan Bishop Raymond Burke said, “To know Francis and not to know Christ is not really to know Francis!”

My second favorite quotation from Francis is, “All which you used to avoid will bring you great sweetness and exceeding joy!” Francis teaches us that we all need to make peace with the peoples, the creatures, and the conditions of this world that we are inclined to loathe, fear or flee. Francis is more than an adornment for birdbaths!

In a sacrilegious mood, I told my fellow pilgrims my third favorite quote: “Ouch, this stigmata hurts!” Surely, it did. Francis was the first person to experience the stigmata, the wounds of Jesus, in his hands, feet and side. It was not painless! I learned on pilgrimage that it was one of many causes of his death, along with bone cancer. This is not a “wilting lily” saint. Here is a saint forged by the gospel and the love of God. Perhaps the beautiful countryside had something to do with it, too.

The La Crosse area is called God's Country because of its magnificent beauty. I wonder what kind of saints it will produce!

Jesus Christ in the Neighborhood
Father Robert Cook

The town of Capernaum, in the Holy Land, was the headquarters of Jesus during his public ministry. In the last ten years I've visited it twice on pilgrimage. Many of the biblical sites of Jesus' life are still vibrant and pulsating cities. Nazareth, Tiberias, and Jericho are all centers for commerce. Capernaum is a city in ruins. That's partly what makes it so attractive to pilgrims. A second-century synagogue stands in ruins there. Massive millstones line a display area of the city and give understanding to the words of Jesus when he threatened those who scandalize children. The only representation of the Ark of the Covenant from antiquity is found engraved on a stone tablet found in Capernaum.

But the most striking feature of the old, ruined city is the very home of Peter, prince of the Apostles. Archeologists have many reasons to believe that the home is authentically that of Peter. The roof is no longer in place, but the floor plan is very clear. Above the house stands a Franciscan church—on stilts. The sanctuary floor of the church is made of glass so a pilgrim can look directly down onto the floor of Peter's house. Here Jesus ate and slept. From here, he preached. Across the street, he cured the paralytic who was lowered through the tiles of a roof. Here, in this house, Jesus raised Peter's mother-in-law from sickness.

With me on pilgrimage was my great priest friend, Jim. We had been in college seminary together. We had vacationed together every year since ordination. Together, we had sat around campfires, canoed and kayaked rivers, explored London, fished for walleye, shared novels, gossiped about the Church, concelebrated Mass. He had seen me through disappointments; I had seen him through illness.

He had been standing at my side, looking through the glass to Peter's house below. Now he was gone. Where was he? Outside again, roaming the beach area between the church and the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee. Later, when I caught up with him, he said, “Bob, he was here. He saw this land, this sea, this sky, the surrounding hills. Not like in Jerusalem, where layers of land cover over the streets he walked. Jesus was here.” Jim was filled with awe. Now that's not too strange until you know that Jim was a cynical, sarcastic, red-haired Irishman from Chicago. (Well, in his youth he had red hair. Now what hair he had, like mine, was gray.) “Given over to spiritual awe” was not characteristic of Jim, I thought to myself. Then, I thought further: Of course it is. For all his cynicism, Jim is full of awe of mountains, of rivers, of an impressionist artist, of an old woman with common sense, of a man with a sense of humor. It's what enables him to be so awestruck, now, at the intimacy of Jesus.

I felt like the paralytic who, in this same town, was lowered by his friends through the roof of that house. When Jesus said to him, “Rise, pick up your mat and go home,” that's exactly what he did. Mark's gospel ends, “They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this.'” In fact, there is only one Jesus Christ, and we all should be in awe of his divine presence in us and this world.
Ever Wonder About a Picture? Or, Journalism as Inspiration

David J. Marcou

In 1979, soon after I’d earned my Master’s degree in American Studies from the University of Iowa, I was back in Madison, where I’d earned my History degree. One day, I was wondering what I would do next, academically and/or professionally, and I saw a photograph in the UW’s Daily Cardinal. It showed a man asleep, which usually wouldn’t have been remarkable—except the man was asleep during the coronation parade for Britain’s King George VI, in 1938.

I asked myself, What is the reason for this photo’s strength? I didn’t have an answer then, but that photo still inspired me to buy my first 35mm camera. I read up on the photographer’s career and discovered that Henri Cartier-Bresson was called the world’s greatest photojournalist with good reason. His perfectly timed, perfectly composed images had been taken in all kinds of conditions; and his book, The Decisive Moment, published in 1952, had laid the groundwork for modern photojournalism.

I thought that photo of the man asleep beneath a crowd was somewhat humorous, but didn’t think much more about its power until many years later. In between, I became inspired by other photographers, chief among these being British photojournalist Bert Hardy, who was an expert candid cameraman like Cartier-Bresson.

After I bought my first 35mm camera, I entered the Missouri School of Journalism to study both written and photographic reporting. Then I went to England in 1981 with that school’s London Reporting Program. It was there that I met, interviewed and photographed Mr. Hardy. I also met and interviewed his old Korean War mate, the great writer James Cameron. I have since viewed the two men as the perfect journalistic team, and they still inspire me.

I also read about Cartier-Bresson periodically and viewed his works. They are masterly, as are Mr. Hardy’s. One of my Mizzou instructors, Veita Jo Hampton, used to say that if someone could combine the best of Cartier-Bresson (for formal excellence) with that of W. E. Smith (another hero of mine, for emotional truth), that photojournalist would be the greatest ever. I still think Mr. Hardy’s work combines the best of both; and I’ve aspired to be as great a photojournalist as those three men could have inspired. They, along with other great photojournalists (including Margaret Bourke-White, the contributor of Life’s first cover story-photos in 1936, and Dorothea Lange, whose “Migrant Mother” is the most memorable American image taken in the 1930s), have told history’s story in the first moments that it becomes history. These three men have been such great inspirations for me because, although my writing had long been adequate journalism, I didn’t really take a strong interest in my written journalism until my photographic inspirations entered in. After I met Mr. Hardy in 1981, I began collecting his work, and I now own thirty-one Bert Hardy prints, including some of his best—one of them (taken in London’s Elephant and Castle district) having been used in the “Family of Man” exhibit, and another being his favorite photo, of two street urchins off on a lark in Glasgow’s Gorbals.

In early 2000, I bought a Cartier-Bresson monograph because I’d lost one I’d owned years before. It includes the sleeping man photo. Then I saw

Signed (on back) postcard of man sleeping beneath the crowd at the coronation parade for George VI, 1938. Trafalgar Square, London, England (By Henri Cartier-Bresson).

the author of The Decisive Moment on the Charlie Rose show on PBS-TV. I decided to write to him. Being thrifty if not downright poor, I sent him a $20 bill with a few samples of my work and asked him to send me a copy of the photo that had inspired me to study photojournalism. I soon began to think he must not have time to answer everyone who asks for his pictures—which are each valued at thousands of dollars—especially requests from people who include only $20!

So I was surprised one day when an airmail packet from France arrived. Cartier-Bresson had sent my photos and my money back, but there was one other item in the packet—a picture postcard of the photo I'd asked for. On the reverse side was this greeting: “For David J. Marcou, With my best wishes, Henri Cartier-Bresson.” I now feel very lucky to have that.

At last, I saw the reason for the strength of the sleeping man photo: In the midst of everything, when everyone else is enjoying a great moment of history, at least one person won't see what all the commotion is about, one person will just want to catch some shuteye—and some of the time that person is Everyone. We are all capable of falling asleep just when history is being made. It isn’t a world unless someone falls asleep then. None of us is totally free from temporary losses of focus. It took me a while to contact my first great photographic inspiration, but when I did, it proved worthwhile.

The circle is unbroken, in Spirit of America, because the sleeping man picture postcard from Cartier-Bresson appears here, along with two Bert Hardy prints I’ve obtained from the Hulton-Getty Picture Library—one of them representing a moment of total joy when President Eisenhower, in his 1956 reelection campaign, looks to a crowd above, “in the clouds,” and embraces heaven. If the photos of Bert Hardy and Henri Cartier-Bresson have brought me anything valuable, over the years, it has most often been moments of pure joy.

As for the writer James Cameron—he was the man who wrote the best remembered journalistic eulogy to King George VI in his down-to-earth, yet poetic, prose, “The King Is Dead.” Hopefully, none of us will be caught napping when the next King of England is crowned or when another Republican president is reelected.
New American Color Photographs

Lake Superior lighthouse, people, and seagull at sunrise, September 1991. Duluth, MN (By Gerald A. Bonsack).
The seven children of David A. and Rose C. Marcou, Memorial Day 1997. The photographer’s dad is first on the left. This was the first time in twenty years they had gathered for a picture. La Crosse, WI (Photo by Matthew A. Marcou, David J. Marcou’s son).

Blessings to the groom from the bride’s mother at a Muslim wedding in the Ayoob family. Onalaska, WI (Courtesy of Ayoob family).
Left: (Back, L-R) Mark Jr., Mark Sr., Anthony Michael Stevens; (Front, L-R) Marissa Paige (youngest descendant of York Kitchens) and Roberta H. Stevens, in family portrait, 1997. San Diego, CA (Courtesy of Roberta H. Stevens).

Above: Former Notre Dame and Green Bay Packer great Paul Hornung and Matt Marcou, November 25, 1995 (By David J. Marcou, Matt’s dad).

Top left: Linda Wilson and Jason Bonsack riding off Lytles Bridge (on Great River Bike Trail), July 1989. Town of Onalaska, WI (By Gerald A. Bonsack, Jason's dad).

Top right: Tim, Daniel and Paul Gerber cut the family tree, 1994. La Crosse, WI (Courtesy of the Tim and LuAnn Gerber family).

Bottom left: Zoom-view on sunset, 2000. La Crosse, WI (By Mark Michaelson).

Bottom right: John Rzeznik, lead singer for the Grammy-nominated rock group Goo Goo Dolls, April 1999. La Crosse, WI (By Steve Kiedrowski).
The American Queen steamboat on the Mississippi River, 2000. La Crosse, WI (By Robert J. Hurt).

Del Ray Harbor Marina, circa 1990. Los Angeles, CA (By Carl E. Liebig).


Bottom left: Mandan Indian paraphernalia, summer 2000. South Dakota’s Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park (By Nancy Kaminski).

Top left: Eternal flame at gravesite of John F. Kennedy, April 2000, Arlington (Virginia) National Cemetery (By David J. Marcou).

Top right: The 170-year-old Pierce Grocery Store, 1995, North Shrewsbury, VT (By Robert J. Hurt).

Bottom left: Woman wearing a U.S. flag costume at rally for President George H. W. Bush, 1992, La Crosse, WI (By David J. Marcou).

Bottom right: Frank Kiedrowski Jr., his dog, Mandy, and a 1919 Oldsmobile truck, Trempealeau County, WI (Courtesy of Steve Kiedrowski, Frank’s nephew).
Downtown La Crosse and the Mississippi River, 1999, La Crosse, WI (By Robert J. Hurt).