

# Uncle Jack Among the English *One Man's Sabbatical in 1983*



Jack Loughary

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*pdf edition*

Preface .....	3
Problem Solving .....	4
Londoners .....	6
The Electric Washing Machine .....	7
The City .....	9
Money and Marbles .....	11
Sex .....	13
The Haircut.....	15
Size .....	17
Travel Tips .....	19
Rules.....	22
Rules: P.S. ....	24
Self Talk .....	27
The Pub.....	29
Booking a Trip.....	32
Embassies .....	35
The Houseboat.....	38
About the Author .....	42

# Preface

*Uncle Jack Among the English* has had two lives already. It was first published by United Learning Corporation in 1984. My husband, Jack Loughary, and I were principals in the company. The little blue book that resulted was a gift Jack often gave to friends and anyone else interested in knowing more about his experience of this particular sabbatical year. He overestimated how many to print, and we carried boxes of these around on our many moves. Then in 2000 we started a website and Jack put some of the material in *Uncle Jack* on our website. This is the third life for this charming little publication. Jack died in April 2010, but I think he'd approve having *Uncle Jack* make it to one more publishing platform. Jack had a lifetime adult affair with England.

Theresa Ripley, September 2011

Below is the preface Jack wrote to the website edition of the stories.

As luck, a sabbatical leave and assertive planning would have it, I was once fortunate enough to spend part of a year living in London. My goal was to live in the city and at least have a sense of how it might feel to be a Londoner. While there, I came into contact with a large number of English people, as would be expected. Being a foreigner from the colonies, I often had to think carefully about connecting my desires to behavior. Here are several short stories written about my adventure. Knowing that the years were 1983-84 may provide a cultural context.

Jack Loughary, 2000

And here is the preface to the printed edition in 1984.

These reflections are about life in London. It's a nice place to visit, and I would love to live there...if I had a million dollars, a house in Hawaii, and lifetime pass on Pan Am. Uncle Jack, 1984

# Problem Solving

Because this visit to London was a work study trip, I brought along my electric Osborne computer and Epson electric printer. I anticipated a pleasant experience, but I knew that even in England everything is not perfect, and that I might have to respond imaginatively now and again to some unanticipated events. I was correct.

Today was my first serious problem-solving challenge in London. Friday night the electric printer went out. It had been printing along nicely for a week and then the next time that I turned it on it didn't. Nothing. So, this morning I began making phone calls, attempting to locate an Epson dealer. You almost need to have experienced English retail business practices to appreciate what I went through. I began calmly and with great resolution to remain so. The phone calls to computer stores, when they went through, resulted in absolutely no useful information. Either dealers had not heard of Epsons, didn't handle them, or in two instances, the firm seemed to be "computer consultants," and were not able to describe just what services they did provide. (For what it is worth, I have noticed that this is a characteristic of many consultants on both sides of the pond.) None seemed able to suggest a viable alternative to shipping the machine back to the U.S.

I then remembered that a week prior I found a tiny electrical appliance shop where the proprietor had been helpful in testing the Radio Shack voltage converter that I had purchased in the US. He didn't think very highly of it, but half heartedly acknowledged that it might work. So, I lugged the printer to his shop, where he confirmed that it wasn't getting any electrical power. He wouldn't nor would I have let him, examine the inside of the printing machine. He did suggest, however, that I might try Sampson's Electronics at the top of the street.

So, off I went, printer under arm, working my way in a direction opposite of my digs, to Sampson's. It was closed. But, the friendly Iranian who ran the dry cleaners next door told me that Sampson's kept odd hours. Some days they don't even come in until noon and stay past midnight. However, he continued, Sampson's has a second shop not far away, meaning two left turns through a subway under Marylebone Road, and then a left turn by some garages. His directions were perfect, but the Indian fellow running Sampson's No. 2 said that they didn't do computer printers. Mainly they did wire coil rewinding.

So far, this had taken only 32 hours. Then, I recalled seeing a shop on Baker Street a few blocks the other direction from my flat with a sign proclaiming something about copiers and computer. So, off I went still lugging the printer, which was gaining weight with each block walked.

Sure, the young middle class English computer salesman assured me, they dealt in Epsons, pointing to one just like mine on the shelf behind me. He listened to my sad tale and then suggested politely that perhaps my little Radio Shack converter caused a fuse to blow. Would I like them to take a look at the printer and sort things out? You bet your sweet butt I would! So,

they changed the fuse, which was blown (I didn't know there was a fuse) and sent me off to buy a proper voltage converter at a shop, by the way, located less than 50 yards from Sampson's No.1, about 12 blocks back. I was getting to know the neighborhood. The shop had exactly what I needed. They even tested it for me. I was back in business.

It was only 1:00 p.m. and I felt so good that I stopped at "The Hart and Lion" pub for a pint and a pork roll before making the return hike. As you can see, all is well again with the Epson electric printer, except that I can't cure its tendency to misspell occasionally.

# Londoners

The matter of establishing personal relationships in London is confusing. It is not that Londoners are cold, because they are not. The term Londoner itself is misleading. There are hundreds of thousands of second generation subjects in London. All have one kind or another of a legitimate London accent, but their parents come from any one of 75 countries. So Londoner, while a much used term, is nearly meaningless as a starting point for getting to know Londoners.

But, you've got to start somewhere. For me, that means approaching everyone in the good old straight forward American manner, which assumes that you will get some credit for good intentions, even if your style is thought awkward. Actually, I knew better. The great variety of social classes and cultural backgrounds to be encountered seems to doom such an approach from the beginning. But, I couldn't think of a better alternative.

So, on guided walks I smile a lot, ask questions and try to be congenial. This has been going on for several weeks and more than a few walks. Nothing. I tried again Sunday. Twenty or so of us were being guided through the London suburb of Highgate. One woman in her twenties made lengthy notes in her foolscap book during the entire adventure. All of us probably noticed. As the tour ended and we all went off to our various tube and bus stops, I found myself walking beside her on the sidewalk, heading towards the Highgate Underground station. "Hi," I said, underscored with my most genuine smile. "Are you doing a report or writing an article?"

"Neither," she replied coolly, and crossed to the other side of the street.

My landlord still hadn't told me where to put the garbage or how to order milk, but had inquired several times about "How are things"? The shop girl gave me correct change with a smile and then stared blankly when I commented about the nice sunny London weather. The man at the watch repair shop served my needs quickly and well, but I left feeling that I had imposed on his time. The news agent was prompt, but showed disdain when I asked about the difference between the several Sunday supplements. Frustrating!

Yesterday, I was walking down Marylebone High Street towards the Baker Street Tube station, when a fellow holding a large microphone and expensive looking audio recorder made eye contact. When I smiled, he moved towards me, stopped, and asked, "Do you watch morning television?"

I said that I did, and he wondered if I had seen Independent TV's Good Morning Britain. I said no, that I preferred BBC 1's morning show. He asked me why, and I explained briefly. He seemed pleased, if not with my answer then with the directness of it. We talked comfortably for a few minutes. Then, he turned off his recorder, smiled very pleasantly and said, "Lovely! Now, is there anything about London with which I can be helpful?"

Friendly people, these Londoners.

# The Electric Washing Machine

British technology ranges from loos (toilets) to the Concorde. Both can be found in London. I read an article in the Sunday Times that featured electronic gadgets. Everything from a voice activator in the newest automobile to robots for the kitchen. Lots of English homes have such electronic magic permanently installed, or so I understood. The edge of technology in my London bedsitter was an old American manual can opener which the last tenant jammed shut with tuna fish, and a loo that only produces water after you do two pulls.

There were some prize winning modern flats; very beautiful and efficient, so the papers said. When I think of paper it is that which was put on the walls of my place with a flour and water paste. It turned down like a worn book cover where walls met ceiling.

The telephone in my room accepted a hard and fast limit of two out of three domestic calls, rejected half of the incoming long distance calls, and gave you 3 to 5 odds that you can't make a local call the first try. Sitting next to that instrument was a black box about the size of a electric alarm clock and which kept track of all my telephone activity. It was for my landlord's convenience. According to him, it never fails. One hundred percent efficient, like gravity or the loo, for that matter.

There is a phrase here that is used a lot regarding technology. It is "get it right." It has several forms, of which the most frequently used include: haven't got it right, haven't got it right yet, we've about got it right, we'll get it right yet, we should get it right eventually, they may get it right, they ought to get it right, do you think they'll get it right, and one wonders if they'll ever get it right. I think I got that right.

Until one eventful day, my conscious association with technology in England had been minimal. Automatic ticket vending machines at the underground, Visa card imprinters, escalators, window shades, light switches; you know the sort of thing. But, on this day it was time to climb to another level of British technology, namely the electric washing machine. There were several of these in a shop about a block and a half around the corner from where I lived. The shop didn't have a name, and I had never seen an operator or owner, that I knew of at least. One to three of the local lads were usually hanging about, watching the dryers go round. There were four of these and eight electric washing machines. All, according to the stamp on the coin slots, made in Brooklyn, New York. In fact, the name of these machines was Americana, but they took English coins. Technology is flexible.

I checked out the electric washing machine place pretty carefully before I became involved. Seemed straightforward enough. The directions were printed on the underside of the lid, just like in Brooklyn. I understood these and then had a good idea as well. A local lady told me that one cycle on the electric washing machine lasted about 30 minutes. Just long enough for a short run in Regent's Park, I estimated. So, about 4:00 p.m. I loaded my clothes, added detergent, put the coins in the slots and started the electric washing machine. The red light goes on, and I take off

on my run, returning about 4:30 p.m., pleased and optimistic, expecting to find my clothes ready to be dried. A little too eager, perhaps. The electric washing machine was just entering its rinse cycle. I could tell because of the high technology system of four red lights. I must have had a look of slight distress, because another kind lady explains that the machines take quite awhile; "Longer than a thirty minute thirty minutes," is how she put it.

Okay, I thought, having planned ahead and brought my shopping bag along. I'll just run down to the corner grocer and pick up groceries for the evening. Should time it just about right. Eleven minutes later I return, groceries in bag and ready for the spin dry. Except that somehow the electric washing machine was now back into its wash cycle. There was a suspicious looking guy sitting in the corner, and while I certainly wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt, I was pretty sure that he probably screwed up and put his money in the wrong electric washing machine (mine), discovered his error, and then went on to start another machine. I smiled and asked him if he knew much about the machines.

"Which machines?" he asked.

"The electric washing machines," I explained. He offered that they just take a long time. Very slow. Because of my great faith in technology, I knew he was lying. But, what can a person do, being a foreigner in a foreign country, and all. Remaining cool as a European cucumber, I waited, whistling Yankee Doodle Dandy, and examined the collection of cigarette butts on the floor. After a while, this fellow's dryer stops and he removes his laundry. "Slower than hell," he comments as he leaves. I was still on wash. Figuring that I had a good 20 minutes, there was plenty of time to go home and take a quick shower and return just about the time that the electric washing machine would finish.

So, I was just a little upset when I returned after a hot but quick shower, to find the electric washing machine beginning its rinse cycle. Nothing else to do but let it do its thing. Maybe, because of circumstances like these, there was a pub just across the street. By now it was nearly 6:00 p.m. and so the Queen's Arms is open. Ten minutes and a half pint later, I'm back and the electric washing machine is somewhere into its wash cycle. (I know, Mother, I should have remained there and watched the damn thing, but I have this undying faith in technology!)

By now, I had made an important technological observation; when the lid is open, the machine doesn't operate. The solution came to me intuitively, probably because of my extensive science background. I waited until the electric washing machine wound down its wash spin, and then the instant before it started to inject rinse water, I competed a technological intervention by quickly opening the lid and interrupting the seemingly perpetual motion of the electric washing machine.

After that, I was clever enough not to become further involved with the electric washing machine. No Mam, I simply took my 3 pairs of socks, 2 Jockey shorts, 1 bath towel, a white shirt and a pair of Levis back to my flat to a cold rinse in the bath tub. Then, I draped them over the heat radiator. They should have been dry in the morning, especially if the landlord got the furnace working. He didn't, so it two days later that the project was complete.

# The City

Cities can be both exciting and confusing. I'm simply not used to so many different kinds of everything.

Take bridges, for example. I thought that I had London's bridges down pretty well. Not so. In a walk through Chelsea today, I was at one point in throwing distance of three: the Chelsea, Albert and Battersea. In addition, to the east, are the bridges Tower, London, Southwark, Blackfrais, Waterloo, Westminster, Lambeth and Vauxhaul. Going south from Chelsea, there are more: Wandsworth, Putney, Hammersmith and Kew. There are also a couple of car tunnels under the river and a tube or two for the underground trains.

Chelsea itself presents an unbelievable variety of costumes: a few very proper British gentlemen in their pinstriped suits with umbrellas rolled tighter than tight, American tourists with his and her down jackets, middle-aged tradesmen wearing their ex-Sunday best suits and still wearing their old secondary school ties, the heavy set mid-Europeans seeming just off the boat and somehow always managing to look in mourning, all of this as a backdrop for that segment of the Chelsea regulars referred to as punks. It is easy to tell tourists from regulars by their reactions to the punk people. The regulars never turn a head, while the tourists are fascinated and can't take their eyes off these strange looking creatures. Punk comes down, mostly, to differences in hair and color. The hair for both sexes is often shaved in the American Indian Mohawk style. Except, that instead of tight brush across the head, there is a huge bush. The bushes are dyed in purples, blues, oranges and greens or any color that is not a hair color. Another prominent style consists of a closely shaved head except for a wild bush left just above the forehead, which is often dyed bright yellow. Faces are usually painted to complement the color scheme of the hair, which usually means matching. An occasionally seen option is a face painted chalk white.

I had the TV on just a little bit today, and variety zapped me again to the tune of a full length color animated film about monkeys from China, a Finish-made drama with lots of pigs and sheep, the Martian Chronicles. G-Men (1935 with James Cagney), Puccini's Girl of the Golden West, Monty Python, and a short on going to the dentist.

Some cities don't have underground railway lines. If they do, one is usually sufficient. London has eleven, at least. This makes not only for variety in kind, but in function as well. The eleven or more railways run back and forth and around and underneath London. They often connect, thus allowing riders to change trains. Because many of the trains go to many of the same tube stops, there are usually a variety of companies and routes which you can use to get from A to B. Each involves one or more Underground companies and a different combination of Tube stops between points A and B.

And languages. What a variety. It is not unusual in the confined space of a lift (elevator) or queuing for a bus to hear five or six languages spoken. In the course of an hour, while wandering

through a large department store or super market, for example, you can count on hearing eight to ten different languages, not from tourists, but spoken by residents of the City.

The variety goes on and on, regardless of the aspect of the City you choose to observe. The question is raised in the press and public service TV programs, when real news seems hard to come by, as to whether this variety is good or bad. I don't think that it is really a question of good or bad. The variety in the City clearly contributes to the excitement that many people experience living here. Some people maintain that it adds to the quality of life, a term which can only, in my judgment, be defined mostly from an individual's perspective. Others prefer less variety, wishing for a simpler existence with fewer differences in costumes, languages and ways of getting from A to B.

The thing that strikes me most is that the variety probably won't go away. If you don't like it, if it somehow makes you unhappy or even uncomfortable, then you ought not be a city dweller. I suppose if you grow up with it, it is no big thing. But for a small town yokel like me, the variety of the City is significant. What is surprising, is that I liked it from the start. More than liked it, relished it. I'm not sure for how long, however. I suppose that the pleasures of the City's heterogeneity would be maximized if it could be coupled with a place in the country and an open Pan Am ticket to Hawaii in your pocket. I get just a sense of that when I pass through certain sections of the City, comforted by the knowledge that my small walk-up bed-sitter near Regent's Park is warm and awaiting my return. I'm not sure what to make of it all, but it is sure different than Cedar Falls or Grand Junction...or San Francisco, for that matter.

# Money and Marbles

Even though it would be nice if there were no poverty, I think that there always will be. It is practically certain that in a free society there will be a least economic inequality. And one way of compensating for some of that is for those on the top to provide certain benefits for those at the bottom of the hill. Higher taxes are one means, but we can go beyond legislation and government policies.

A nice example is the acquisition of a painting named Samson and Delilah that hangs in the National Gallery in London. I mean if you haven't seen it, this is a painting! During my stay in London it was hanging in a room very close to the north entrance, easy for anyone to find. It was the only art in the room. People come from the UK and the rest of the world to stare, admire, sketch, just wonder about it.

Samson and Delilah is an art classic of the sort we used to study during grade school art periods. You remember, the 2-inch square reproductions with a paragraph of fine print on the reverse side that you could hardly read, let alone understand.

Pete Reuben, the creator of this magnificent painting, has about a thousand things going on at once that I could see, and I didn't even know what to look for! What got my attention first is this great big guy, his hair long and his tremendously full muscles forming his strong masculine body, sort of sitting on the floor at the feet of this gorgeous woman with his head and torso resting on her lap. Delilah is gazing down on Samson with a look of concern. She has soft red hair, and is dressed in a bright red gown. The upper part of her body is exposed for all the world to see. What it sees, among other things, is a pair of full, red nipples that exemplify love, woman, femininity and desire. You just know that if old Samson could get his strength back, the two of them would have it on gloriously right then and there.

If you should want to look at it that way, the painting tells a story about passion that few people would miss. It also has great literary, artistic and historical significance beyond my meager knowledge of it. But what is most important to me is that it is there for people to enjoy. It is free and no more than a few yards from the front door. Why? Because when this painting came up for sale at auction the trustees of the National Gallery bought it for \$5 million and then hung for anyone who wanted to come by and have a look. Never mind 15 per cent unemployment at the time, starving children in Africa and pressing need for medical research. A few people, with discretion over considerable financial resources used the funds to make available a single painting because they thought that in the long run it would be in the best cultural interests of the people of England and others who would be fortunate enough to view it.

Another example that illustrates the seeming absurdity and presumptuousness of one man and his money facing the reasoned process of government is the story of Lord Elgin and his Marbles. These are not the kind you shoot on the school yard, but rather the type that the Greeks used for telling stories. What has come to be known as the Elgin Marbles, as you may know, is a

series of marble sculptures from the Parthenon in Athens. Of course, the Greeks didn't call them the Elgins. That all came later in about 1800. Lord Elgin was pretty well fixed financially, even for those days, and somehow got himself appointed to a position of importance in the English scheme of things. He heard that the Turks, who were in charge of Athens at the time, were neglecting the Parthenon statues. There was a particularly fine set which was about 3 feet tall and ran for 500 feet around the top of the Parthenon. They were a frieze that tells in detail the story of a Greek procession in honor of one of their goddesses. In addition to just being magnificent to look at they reveal a great deal about the period during which they were done, 447-432 B.C. A long time ago, whatever you might say.

Well, Lord Elgin sailed down to Athens on official government status for the purpose of making casts of the frieze so that copies could be displayed in London. When he got there the maintenance was even worse than he had heard. The Turks apparently had more important things to do than look after the marbles and so the ancient treasure was deteriorating rapidly.

"The hell with this noise," or words to that effect said the Lord to his staff. "Let's pack up what's left of the frieze and ship it back to London." And that is what they did. They took down, crated and shipped 240 feet of the marbles to London. He did all of this not at government expense, but from his personal funds. Wanting to avoid government red tape and having the means to act with purpose and haste, he spent the equivalent of \$150,000 (remember this was nineteenth century money) out of his own pocket.

Elgin presented the whole lot to the British Museum when he returned to London and naturally asked to be reimbursed for his out of pocket expenses. He was a Lord, you know. Parliament was less than enthusiastic about his request and didn't want to pay him a schilling. After two years of hassling, the Lord settled for half of what his little act of altruism had set him back.

Today the Elgin Marbles are priceless and can be viewed free in a British Museum gallery. The room is immense. It was a gift to the people from a fellow named Lord Duveen of Milbank. Apparently, he was also filthy rich.

And if you or any of your friends are interested in postage stamp collections, there is a huge one worth millions of dollars in the London National Postal Museum. Much of it was paid for by an individual collector, one Reginald M. Phillips. Admission is free.

It is nice, I think, that some who easily could, don't take their marbles and go home.

# Sex

NO SEX PLEASE, WE'RE BRITISH, is the name of a London West End play which is in its 12th year. Obviously there is sex in England, evidenced by the fact that over 50 million people inhabit this island. True, some of them came by boat, but most by bed.

British attitudes towards sex are not so much strange, as they are off kilter. I often do a half-double take at something I read or hear on TV. For example, the English have a cinema rating system, which in part, alerts people about the sexual explicitness of movies. It goes like this:

X/8: films are for adults only (no one under 18 admitted).

A A/5: is for anyone over 14 years.

A or PG (parental guidance): is for general exhibition, but parents are advised that the film may include material not suitable for children under 15.

U: is for general exhibition.

All of the many films showing in London are dutifully rated in the daily papers and weekly entertainment guides. Movie showers and goers pay no heed, as near as I can tell.

The back cover of one of the tamest London amusement guides proclaims that for a £5 entrance fee one can join "a long established and exclusive gentleman's club with Victorian style and elegance. Ideal for business men wishing to relax with a drink or a meal and be served by our charming topless French maids." The Pinstripe Club, it calls itself, warns nonmembers to be very explicit in giving directions to cab drivers. No substitutes, please.

Towards the back of the same publication are several pages of interesting social services announcements such as:

ABBA Beautiful Brazilian masseuse. Unhurried attention, luxurious private apartment. Phone...

ABBERT Sophisticated, sweet magical massage and shower, extensive amenities, high class surroundings. Phone...

CRYSTAL Dark and lovely. A really friendly massage, centrally located. Phone...

It is not just the advertisements. Sex makes the news, as well. Today's Times, under the headline, "Ex-Civil Servant Met Transvestite," informs us that, Sir James Dunnett (he did, too) former Under-Secretary (this gets worse, as you'll see) of State at the Ministry of Defense, yesterday admitted a fleeting relationships in 1979 with a male prostitute.

"The involvement of Sir James, aged 69 (I'm not making up a thing) who originally believed the prostitute to be female, came to light after Mr. Vikki de Lambray was found by police to be in possession of two credit cards belonging to the former civil servant.

“Sir James...picked up Mr. de Lambray, believing him to be a woman in Shepherd Market (where else?)...

“It was only after Sir James had spoken to police after de Lambray’s arrest that Sir James discovered the prostitute with whom he had committed a sexual act was a man.”

Moving on down the same page, and skipping over the picture and announcement of David Frost’s marriage to Lady Fitzalan Howard, a headline assures us that Postcoital Pill Legal ‘In Emergency.’ We learn that “the morning-after pill and other methods of post-coital contraception are legal, provided they are used as an emergency measure.” The story goes on to explain, “That view is offered today by Mr. Ian Kennedy, reader in Law at King’s College.”

Might be interesting to hear a discussion regarding the definition of emergency between the Irishman and whomever he romps about with.

I don’t know what to think about all of this. But I’m certainly going to avoid movies, The Pinstripe Club, Civil Service agencies and Shepard Market while I’m over here. Science proved long ago that one of the most effective ways to avoid emergencies is to run a lot. If you’ll excuse me, a little mid afternoon jog sounds good...and safe.

# The Haircut

If I were to say that one of my more notable events on the following Friday was getting a haircut, you would probably conclude that I was at a loss for a topic. That is not true, because on that Friday, for the first time in my then 52 years, I had my hair 'styled.' It all happened before I knew what was going on.

This haircut was not a big deal, until I began looking for a barber shop. That was about 3 weeks prior. Casually, at first, just checking out the neighborhood on the way to the underground. Then, as I realized I had not spotted a barber shop, with a little more attention. I found salons, hairdressers, trichologists, hair stylists, hair studios, hair artists, hair designers and a place called Roots Hair. I hurried right by that one. But not a barber shop in sight. It was clear that all of these hairy places did women, but where could you buy just a plain, regular, man's haircut?

On a walk to the Xerox copy shop that Friday morning, I found myself on a short lane just off Oxford Street behind Selfridges, the department store, smack dab in front of the Unisex Hair Dressers. Persistence had paid off again! Let's get it over with, I thought, and with that went in and asked the receptionist if they cut men's hair? Yes, they dress both women's and men's hair. I tried to explain that I was not interested in having my hair dressed; just cut. It is too long and needs to be shortened, I explained, needlessly going into detail about being a foreigner not having a hair cut for eight weeks. I was informed that sometime after 4:30 p.m. they might work me in. I shot a quick look around the place, which had a lady smell to it, and got a glimpse of some guys under hair dryers reading magazines. Smiling, I backed out, pulling the door shut behind me. Lost my courage; simple as that.

It was about one mile from the Unisex salon to my flat, and as I completed just over half of the distance, walking along back streets and enjoying exploring, I rounded a corner and faced another hair dressing establishment. I could see through the window into this small salon. There sat a man getting his hair cut. In I went, quick as a duck's ass.

"I would like a hair cut," I said to the young woman at the reception desk. Before she could answer, a dark complexioned guy appears from nowhere, and announced that a styling would be £6. "Man," I'm afraid I said, "can I just get a plain haircut?" I went on to explain that my hair was too long and the I wanted it cut to look about like this, holding up my Oregon driver's license picture. He studied it carefully, if momentarily, and smiled reassuringly.

"You want an shampoo and a styling," he stated.

"No," I pleaded, "just a hair cut."

"But I must at least wet it. It is for your sake," he explained. "It is better that way."

"Okay," I surrendered, "but no styling. Just a hair cut."

Immediately the tension which had been building in the salon lessened. The receptionist took my coat, and then helped me into a white cotton garment, the likes of which I have seen only in hospitals. More than a sheet, but less than a gown. She sat me down in an old swivel desk chair and stuffed a dirty brown Turkish hand towel between the back of my neck and shirt collar. With a flourish, the maestro (the guy with the £6 announcement) reappeared and took over. He soaked my head with water from a squirt bottle and began 30 minutes of cutting and snipping and putting long clothes pins in my hair. Wet blobs of hair fell all over me and the surrounding area. During all of this, the receptionists sat and stared at me, sometimes smiling, mostly just looking. I could tell that we were nearing the end of the symphony when the assistant approached us with a brush and dustpan in hand. Just then the maestro performed his final flourish with his air blower and brush, stood back, bowed, held up the rear view mirror and asked if it was satisfactory? I said sure, it was nice, having absolutely no alternative response readily in mind. I mean, what can one say to such a question? He quietly disappeared. The assistant swept up the hair droppings, and then took the cloak like garment off of me.

It hadn't been as bad as I had feared. Now to pay. I had only a £5 note and three or four twenties. The shop had no change, the constant condition that haunts small businesses in London (and all the rest of the British Isles, for that matter). Fortunately, a friend of the maestros's comes into the shop and to the rescue (a plant?) with change. After leaving a generous tip from a twenty, I stopped in front of the wall mirror and took the first really good look at myself since arriving. My God! I really looked different than when I came into the shop. It was a new me looking back from the mirror. My hair was swept back on the sides, the hair itself seemed more coarse and for the first time since I was a small boy, I had a part in my hair.

I looked like something you would find on the back porch at Brideshead. God, I had been styled!

# Size

It is a known fact that countries can be classified according to the general size of things. Thus, it won't come as a surprise that the United States is a big country. Big houses, big automobiles, big dams, big meals, big mamas, and so forth. Germany and France, by the same token, are middle size countries. That's after giving the Rhine due consideration, too. You might think that Switzerland is a small country, but it is not. It is medium-small, thanks to the Alps. Austria is small-medium for the same reason, but not so much so.

England is definitely a small country. Except for a big clock and an ocean liner, almost everything in England is small. The houses are small, and that's not such a bad thing. It encourages careful use of space. A guy in a flat three doors down from me remodeled the other week. I watched the project progress. It amounted to closing in a 2x2 foot space in front of his ground floor door. To enter his place, you descend a set of stairs from the front side walk. There, a door opens into his basement digs. By hanging a new door at a 90-degree angle to the existing door, he creates a 2x2 foot area. As I figure it, just enough space for the new door to open. Somehow, though, I think that this was a significant increase in the size of his house. He probably rose about 10 status points in the neighborhood.

Food and drink are small, too. There now are supermarkets in England, but not designed to cater to large numbers of shoppers (small, you're getting the idea). There are no shopping carts...no need for them, because every one buys small. Just little wire carrying baskets. The check out stands are small. You're got to be pretty quick on your feet if you have more than a few items.

The drill goes about like this. As your place comes up in the queue in front of the cash register person, you place your basket on a 12-inch square, sunken counter. The checker begins removing items from the basket, ringing them up, placing them on the counter, just beyond the sunken area. In the middle of this routine you are asked something like "wannacarinbag". That means, "would you like to purchase a plastic carrying bag for your purchases?" My first time around, I smiled, and said no thanks, indicating that a paper bag would be fine. The checker literally stopped and stared at me, and everyone in the queue became quiet. Then, she pulled a really scanty little plastic sack, I mean I could tell you what it wouldn't hold, out of a box and handed it to me.

You do the best you can, and soon learn that you are supposed to load your carrying bag as the checker rings off each item. If you don't, the person behind you gets irritated and mutters something about rich Americans and we just about had the Germans beat anyway.

Drink is also small here. A half-pint of beer hardly whets the whistle. The standard whiskey measure is so small that people who order triples are considered light drinkers. Toilet paper comes only by the twos and frozen veggies by the serving. "Fill it up, please" at a petrol station gets you nothing but a funny look.

But, as I said, the houses are what really qualify England for small. Somehow the application of electricity to kitchen appliances passed England by. English telephones are electric, but they are not up to world standards, either. A historian friend told me that the reason that the British telephone system is so far behind the rest of the world is that when Alex Bell offered his prototype, those in charge here thought that it would be terribly inconvenient to have that bell jangling all hours of the day and night, and so ignored telephones for 25 years, thus giving them a poor start in telecommunications. I don't really know, but that's what he said.

Well the situation has gotten to the point where a small 'fitted' kitchen or bathroom (or whatever they call the latter) is the dream of every young English couple. I heard a young couple talking on the underground train the other night, and they were discussing this. She was American or Canadian, and she asked him, "Reggy, just what is a fitted kitchen?" "It's just what I'd give my balls for," he answered, expressively. "It's like you know, where everything matches. Not bits and pieces. Counters at the same level as the cooker, a fridge with a freezer, cupboards instead of shelves. You know, a real fitted kitchen." She smiled, and said that she did.

Bathrooms may be the smallest things here. Mine is so small that I must retrieve the toilet paper before. Bath tubs are usually very short. And then there is always a wire shelf placed across the tub for holding...soap? I've never been sure, but the effect is to use up about four inches of the already precious tub space. Once, while residing in a hotel for a few days, I revolted, and removed this damn contraption, storing it in the closet. I did this each evening, and the maid replaced it each morning according to my observations. I think that while the men in England run to national characters, and thus are on the smallish side, women do not. There are a lot of tall women in London, maybe they are more active than the men. The English shopping routine is designed to get them out for daily excursions which must promote growth and health. I mean, compare that to men sitting around in pubs for two-hour business lunches day after day. Bound to develop the body.

The real test of this contention about size may be in basic nature itself. There is support here. Even the flies are smaller in London. Really! Gentler, quicker, maybe even cleaner, but definitely smaller.

# Travel Tips

Travel books must be difficult things to keep up to date, and the people who try are to be complimented. Hotels burn down, chefs become disillusioned, carpets wear out, staff get sloppy, all of those things over which the travel book author has no control. So travel book authors and publishers are to be forgiven for errors of time and circumstance, and encouraged to maintain their monitors around the world. That, in fact, is why their books are over priced. Perhaps, like the old four-gas-stations-on-a-corner syndrome, the multiplicity of travel books will also succumb to those few who really do provide superior service.

In case any travel book author should take me seriously, I do have one recommendation which could put you in front of the pack from the start. It is simple. Emphasize the basics. These diagrams of art galleries and museums are fine, but not basic. Besides, they keep changing them. Restaurant ratings are okay too, but who really cares? Travel authors are on expense accounts, which I find always makes food taste different.

No, focus on the basics of survival in foreign lands and you'll have a winner. For example, if I were to get into the competition, which I'm not, here are some absolutely essential things which the first time traveler to London should know, but none of the which I've every seen in a travel book about London.

First, in London automobiles have the right of way. That is true. Definitely true, as Michael Caine would say. There is no question about that. Londoners drive very fast. So when you want to cross a street, you search out an orange and white 'Zebra Crossing.' Then, you wait patiently until a well trained orange and white zebra gives you the nod, and walks you to the opposite side.

Second, be very careful about ordering pub food. Many London pubs serve lunch from about noon until 2:30 p.m. Some of them include food. Pubs are very crowded during these hours and nine out of ten people in pubs smoke. It is apparently poor sport to open the doors or windows, and there is a national safety regulation prohibiting air conditioning in public houses. Usually the only people you will find eating lunch in pubs are tourists, who read about pub lunches. All the locals stand about consuming large glasses of dark beer and ale. Normally, you can't find a seat in pubs. Sometimes not even bar space for your plate. What you do is go to the nearest 2x4 table which probably has 7 or 8 patrons crowded around it, smile, say something like "thanks Mate," and shove your plate onto a corner of the table. Then gradually push it forward, expand your elbows, spill some food, and before you know it you'll have claimed the largest share of the table. At least that is the way the English seem to do it. Also, watch out for pubs which have microwave ovens. To a pub owner, having a microwave oven is license to reheat anything left over during the previous fortnight.

The best suggestion I have is to get right in there and drink the dark stuff. if you are hungry, order a pack of peanuts, the better pubs stock both salted and natural roasted.

Third, carry lots of change. There is a law which prohibits London retailers to make change for you unless you actually do some business with them. Because most small businesses begin the day with no change at all, this means trouble when it is early morning and you have only bills. One problem is that the coin with the largest circulation is about the size of a half dollar, and twice as thick. It is worth about 15 cents. European men who visit London know this, and that is why they all carry little handbags, just like the ladies do. There are no exceptions to this making change business. Once, when I needed change to operate a photo machine, I asked the clerk in the photo store next door (which owned the machine) if she would give me change for the photo machine. She said, “no.” Oh.

Fourth, be careful of loos. Loo is the British word for toilet, WC or what they amusingly point to as what Americans call ‘the bathroom.’ Right they are, but whatever we call it, we also heat it. They don’t. There must be a British law against heating loos. So when you go to the loo while in a restaurant, take a sweater, or even a coat. Be selective, and plan ahead. This applies to all classes of establishments. Pubs are the worst. Gents is usually out the back door, across a junk ridden yard, and into a sometimes lit outhouse. In high class places, you go out of a nice, friendly, warm dining room into a bleak, cold, damp loo, isolated from the rest of the building. Determining how this is accomplished so universally would make an instructive M.A. thesis in architecture.

Fifth, telly times (TV schedules) are not symmetrical. Because the main criterion for scheduling TV programs in England is the actual length of the programs, they begin at odd times. Americans are reported to believe that the Bible states that TV programs must be done in multiples of 15 minutes. That is an untruth. What the English Bible actually states is go until your tube as you can tolerate it. Thus, news may be at 5.19 (they use periods, not colons) and The Cecil Breckbridge-Smythe show may start at 7.1 (they also don’t waste zeros).

Seventh, in case you bring or acquire a dog, you should know that the British have a rule about dogs not fouling the walks. They post signs to this effect throughout the streets and parks of London, noting the fine which will be assessed to owners of any law breaking dogs. This illustrates an interesting aspect of the law, that of enforcement. As near as I can tell from the evidence, London dogs poop where they please; all over walks, streets and public parks. It’s not their fault, since most of them can’t read. In spite of the signs posting the rules, I once saw a London policeman stand by and watch a very large dog, which was attached to its owner by a leash, poop right in the middle of a busy walkway, and didn’t even flinch (the policeman). The message to the owner of the pooping dog seemed clear, in spite of the law.

Eighth, the real problem to the newcomer to London is unstated customs. Not the kind at the border, but those that govern social behavior. Not understanding these can lead to a great deal of embarrassment or personal inconvenience. Customs regarding behavior in public places is a good example. Not long ago I had dinner in a reasonably high class London restaurant in the National Theatre. The place offered only one choice for dinner (well, you could choose not to eat), so I felt reasonably safe. Difficult to muck it up here, I predicted. To be double sure, I confirmed the

routine with the waitress, “That’s right,” she said, “when you’re ready, just go to the serving area, chose the cut of meat that you prefer, and the meat carver will serve you.”

“What about the salad bar,” I asked. “Is it okay to stop by that on the way to the meat carver? Okay to put the salad on my plate?”

“Certainly sir,” she replied.

Thus, I soon approached the white uniformed, silver buttoned, chef’s hatted, effeminate, commanding meat server with my plate in hand, having stopped along the way to acquire a small salad. His initial reaction to what I was presenting him would seemed to have been appropriate only had I peed in my soup or done something equally bizarre. It was clear now that the plate should have been presented to him virgin clean. The stop at the salad bar had totally exposed my lower class upbringing.

Eventually he recovered, ordered me to put the plate down, and managed to serve what I quietly requested. As I slunk back to my table, I knew so well that this could have been avoided had I just understood the salad custom. So don’t ask questions. Instead, observe how your peers act and take heed.

That only scratches the surface, but these are the kinds of insight that make travelers out of tourists. Travel books ought to pay more attention to the basics. You can discover the artsy stuff on your own.

# Rules

Everyone knows that we live by lots and lots of rules. You may not like some and I may not like others, but we all understand that rules exist. Rules range from those we proclaim as laws of the land to subtle innuendos communicated with a raised brow or a particular tone of voice. Behavior which breaks or violates rules often has unpleasant consequences. With regard to our big rules, that is laws, these are made very explicit and we are expected to know them. You remember, ignorance of the law and so forth. There are other rules about which those in charge post constant reminders but which receive less respect. We experience these every day: Wet Paint, Men, Women, Shirts and Shoes Required, Credit Cards Not Accepted, Please Don't Cross The Tracks (they are difficult to straighten).

There is a particular kind of situation involving rules that can be extremely frustrating. These involve written rules, take place within the context of government organizations and thus inevitably require interactions with civil servants, some of whom are neither. We all get ourselves into such situation at one time or another. In a can-you-top-this contest regarding rules, I would offer the following for openers.

I planned to return to American eventually by continuing my around the world itinerary which included a stop over in India and so my task for this particular day was to begin the process of obtaining an Indian visa for my American passport. Basically, a visa consists of a rubber stamped message on a page of one's passport, initialed by some nameless official. Simple? Well nevertheless I proceeded with caution, this being one of those situations about which the rules were not totally clear, even though I had read up on them and the related procedures.

Day One: Go to the India House in the center of London where the person at the main reception desk directed me to The High Commission of India. The High Commission was located outside the main entrance to India House, around the corner to the back of the building. One entered the clearly marked door, goes down a flight of stairs, then back up and around a corner to a window labeled visas, without the expected queue. Very Good!

Ah, but not so fast. The fellow behind the bars of the visa window explains that visa business is transacted only between the hours of 9:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.. Somewhat of a surprise because I had telephoned earlier inquiring about procedures (rules) and was told to come any time between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. It was then 2:00 p.m. Determined to be patient, aloof and remain an observer who could learn from this experience, I asked for a visa application form. He, the fellow behind the visa bars, informed me that he didn't deal in the form distribution component of the process. That was the function of the lady at the forms desk located some distance from the building entrance. That nice lady provided me with Form V and instructed me to return on Monday with the form completed plus £1, 5 pence and three photographs of myself. Never mind the size of the pictures, she added, the machine takes care of it.

Day Two: Completing Form V in the privacy of my own flat was interesting. Form V was an official document, apparently composed on an older model typewriter and reproduced on an even older mimeograph machine. Form V had many typographical errors, omissions, and requests for information such as my grandparent's nationality. Item "14. OBJECTION (sic) OF JOURNEY" instructs that words such as "visit" and "business" are not sufficient. I completed Form V very carefully.

On my return trip to the High Commission I located a photo booth in a tube stop and created three copies of a photo in color. Because the fellow behind the visa bars said that my passport would be kept in the High Commission's possession for several days, I found a copy shop and had a copy made of that document. (I may not know the rules, but I can make inferences!)

Ah, ready at last and so back to India House, through the High Commission back door, down and up the steps and straight to the rear end of a queue facing the visa window. The same fellow from my former visit was behind the bars. In addition to his responsibilities for receiving visa applications, he is also the person mainly in charge of responding to telephone inquiries. As is often the case, as you also may have observed, these somehow take priority over the business to be done with people who present themselves in person. But the cool, patient observer of the human scene I remained.

Finally, it was my turn. The man behind the visa bars took my Form V and gave it a general inspection. I inquired once again (motivated, I'm sure, by fear for the fate of my passport) if it necessary to have a visa for a six or seven day visit to India. I thought that he replied that it was necessary, but our approaches to spoken English were sufficiently different that I was not absolutely sure.

After the cursory inspection of Form V, he placed the three photos more or less over the upper right hand corner of Form V and drove a large staple square through the middle of my face, making the photos nearly unrecognizable. A few seconds passed while his fingers wandered through my passport and I waited to pay my fee. Then, a dim light of awareness began to appear in the depths of his eyes. He looked at my Form V again and asked when I would visit India? Was it to be in May? I confirmed that was correct, deciding that to remind him that we discussed that fact on day one would not strengthen our growing relationship.

"Then no visa required," he informs me, shoving the passport, Form V and the three pictures under the bar and back to me. "No visa required after March 15. You get a visitor's permit when you arrive in Delhi."

Giggling is inappropriate for a grown man, but that is what I did as I swept the documents into my case and hurried down and up the stairs and out the back door of the High Commission of India. But, I felt good about all of this. Not only did I have a better understanding of the rules, but also a completed Form V and 3 photos. Actually, that was not correct. I understood the old rules, and was prepared to obey them should the High Commission ever reinstate them.

# Rules: P.S.

I enjoy Germany very much and decided to stop over in Frankfurt on my journey from London to Delhi. As it turned out, it was a very rainy weekend and a national Monday holiday. Thus I especially enjoyed a run or two, several long walks and hanging around the bar of the Frankfurt Intercontinental Hotel, pretending to be a secret agent gathering intelligence. I should have done just that, as circumstances developed, but how was I to know? On one of my walks I rounded a corner and found myself in front of the Frankfurt India House. A small bronze sign on the corner of the converted older grey stone home pointed to the rear of the building and read High Commission of India. I smiled, knowingly, glad that all of that was behind me.

The Frankfurt Lufthaven was several kilometers from the city center so I decided to splurge and take a cab the next day instead of the airport bus. It was a 20 minute trip and cost the equivalent of \$20 in those days. I arrived at the Lufthansa departure gate about 9:25 a.m. having enjoyed being chauffeured in the big Mercedes-Benz machine. My flight was scheduled to leave at 11:00 a.m. The lines were short in front of both Pan American stations designated for the long Delhi flight. I drew a cheerful red headed agent whose English was excellent. "Learned a lot of it in the U.S.," he informed me. With no one else in line we had a pleasant conversation as he leisurely sorted through my ticket envelope, tearing and stamping and getting me an aisle seat via his computer terminal.

Finished with the check-in procedure, he smiled and began to hand back my ticket envelope when he paused, took it back and said that just for the record he should check my India visa.

Following a moment or two of absolute silence, I stuttered something about not needing a visa after March 15, and knew this to be true because I had conferred with the India High Commission in London a couple months prior. He smiled and remained pleasant, but it was clear that our relationship had degenerated to something of a much formal nature. He was now an Enforcer of International Travel Regulations and I a violator of same.

He did acknowledge that it was true that India announced that it was waiving visa requirements for Americans, but then in its infinite wisdom, the High Commission reversed itself. My self assured suggestion that I could work this out in Delhi was a waste of words.

No Visie, No Tripie!

How about some help from Air India, I begged. They must have an office at the airport.

Nope. More words wasted. Only the High Commission of India could produce the magic stamp on my passport.

Now it was 9:45 a.m. and the Pan Am flight to Delhi was on time. "Go for it!" urged Big Red, acknowledging at least in part some of our former friendship.

And so I did. The location of India House in juxtaposition to the Intercontinental Hotel became clear in my mind as I ran through the terminal toward the taxi stand. A youngish looking driver who looked as if he would have been equally comfortable at the controls of a Messerschmidt fighter plane had just unloaded a passenger and I jumped into his back seat, giving directions and pissing off taxi drivers waiting in the queue. The driver caught my sense of urgency and in spite of some harsh sounding directions to the contrary from the taxi coordinator we were off.

As we sped over the autobahn back to city center, I recalled the snail's pace action which characterized the High Commission in London and predicted that it would be even worse in Frankfurt. The English have a traditionally effective means of dealing with the Indians. Had conditions been different I would have been fascinated with observing the interaction of German efficiency and Indian bureaucracy.

We made the High Commission just after 10:00 a.m. and I was able to communicate with the driver regarding waiting. I don't know how much of the situation he understood, but wait he did.

I felt at home in the visa section, long queues, stacks of forms and slow moving, non-smiling Indians on both sides of the barred service window. With a deep breath and look of desperation on my face I offered several "excuse me's" and barged in at the front of the line. My situation was pretty simple to explain and fortunately was understood. I think the clerk behind the bars thought he had me by the short hairs as he began the "Form V and 3 Photos Lecture". But when I produced these instantaneously from my travel bag he took them, my passport, several Deutsch marks and slowly moved back into the large room full of clerks. Disappointed, obviously.

He returned in seven minutes to the widow by which I had remained very, very close and starred at me. Nothing happened. I asked if it is all okay? Apparently everything was, except the closed private door leading from the reception area bull pen. The sign on the door read High Commission. Before Punjab knew what had happened, I grabbed the passport and other papers out of his hand, walked quickly to the Door of the Gods, opened it, smiled wide at the dignified Indian Official inside behind a desk and said, "Please Sir."

"You must wait outside," he said in a firm but kindly manner, "these people are ahead of you."

"Very sorry," I apologized, "but my flight to Delhi leaves in 45 minutes and I have been misinformed about visa requirements. My paper work is complete. I just need your signature."

"But your business is more pressing," he continued taking my passport and Form V and scratching his signature on the visa.

Punjab received my most sincere look of appreciation as I raced out of the room, down the stairs and into the waiting cab where Hans sat behind the wheel. He used sign language to assure me that I understood that he was restarting the meter, noting the amount of the incoming fare. He quickly brought his Mercedes up to about 5000 feet and then vectored straight to the Airport, making a perfect landing in front of the departure entrance. Deja Vu! I overtipped him, some of it going spiritually to the H.C. crew.

Pan Am's Big Red was working a long line of departing passengers for another flight, but apparently had kept an eye out for me. He handed me my ticket envelope, cheered me on to Concourse B, Gate 36. With ten minutes to spare, I arrived at the gate, walked calmly on board to seat 24C and asked the attendant if he would please hang my coat.

I didn't appreciate how beholden I should have felt towards Big Red, the H.C., Punjab and the rest of the gang back at Frankfurt India House until I arrived at the Delhi airport at 2:00 a.m. the next day. It required over two hours to struggle through the red tape and irrelevant bureaucracy of customs and passport control. That was with visa in hand! Without it one would be in long term purgatory. Worse than hell, since there at least you know. A couple of passengers felt so strong about it that they attempted to purchase tickets on the next flight back to London in order to avoid what looked to them like a poor travel choice in the first place.

They couldn't, of course. There was a rule requiring a minimum waiting period.

# Self Talk

There was a funny thing going on in London when I lived there. Maybe it happens in all large cities but it is was not unusual to come across self-talkers in London. A lot of people talk to themselves. Out loud. In public. Privately. And that's what makes it interesting. When I worked as a psychologist, I suggested that clients learn self-talk skills. The concept isn't all that difficult to comprehend. It is essentially what it denotes, i.e., talk to yourself. Sometime it is a conversation with you and your self, you taking both roles or voices as it were.

Other times you might substitute other people whom you would like to have a conversation but for some reason can't. Perhaps they are not available or won't cooperate or are simply a creation of one's imagination. Some would view self-talk as a little crazy, others think of it as a kind of therapeutic exercise. It can also be a useful coping skill.

For example, imagine you are having dinner with a very important person and as you cut into the avocado covered with an exquisite, cream dressing the damn thing slips off your plate and lands squarely on your lap. A moment of panic and embarrassment. Self-talk to the rescue: "Funny that should happen. Bet everyone in the dining room saw that one. Look at how much they admire me and envy my cool as I scoop up the mess with my saucer and return it gracefully to its former position on the salad plate. I'll be the hero of a hundred stories tonight." You self-talked your self back to a normal state of mind.

Or, as you fail to answer questions put to you in a job interview, you could say to yourself: "That's okay, Good Person, you learned a lot from the experience. Best thing that could have happened to you. Never mind that you didn't get the job, and that you have no other options at the moment. Starving is good for building character."

That kind of self-talk can be an effective coping skill and is okay mainly because you do it silently, or at least "under your breath," as we say. However, I'm thinking about a different form of self-talk, one that is done out loud directed at no one in particular and within earshot of anyone near the talker to hear. I don't want to make too much of this but it does seem strange and I wonder about it's utility. This kind of self-talk seems mysteriously relevant to the self-talkers' being, not because I know what they are talking about, but because of the firmness and often conviction with which they say it.

Here are examples from which you might make sense of this phenomenon in the UK. I had taken a train ride to Eastbourne, a seaside resort city about an hour and a half south of London.

There is a long promenade there, running by a white washed display of Victorian ocean side hotels. On the sea side of the beach street is a well designed band stand with its back partially to the sea, encircled about two thirds around with twenty feet sheets of clear glass. The band, The Royal Regiment Something or Other, was performing it's 1:45 p.m. concert, mostly marches and

tone suites. The audience, seated on a series of 10 or 12 bleachers with the English Channel as a back drop, was sparse. Thin. There was hardly anyone there.

I listened for a while and then ambled slowly southward, enjoying the sounds of the brass band, gazing out to sea, and feeling the warm sunshine on my face. Into my line of visions came a short, slightly built man, passed 60, hunched over in his black pea coat and watch cap, and shoulder to the wind with his lips moving.

As we passed by one another slowly on the promenade his voice became clear as he asserted, "Fucking waste of a good band and something should be done about that!"

I tended to agree but he wasn't talking to me, but to himself.

Another day I was about 3 stops from my destination on the tube, when a fellow got on and took a seat close to mine. He was tall, thin, and plainly dressed. Wouldn't have given him a second look, except that he was talking to himself. Quietly, but with concern. "Right, no question about that. Must turn it all around before tomorrow night. Benny has got to help with this one. By God he has to! Benny is the only hope!" He repeated his conclusion several times and actually seemed calmer as he went on shifting the responsibility for what ever was concerning him to Ben.

Then, there was the guy in my local pub one evening who I thought was trying to strike up a conversation with me. I sat down near him with my pint and *The Times* and in a couple minutes the fellow said something like, "Good thing, that, eh?" or so I thought. I waited a moment. There was silence, so I turned my attention back to the paper. "Good thing that," I heard again. Looking left, I smiled easily, put down my paper and responded with the question, "Good thing what?" The fellow looked straight through me, stood up, and without a word walked across the room and into the gents. Five minutes passes before he returned to his post at the next table.

"Good thing, that."

God, was he to go on and on, I wondered and turned my head to the mysterious optimist and he responded with a sincere smile. No glassy eyes. Sober. Just another self-talker, no doubt. Seeing no point in continuing, I slipped on my jacket, downed the last of the pint and stood to leave. As I edged around the small pub table, I looked down towards him again and heard, "Better a good thing, that, now that I'm on my way."

Then there was the night in the highly rated Chinese restaurant on Leister Square. This tall string bean of a waiter was standing over an empty corner table set for two, pad and pencil in hand, white napkin draped over his arm, very carefully explaining the specialties of the evening. When he finished his presentation, he paused a moment, wrote something on his pad, smiled gently, and quietly retreated from the guestless table.

# The Pub

Brits and Americans have different drinking cultures, at least they did as late as the 1980s. The English, with the exception of jet-setters and trendy rich, did their public drinking in pubs. Americans do it all over the place, including neighborhood taverns, working men's taverns, beer joints, cocktail lounges, men's bars, gay bars, café bars, road houses, country cubs, college beer halls, beer parlors and wine bars. These are not just different names for the same kind of place. A logger's tavern in Idaho calls for different behavior than the Top of The Mark bar in San Francisco. Not better, just different. A neighborhood tavern in Wisconsin isn't the same as one in Alabama. It's complicated in America.

Not so in England where it is not so complex. The Brits have been at it a lot longer than Americans, and so it is understandable that they developed a much more reasonable, functional and pleasant drinking system. This is generally acknowledged by American visitors, once they accept the fact that it is difficult to buy a drink in England before noon, between 3:00 and 5:50 p.m. or after 10:30 or 11:00 at night. At least, as I say, that was the true as late as the 1980s. It has apparently loosened up a bit in more recent times.

The appeal of the English system is so great that some Americans return to the U.S. seriously wanting to open an English pub in their home towns. Such attempts at cultural transplants are never successful. The U.S. society rejects the foreign organ. One reason is the failure to understand a cornerstone of the English pub system; i.e., the institution of social class. The difference between England and America is not that one country has social classes and the other does not. Both do. The difference is that the English recognize their class system and live according to its customs, while the Americans pretend theirs doesn't exist.

Historically, the English public house was a place to conduct business, socialize, and partake of food and beverages made from grape and grain. American taverns and bars are basically drinking places where you may or may not find conversation, good cheer and food. In an English pub, one feels that you are the guest of the publican. The feeling is stronger in some pubs than others, and granted nothing is free; nevertheless a spirit of welcome and friendliness prevails in nearly all pubs and you know that after you have departed the publican and his family will stay on. Even if the pub does not contain the family living quarters (which many do) it still has a homey quality. Most American bars lack such cordiality.

The English system is much more sensitive and accommodating to social class mores. In England nearly all pubs have two bars and larger pubs may have three. In the classic design, they are in separate rooms but served by a single long counter (bar) that runs through the separate rooms from the server's side. Each room is self contained (i.e., duplicate dispensing equipment, inventories and supplies) and each has its own entrance, sometime off a common hall and sometimes from the street.

The first room, or public bar, is for working class patrons. No rugs, curtains, pictures or other needless frills, but always a dart board. That is absolutely essential, darts being a national past time of working class Brit males. The next room is the lounge bar where men may bring their wives, girls friends and even their mothers, or for that matter females are welcome without male companions. It is also the place where business and professional people might meet for lunch or dinner or stop after work for a half pint, glass of wine or a gill or two of spirits. After dinner, you could drop in for conversation and a drink with other neighborhood "regulars.". The lounge bar looks very much like a family living room with the addition of the actual stand up drinking bar. There is a variety of comfortable chairs, small tables, lamps and always a fireplace. The publican may also display photos of his family, mementos of his military service and other personal and family items. Or, as in many larger city pubs and larger country establishments, there are grand and elaborate displays of copper, brass, swords, medals, and other artifacts dear to the publican. In large pubs, the long counter may extend into a third room which is also a proper restaurant. There the main purpose is more less formal dining, but a half pint or glass of sherry is never out of sight.

The publican, often with his wife and another server or two, remain behind the counter, moving through the bars tending equally well to all guests. It is not unusual to observe them make subtle changes in language and vary topics of conversation as they move back and forth among people from the several social classes present in the three rooms.

If you have been to a few pubs, you will recognize the foregoing description as a caricature, but more often true than not. Traditionally, pubs open about noon and close around 2:30 p.m. They open again between 5:00 and 5:30 p.m. and close somewhere near 11:00 p.m., the precise time being a function of when they open for evening hours, the local closing time ordinance and the night of the week. Some pubs are quiet, some buzz with conversation and others roar with talk and laughter. Beer, wine and strange sour beverages are the rule, with gin and Scotch available in thimble-like portions measured by the gill. What happens at 10:30 or 11:00 p.m. when the publican rings the "drinking up" bell? Well, people drink up and go home. What else? The evening if over.

Most pub going Brits have a local or neighborhood pub that they frequent on a more or less regular basis.

I was fortunate for a time to have been granted the status as a "reg'lar" by a charming couple named Fred and Joy who operated the Windsor Castle Pub.

I had, I suppose without thinking about it, always entered the Windsor Castle through the lounge bar door. One cold and very rainy evening, I peered through the leaded glass window of the lounge bar door and discovered the room to be very crowded. In addition to an unusually large number of patrons, there were wet overcoats and umbrellas dripping and steaming all over the place.

I could also see that The Windsor Castle's public bar, in contrast was half empty that evening, so I chose it as the more pleasant place to have a half pint. I had no sooner entered the door of

the public bar and placed my foot on the rail, when Joy entered from the saloon bar side of the counter, gave me a perturbed look, leaned over the counter and announced in a quiet, but oh so firm voice, that I should be in the lounge bar, and would I please go there now. I felt as if I were a young school boy being reprimanded from mistakenly entering the girl's loo.

There was no question in my mind about what I should do. I hurriedly grabbed my rain coat and cap, exited the public bar, walked the twenty feet in the rain to the lounge bar door and entered. There, behind the counter, stood Joy, smiling warmly and making a special effort to see that I had a spot along the crowded bar counter.

"Now that's better, isn't it Professor," she proclaimed, "and will it be the usual this evening?"

That's class!

# Booking a Trip

I hate old saws, but sometimes absence does make the heart grow fonder. That's certainly what it's done to my affections for my travel agents. I knew all along that Sara and Lynn were a competent, coordinated, efficient pair, and that they are a pleasure to work with. What I realize now, after 3 eye-opening days of attempting to do what the British refer to euphemistically as 'booking your trip,' is that I am shamefully guilty of taking these two helpful people and their efficient agency for granted.

This tale of newfound awareness begins with my quasi acceptance of the fact that I would eventually have to complete travel arrangements for the remainder of what Pan American calls its special Round The World ticket. (What's special about it, by the way, is that they offer a grand total of two possible stop over cities between London and Delhi, charming Karachi being one. But that's another story.)

Even residential neighborhoods near the center of London are loaded with travel agencies. Having noticed that, I assumed that firming up actual departure dates and times and reserving hotel rooms for the trip home would be simple. After all, I could see that all of these agencies had computer terminals, so they must be plugged into the world's major travel systems.

So, I had built up a mental directory of agencies which could solve my travel problems. Early last week, as I left the green grocer, I found myself entering the Fiesta Travel Agency next door. A nice looking young woman asked if she could help, and I made my request. She smiled even broader, and said that if I would sit down, she would get someone whose English was better. She did, and I learned that Fiesta's service is limited to selling Spanish tours, mostly to Spaniards. Now that I was into it, I went down to the next corner to the Golden Horn, Limited. They were, as their name suggests. No link with the major air lines. A little frustrating, but no big problem because there were plenty more on my list. Jetways and High Society were both within a block.

Two stops later, and I was discouraged. Jetways featured cheap trips to Portugal, and High Society's real specialities are theatre tickets, luggage, and local bus tours.

Enough of that. Falling back on my scientific training, I mounted a double-pronged approach to solving the problem. I would go to official government tourist offices for information and suggestions, and to the Pan Am office on Piccadilly for the paper work.

The official tourist offices in London, which are maintained by many countries, seem to be staffed by two kinds of people, men and women. I don't want to appear sexist, but there is a pattern here. One type of man wears almost matching dark coat and pants, never sits down, and frequently disappears into back rooms. These kind are always found in offices with at least two women, and try to give the impression that they are really in charge. They may be, but their knowledge of travel is limited. After fumbling about in a cupboard, looking for a brochure, they usually half turn to one of the women, who have all the while been hypnotically staring out the

window or at the opposite wall. From out of nowhere, seemingly, she produces three brochures and a list of hotels. He hands these to you, smiles weakly, and before you can ask for suggestions, disappears again into the back room. The two women, in the meantime, have gone back into their trances. There is not a sound or movement. The only decent thing to do is mutter thank you very much, take your brochures and leave.

The other type of man is dressed in IBM blue, wears a crisp white shirt and a tie with some emblem suggesting the name of the country which he represents. They always come in twos or threes, and never stand up. There are absolutely no female staff members in their offices. They have hundreds of brochures, maps, booklets, charts, posters, and flyers. Each is about a specific city, lake, river, mountain, hotel or tour. The materials are compulsively organized on racks, stands, and open faced pigeon holed cabinets. These agents meet you with a big smile and an engaging accent, and before you finish your request they begin pulling materials faster than the human eye can follow. I left one place with over 25 brochures, and all I wanted was a train schedule from Bonn to Berlin.

An exception to this was the quiet, smiling, diplomatic (I would like to say inscrutable, but won't) gentlemen at the China Tourist Office. He listened carefully as I tried to explain my interest in a short visit to his country, then smiled, and permitted several moments of silence to settle in the room. Yes, he could help me with my problem. He disappeared into the basement and returned with a printed list of do's and don'ts, and how to's about visiting China. I thanked him, and asked if he might have suggestions regarding where I might visit. Another few settling moments of silence, and he said again that, yes, he could help with my problem. The disappearing act was repeated, and up he comes with a single brochure with answers all of my questions. No more, no less.

After making the rounds of eight or nine national tourist offices, I return to my room with a box full of mostly four color prints of mountains, hotels, and people in quaint costumes. Three hours later I had retrieved the names of hotels and identified a couple of interesting side trips.

With this information, my open ticket, and credit cards in hand I arrive at the London Pan Am office about 11:45 a.m. I should also mention that I had stopped at three other airlines and acquired specific information on their special fares.

An agent was assigned to me, and it was clear from the start that she was effective, efficient, and helpful. In the first place, all of the information from the other three international carriers was wrong. Was she sure of that? It took her only three phone calls to confirm her position, and learn that in most cases the fares quoted to me were about half of actual costs. So much for that.

Then she shot down about half of the flights I had identified in various schedules. Some had been changed an hour or two in a couple of cases, and the days altered in others. Following each step of her effort, she would push a button, and announce that a print out was ready, walk to a back room to return with a typed listing of the arrangements just made. This all took longer than I expected. So, at about 1:45 p.m., when she finished confirming all of the flight details, I hesitantly asked if she could help with hotel reservations. Certainly, why didn't I pop by

tomorrow morning about 10. She was hungry now, and wanted to eat lunch. Would later this afternoon be acceptable, I inquired in my most charming way? She thought that 4 p.m. would be nice. It was, and by 4:10 it was done. Except for a hotel reservation in Athens, which it would be more appropriate for British Airways to make, she suggested. Their Regent's street office is just five minutes from here.

The uniformed, white haired receptionist at the BA office looked as if he could have been Alistair Cooke's brother. He is afraid that there will be a 30-minute wait for an agent. He was right; the place was jammed. But, if I would just pick up the phone on the counter there, and dial 5, someone would help me immediately. Ten minutes later I'm still getting the busy signal, so I slip out the door and catch the tube to BA's Oxford street store, predicting that it will be less busy. Hooray! I get sent to position 7 right off. A friendly agent greets me, understands my request, and suggests that the hotel I have in mind is expensive. Nice, but too expensive. I wasn't dressed too shabbily, but for whatever reason, she thought I was out of my price range.

I thanked her for her concern, and somehow felt compelled to explain my travel guideline about when you are uncertain always stay in a top hotel your first night in a strange city. I wasn't half way through this little spiel before being sorry I had started it. No, much too expensive, she insisted. How about the Acropolis Plaza, good value for the money. I could see no polite way out except to let her consummate this deal. She did, because British Airways just called to say that the reservation had been confirmed from Athens. The only thing left for me to do now is to phone the hotel I had in mind in the first place and make my own reservation. I should probably also let BA know what I'm doing, so that's at least one more phone call.

One thing is certain: it'll be a damn cold day in Athens before I request any changes in my itinerary. Come to think of it, I'll bet Sara and Lynn would drink to that!

# Embassies

If you do much foreign traveling, or more to the point, especially if you don't, in the back of your mind you probably know that in the event of unanticipated, dire circumstances, you can count on the U.S. Embassy. We know it is there, because it makes the national news from time to time. Like the hostages in Iran, and then the U.S. Embassy in England was concerned during the Falkland Island crisis because the U.S. Ambassador wouldn't come back from a Florida trip.

I'm no different than anyone else who travels, because I count on the U.S. Embassy, too. What is interesting to me is my proclivity for stumbling upon U.S. Embassy buildings. What that really means, is that usually I can't afford to stay near city centers. I take up in lesser hotels located away from the hub of commerce, government, and everything else. That's the same place where the U.S. Embassy is usually located.

The first time I stayed overnight in London this happened to me. I got a cheap little room in a nondescript hotel. The hotel is an excellent example of 1950 English tacky elegance, decorated in used British Rail carpet, Marks and Spencer curtains, and bank night crystal. I chose it because on the map it was near Grosvenor Street, and I remembered that someone in that family had something to do with the National Geographic magazine, and that couldn't make it all bad. It could even mean class!

After settling in, I decided to fight the jet lag with a little exercise. As I rounded the first corner of my early morning jog, I hit Grosvenor Street, and soon saw a building so much larger than anything else in the neighborhood that it had to be the U.S. Embassy. I mean to say that I actually knew this before I saw the flag. I circled the building slowly. Each entrance was laden with closed signs, instructing those interested in entering to move on to the next entrance. I passed three before encountering one with a Marine guard contingent and a list of discouraging regulations. At least they would have been for anyone seeking entrance. I felt sorry for such people, but other than that, didn't give it a second thought.

Last August it happened again. My partner and I were taking a tourist's look at Vienna following a working trip in Africa. After several 45-minute treks from the city center mall back to our hotel, she raised a question and then expressed an opinionated comment regarding the lengthy distance between the heart of the city and our modest rooms. One late afternoon, searching for a means of avoiding a discussion of the issue which was verging on an evaluation of my character (the word cheap began appearing with increasing frequency), I maneuvered us over one block to a street which paralleled our usual route.

Sure enough, after walking up a slight hill and around a bend in the road, we spotted several large U.S. cars. Shortly, we were across the street from a large mansion, with bars on the windows, a barricade and two marines in the driveway, the stars and stripes on the roof, and the usual warning signs nailed to the front entrance. In the short time we were passing, several important looking thirtyish men, each with stylish hair, dressed in grayish suits, carrying smallish

attache cases, exited. Each, in turn, was met by a driver in an army green, 1974, 4-door Chevrolet. A lot easier out than in, I observed. That conversation never really got off the ground, because suddenly we were at the side entrance to our hotel. It had happened again.

It's not statistical coincidence. Nor sir. Only last June I was in Delhi, and as the temperature approached 105, I decided to test the mad dogs and Englishmen theorem and set off for a short stroll. Within minutes I discovered that my hotel was adjacent to Embassy Enclave. After traveling only a couple more blocks, there stood the largest embassy building of all. Right, you've got it! Happened again.

I was both surprised, and as you can imagine, emotionally moved. I tried to engage the Indian guard in good natured small talk about checking up on my home away from home in India, but he didn't speak English. He was friendly, though, and laid his bayoneted rifle on the ground so as to have both hands free for sign language. That brought a warm and friendly feeling, but not much information. The latter was provided by a fat Indian supervising guard who shouted, "Reception, reception," as he pointed at the main gate.

Looking towards the padlocked main gate which so beautifully frames the embassy building, the manicured gardens, and the star spangled banner waving in the breeze, there was, sure enough a button with a sign stating Reception. Having gotten this far into it, retreating seemed more difficult than carrying on, so I approached the reception button and pushed. In response, or so I thought, another non-English speaking Indian approached me, looked at my camera and shouted, "No pictures, no pictures, security, security." Nice title for an Xavier Cugat tune, but I got the message. But aside from that, it was clear that he wasn't responding to my buzz, but rather to an official car honking its way off of the grounds. He finished a short walk to the gate, laid down his rifle, selected a key from his chain, unlocked the padlock and unwound the link chain which secured the main gate to the U.S. Embassy in India.

A minute or two later, as I stood across the street photographing the Embassy and all those coming and going, I felt even more safe and secure.

There are exceptions to every rule, and this one is no exception. The only time that I really needed the services of the U.S. Embassy, it was located miles from my hotel. But this serves me right because it was one of the rare occasions when I stayed in the center of the city.

Dublin was the city, and it was there that I really learned how useful and responsive to U.S. citizens in trouble that our embassy can be. I was doing a two day seminar at University College, and had invited my sister, who was visiting in London, to come along. We checked into a first class hotel, took an afternoon stroll, returned to the hotel, and then went down to the lobby and ordered drinks. About five minutes later, one of us looked down and discovered that her purse was missing from beside her chair. It had been stolen, and contained her travelers cheques, cash, a diamond ring put there for safe keeping during our walk, and of course her U.S. passport. The shock, despair, anger and frustration were enormous. But, being rational types, and myself the seasoned traveler, we regained our composure and focused on the really critical aspect of the

problem, the missing passport. The solution lay inside the U.S. Embassy, but it was too late for that now. It closes at 5 p.m.

The next day began with a phone call to the embassy at 8 a.m. The immediate response from the receptionist was sympathy, and the information that if a new passport could be issued, it would require two photographs of the citizen involved. Apparently the U.S. Embassy in Dublin has no photography facility, or at least none is available for U.S. citizens with needs such as ours. Instead, we were referred to a shop in central Dublin. It was a third floor flat in a building of questionable condition, that is to say, mostly boarded up. One hour, \$25 and 2 Polaroid shots later the photos were done.

The 9 a.m. arrival, photos in hand, at the U.S. Embassy was greeted by the usual military guards, warning signs, and this time, two bullet proof security doors. The next five hours involved completing massive forms, which sought such relevant information as parents' place of birth and mother's maiden name. It also involved six different trips from the waiting room to various interview offices. The process was extended by more than an hour due to staff breaks for coffee and lunch. The U.S. Embassy realizes a good saving, incidentally, by not offering either to visiting U.S. citizens requesting services. Finally, one official, following a lengthy interview and a long explanation of Embassy policy of what can only be described as noninvolvement, produced a promissory note, the signing of which resulted in a loan to my sister of \$35; the fee for a new passport.

During all of this mini adventure, I had been off teaching at University College on the other side of Dublin. Only after the forms and \$35 were exchanged for a new passport, did my sister mention my presence in Dublin. The matter of her return to London had not been raised with the official. She would like to know, just out of curiosity, she inquired pleasantly, had her brother not been an available resource, would the Embassy have assisted with the \$100 return fare to London?

No, that would be impossible to do, the official stated. Against policy. However, the U.S. Embassy would have arranged for a return flight to Portland, Oregon, probably, via London.

Damn, you've got to be proud of the old U.S. Embassy at times like these. It's nice to have a comforting, friendly home away from home.

# The Houseboat

I'm relatively easy to satisfy as far as accommodations go. Give me your average \$110 a night room in any old Hilton, and I'm happy as a clam. Anything over \$130 and it is ecstasy. I've even been known to be pleased in a \$50 Holiday Inn room, as long as it is at least six and no more than 24 months old. Cleanliness and quietness have become my two basic criteria for judging hotels. Anything else is extra. Thick carpets, turned down toilet paper, cute little plastic bottles of shampoo, shower caps, messages taped across the toilet seat proclaiming that the pooper has been sanitized, and soap in small plastic gift boxes are all nice and add to the pleasure of one's stay, but certainly do not qualify as basic criteria for selecting a place of lodging. Air conditioned garages and a selection of in-house restaurants are also nice. But their absence is not a serious disappointment.

If cleanliness and quietness are the basis of selecting accommodations, and fluffy towels and sewing kits are the surprise, there are still some underlying assumptions that need to be met. These are so basic that we take them for granted, or at least I do. Safety and privacy are two of these. The first is pretty straight forward. A sort of go or no go consideration. Get robbed in a hotel once and safety moves from an assumption to a criterion right up there with clean and quiet; ahead of both, in fact.

Privacy is more subtle. You have a key to your room but so does half the hotel staff and who knows how many former guests. But what if there is no key to your room? Not a lost key, but no key, no key hole nor any kind of lock.

After taking leave of London and arriving at the mid point of the journey to Hong Kong, I decided that it would be interesting to include a side trip to Kashmir.

It was there, in the city of Srinagar that I had the most un-private accommodation that you can imagine. I knew that I should have known better soon after I arrived.

The cutely written travel book that had served to mislead me through Italy, Greece and Spain suggested that if you go to Srinagar, by all means stay in a houseboat instead of the local 5-star hotel. I had doubts about spending nights on the water, but then shore couldn't be too far away. So, I asked the travel agent at the Maurya Palace Sheraton in Delhi to book me into a first class houseboat. He had been there himself, he reassured me (another omen ignored). After several misadventures involving Indian air, landing at what passes as an airport in Srinagar and a death defying bus ride to the city center, I was paddled across Dal Lake in a shirka (substitute leaky canoe) to the Sheikh Palace houseboat. It was a member of the Sheikh Group of houseboats (three in all) and I could have put into the alternative vessels New Ara Bella or Young Sheikh Palace. A local rental agent was my temporary care taker.

Fortunate I was, proclaimed a letter in the main room of the Sheikh Palace. It documented the pleasant visit of one C.A. Ronning in 1957, then the High Commissioner for Canada.

According to the letter, C. A, liked the Sheik's mother, the meals and a fishing expedition, in that order. There was also a flashy eight by ten glossy shot of two guys with field rifles and about 55 dead birds, which didn't seem to fit with the houseboat, but apparently made C.A. happy.

The houseboat was a long narrow structure, starting with a front porch that served as a dock for the shirkas. The porch led to a large living room, on through a dining room, then down a passage way on the right side of the boat with two bedroom suites off to the left and right. The passage terminates at the entrance to the master bedroom suite. The two public rooms were furnished in a style that made me home sick for Cost Plus Imports.

They were so heavy with tacky oriental rugs, brass shell casings made into vases, elaborate dark handled presentation knife sets, and carved walnut tables and chairs as to threaten sinking the boat. Such a fear was unwarranted, as I soon discovered. The lake served many functions, one being a waste receptacle for a large community of houseboats, thus giving the water a thick consistency that floated the boats and most anything else, some of which one could see.

Being the only guest, I selected the master suite and looked forward to a quiet and private rest, by then having repressed any hopes regarding cleanliness. Within several minutes the local agent in charge of the Sheikh fleet introduced me to Abdul Shake who "takes care of things." Mr. Shake was pleasant, and noted that he would arrange local trips for me. Maybe, I said, suggesting that we leave such decisions until the next day. He smiled, and then settled down on the (my) tiny front porch. Next to arrive was Gulam, a friendly fellow in his early thirties. He, apparently, actually conducted the tours. The matter was not to be postponed.

Price?

"No problem, sir." Aha. That familiar international tourist phrase! After tap dancing around the front porch and smiling a lot, Gulam disappeared into the sitting room, soon to return via a narrow walk way along the outside of the boat. I could see that the walk went all the way to the rear of the craft, but not where it actually ended. Then appeared Aziz, a dark and handsome fellow of about 23, whom I predicted did most of the work on board. The time by them was 5:30 p.m. and I assumed (hoped) that the cast of characters was complete.

Not so. The minor players now began their entrances. Two shirka paddlers, a couple of scruffy young men dressed in dirty green pajamas whose responsibility apparently was to assist Aziz, plus a half dozen men ages 20 through 30 whose function remains to this day a mystery to me appeared within the next 20 minutes. All seemed to have free access to the houseboat. No knocking, no "excuse me, sir," they just appeared, usually using my houseboat as a pedestrian way to the neighboring boats.

By 7:00 p.m. several of the minor cast began extending invitations to their friends to come aboard. Finally, the never ending parade of local water hucksters began.

The author of one sickly sweet gravel book noted that, "The only flaw to a houseboat in Kashmir is that if you sit on deck, the vendors of assorted merchandise, fruits, and flowers on their small boats can become a bit of a nuisance." She ought to be whipped in the public square for that misinformation. What you actually had was a whimpering, passive-dependent extremely

tenacious bunch of hucksters of tremendously over-priced beads, braids, and other products of local child labor. Some of the rug dealers make a price distinction between rugs made by child laborers under and over 6 years of age.

When night finally fell, I moved to the sanctity of my bed room, only to discover that the walk along the side of the boat was a busy nocturnal public path. To where, was a mystery not solved until the next morning. From the roof of the Sheikh Palace, I could see a second community of houseboats behind the row of rentals in which the Sheikh was moored. These served as kitchens for the rental boats and quarters for the crowd that had welcomed itself aboard my barge, and its multifarious support group. My guests were all male, but I learned that each man had at least one wife, several children, probably a parent of two and other miscellaneous relatives and friends docked behind me. When the sun set these boat followers were free to use the only route to freedom and back which turned out to be the side passage of my vessel. It was a sort of "All night, all night Maryanne," situation.

One of Aziz's responsibilities was serving meals. For this he donned a once upon a time waiter's white coat. He would serve the rice and curry, and then stand smiling bare foot, quietly watching me eat. I've never eaten so fast in my life. Eleven minutes from main course through dessert and coffee was my usual time while on board. I felt it wrong to keep him waiting. This went on for the five days I was on board.

Privacy was impossible. Gulam dropped in irregularly, but frequently, feeling free to interrupt whatever writing or reading I was doing, and always asking how Sir liked Kashmir. One fellow appeared each morning with a large broom and beat the curtains, thus filling the boat with dust.

Odd and insensitive I must have seemed to them, but I did solve the floating huckster problem. The second evening in residence aboard the Sheikh, I waited for a peddler to paddle up to my porch. I wanted one whose English was good.

Nick the Jeweler soon arrived and he fit the bill nicely. Nick had dropped in the first night. Now, he and his paddle-man climbed aboard without waiting for an invitation. I began by proclaiming a total lack of interest in making any purchases or even looking at his merchandise. I tried to convince Nick that I was a total loss, a complete waste of his time.

Nick smiled and opened one of several fitted boxes and began laying out his beads and bracelets. "No obligation, Sir, just take a little of your time to look, Sir."

"Fine, Nick," I said. "But let me explain that my time is not free. I must charge you for it." Nick smiled, looked a bit puzzled, and opened another door of his trunk and reached for more envelopes full of beads, continuing his verbal presentation without losing a beat. Aziz, who early on sensed my displeasure with the hucksters, had been observing the interaction and inquired, "How much your time costs, Sir?"

"Two hundred fifty rupees for 15 minutes," I answered. Nick the Jeweler paused, and I asked if he understood? I wasn't interested in buying, but I would sell him some of my time for looking at his wares if that was what he wanted.

Nick looked up from his kneeling position in front of the low table and said, "But looking is free."

"For me, but not for you," I said as pleasantly as I could.

"But we merchants expect tourists to look and buy Kashmir goods."

"I know, but not all want to look or buy. I am one who does not want to do either. I want to spend my time in other ways. Do you understand?"

He didn't really. But he did get the basic message. We had an interesting conversation about free enterprise and the poor quality of Kashmir merchandise and its abundant availability in the U.S. Clearly, he was unaware of the large volume of Indian craft merchandise dumped in the U.S. Soon, Nick the Jeweler packed up his wares and he and his paddler climbed into his shirka and drifted on to a more willing prospect.

Whatever the side effects, the strategy worked. Undoubtedly the lake merchants have a jungle telegraph and except for the odd boy selling post cards and Kodak film, Nick the Jeweler was the last vender to call upon the Sheikh Palace while I was in residence. It is the only time I can recall when there has been total agreement among other people regarding the value of my time.

# About the Author

This from the original 1984 book, written by Jack.

After a nondescript four years at a mediocre, off-line state university, J. William Loughary obtained a full time job which was shortly terminated. From there, he managed to become enrolled in a fourth rate, off-line state university, from which, after several groveling years, he was granted a doctorate, without distinction. Unable to obtain honest work, he took up as an assistant professor. Bungling from one unfinished project to another, he fell into a full professorship and eventually a deanship. Now retired from front line administrative duty, he, again, has taken up the search for truth and knowledge. He is also preparing his memoirs, and plans to distribute them world wide. *Uncle Jack Among the English* is Book One, modeled, with appreciation, after *Uncle Wiggily in the Cabbage Patch*. Six adults sometimes refer to Loughary as Dad, as does the punk at the corner Mobil station. Loughary lives in a 73-room house overlooking Mt. St. Helens and the Pacific Ocean.

