

One Man's Words

Tuesdays With Jack



John W. Loughary

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Preface | 6 |
| One Man's Wheels | 8 |
| Tuesday Letters 1993-99 | 18 |
| September 7, 1993, Washington, D.C. | 18 |
| September 22, 1993, Scottish Highlands..... | 20 |
| September 28, 1993, York, England | 21 |
| May 23, 1995, Harrogate, England | 23 |
| June 25, 1995, Ah! London..... | 25 |
| November 19, 1996, Christmas Landing..... | 28 |
| March 11, 1997, The Cat Show | 30 |
| April 29, 1997, The Water Place | 31 |
| October 13, 1998, Cool! | 32 |
| December 22, 1998, Mirth | 34 |
| April 20, 1999, Ants!..... | 36 |
| July 27, 1999, Competition Sorting..... | 38 |
| August 10, 1999, Dirty Linen..... | 39 |
| Tuesday Letters 2000-2002 | 42 |
| August 15, 2000, Patience (?) | 42 |
| September 19, 2000, The Case of the Bad Flapper..... | 43 |
| October 10, 2000, Sole Food | 46 |
| October 24, 2000, Weigh-In | 47 |
| February 27, 2001, Hired Help | 49 |
| May 22, 2001, Baa, Whistle, Baa..... | 51 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| August 14, 2001, Finding The Path..... | 53 |
| January 7, 2002, Wheels To Go..... | 54 |
| February 26, 2002, Hey Girls | 57 |
| April 16, 2002, Gratitude..... | 59 |
| May 21, 2002, Trial Packing..... | 61 |
| July 23, 2002, Summer Overrated..... | 63 |
| September 10, 2002, Flag Waving..... | 64 |
| Tuesday Letters 2003-2005 | 66 |
| January 7, 2003, To Resolve or Not to Resolve | 66 |
| January 28, 2003, Multi-tasking Week..... | 67 |
| April 8, 2003, Ugly Relationships..... | 68 |
| April 22, 2003, Ha, Ha!!..... | 69 |
| August 19, 2003, Birdman of Sand Avenue | 71 |
| November 25, 2003, PreTurkey Anxiety | 73 |
| December 2, 2003, The Holidays Start With..... | 74 |
| January 20, 2004, Worms and Such | 77 |
| July 13, 2004, Tell It All | 78 |
| August 17, 2004, Start Your Engines..... | 79 |
| September 14, 2004, Ketchum..... | 81 |
| November 2, 2004, Halloween | 83 |
| December 14, 2004, Mystery Nights..... | 85 |
| May 10, 2005, The Information Manual | 86 |
| May 17, 2005, Produce Something | 88 |

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| August 2, 2005, Seeing Others Do | 89 |
| August 9, 2005, Waiting..... | 91 |
| November 8, 2005, Three Quarters and Still Attending..... | 92 |
| Tuesday Letters 2006-2008 | 95 |
| April 11, 2006, iPods ‘R Us | 95 |
| November 14, 2006, Goosing It..... | 97 |
| November 28, 2006, Come Rain Or Come Snow | 99 |
| April 24, 2007, The Writing Life | 100 |
| May 15, 2007, Time, Stamps, & NG March On..... | 101 |
| July 17, 2007, Shredding In A Nice Place | 103 |
| July 31, 2007, Social Skills | 104 |
| November 6, 2007, Watering The Rock..... | 105 |
| May 6, 2008, Be Up--Clean Up..... | 106 |
| July 29, 2008, The Death Industry & Us | 107 |
| Tuesday Letters 2009-2010 | 110 |
| April 7, 2009, Working It Out Together..... | 110 |
| June 9, 2009, Baby Paper | 111 |
| July 14, 2009, Collecting What? | 112 |
| August 4, 2009, Police Officers & Chicken Inspectors | 114 |
| August 11, 2009, Be Prepared | 116 |
| August 18, 2009, Why Did We Keep This?..... | 117 |
| October 27, 2009, E-What?..... | 118 |
| March 30, 2010, Keyboards | 120 |

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| The Last Words | 122 |
| Publisher's Note..... | 124 |

Preface

Jack (John) Loughary died on April 18, 2010. For over 3 decades we had been coauthors and for the previous 23 years married.

Since Jack's death, I have started ebook publishing. We would have done this together if Jack had lived. It was just the sort of thing we would do. In the 1970's we self published print books. Our first book together (Jack authored several before that) was entitled *This Isn't Quite What I Had in Mind: A Career Planning Guide for College Students*. It was written during economic down times and the cover, which we conceptualized, was a photograph of two college graduates in full cap and gown outside a rural rundown barn with a horse. One of the graduates was shoveling horse manure with a pitchfork. It was one of those times when a picture was worth a 1000 words. The book sold well on college campuses as they were just starting to offer career planning classes. I was the billing and shipping clerk, and we sent brochures to over 2000 college career centers. Within a fairly short period of time we had sold 5000 copies. We didn't know if that was good; but when Jack told a publishing friend in the Midwest, he said it was very good. The book was picked up by the Chicago publishing house and had a fairly long print life. We were on a roll. We did several more books, usually self publishing and then using the books in the classes we taught on campus at the University of Oregon. Most were then picked up by major publishers.

When email first came along we figured this was a good way to 'practice writing,' a thing we were always trying to find. We set out seeking other people with email. In 1992 we went on a cross country trip emailing our friends every night along the way. At the time this was unusual. We had a Ford Probe, and described the adventure as *Probing America: High Tech on Back Roads*. The high tech was a laptop, which we called MEG (Mobile Electronic Gab). It was difficult to find a modem connection every night, but we did. Friends laughed at our adventure and the writing. The next year, 1993, we went abroad, again taking our laptop, and connected with others via email every day of the trip in England and Scotland. Friends laughed at our adventure and the writing. We were hooked. This led to writing the same email group, who were friends in the U.S. and many international locations, weekly from October 1993 until the week Jack died in April 2010.

When the web came along, we had our own website before others were doing it generally. We, particularly Jack, had a brand of humor which was unique and endearing to many. The name of our website was Think Pint. We figured we were not big enough to be a Think Tank, as there were just the two of us, so we were a Pint. We were always trying to find another way to practice writing and sharing words.

Now in 2012 we are all overwhelmed with people sharing words and pictures and updates on various social media. Stop! Enough already! Theresa Ripley, Publisher, started September 2011, and thus far three ebooks are in this Publishing House, or to put it in perspective, Publishing Closet. Surprised at how many downloads in just a few months, it encourages the urge to keep

abreast and have people with their iPads, iPhones, kindles, and nooks have something else to download from TR Publisher and read in whatever location they find themselves.

Jack's self published book, *Uncle Jack Among the English*, is already available as an ebook. It was written in 1984 chronicling the Jack's sabbatical experience in London and then continuing on his Around-the-World Pan Am ticket back to Eugene, Oregon, where he taught at the University of Oregon. It was a humorous look at a time spent alone with his then new Osborne so-called portable computer (27 pounds) and Epson printer. This was before many people traveled with such technology, but it allowed him to record his travels and then self publish a book afterward.

This ebook will include my favorite writings by Jack, mostly those of a humorous nature from 1993-2010. The collection starts with Jack's memories of his cars, a personal favorite, and continues with selected Tuesday Letters which were usually about ordinary things and seeing the humor in everyday life.

Theresa Ripley, editor and publisher

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One Man's Wheels

I became aware of the potential joy of an automobile affair when I was very young, too young to participate. It was pure fantasy in the beginning, but that is true with many American males and their motor cars. I had a much romanticized image in my head about how it would begin. If you are old enough, or watch some really late night movies on obscure channels, you probably experienced Mickey Rooney in the Hardy Family Series. "The Mick" played Andy Hardy, son of Judge Hardy. In one movie, Judge Hardy surprises Andy with a high school graduation gift: a beautiful new Ford V-8 convertible. I recall it was a '39 or '40, but it was just before WWII. At any rate, that is how a young man of those times ought to have his first serious encounter with his own car.

My style wasn't quite up to those standards. It was the fall of 1949, the beginning of my sophomore year in college and I was living at home. Being a townie, while not the worst condition, was far from anyone's choice. In our working class family, however, renting a room on campus a long mile from home would have been ludicrous. During my freshman year I walked to campus, and along with many townies, used the lounge of the campus YMCA as a daily base of operation. Owning a car at that point seemed even more preposterous than living on campus. At least it did initially, but by the end of my freshman year the idea of owning a car became more than a convenience of getting back and forth to campus. I knew it was essential if I were to complete "my higher education."

After some careful planning and very good conversational timing, I was able to convince my dad that having my own car would be in his as well as my best interest. The convincing issue was that by my sophomore year I had become a drummer in a dance band. This meant that on many Friday and Saturday nights I found it necessary to request permission to use the family chariot. He soon got tired of that. I knew it would get worse, because I planned at some point to have my own band.

Need was only part of the issue. Dad pinpointed the other part when he wondered where I planned to park whatever vehicle I might acquire. I thought that on the street in front of the house would be appropriate and convenient for him as well. Leaving it in the driveway would inconvenience him, I noted in the spirit of father-son camaraderie. I certainly was not about to block the driveway and bother him! The vision of some old clunker parked in front of the house was obviously abrasive to him, but he was an understanding and devoted father and so the next Saturday I withdrew the \$50 I had saved and he and I made the rounds of used car lots.

Even in those days \$50 would not buy much of a car, and the more we looked the validity of that notion increased. I became concerned that we wouldn't find anything acceptable and as the afternoon progressed past midpoint was willing to take any vehicle that moved under its own power. It seemed to me that Dad was being unreasonably critical and picky. Damn it, let's just get something!

The search finally ended and the affair (rather a series of them) began. She was a 1936 4-door Dodge. In those days, you always included the number of doors as part of the name. You didn't have a '46 Pontiac; but rather a '46 Pontiac 2-door, or a '40 Ford 4-door, or whatever the combination might be. If, by chance your car was blessed with a V-8 engine, you noted that too.

The '36 4-door Dodge was 13 years old, black and had a rip in the felt roof lining. My bass drum wouldn't fit through the back door, but it could be squeezed into the seat next to the driver. The band got some funny looks as we arrived at dances with the leader and his drums in the front with the three side men in the rear seat. I loved that car; what freedom she provided. No more walking to campus or humility of asking for the family car. In spite of those pleasant aspects of car ownership, I never understood why the few girls I dated didn't appreciate her fine character; well, at least none mentioned it.

The '36 Dodge 4-door had two serious shortcomings. One was that her roof leaked. I lived in Oregon where it rains more than it doesn't and so she radiated an unpleasant musty aroma. The second drawback which made long distance travel (over 15 miles) difficult had to do with her manifold. I still don't understand clearly the function of a manifold, but it's the thing on the bottom of the engine block to which the muffler and tail pipe are eventually connected. The '36 4-door Dodge's manifold would become red hot (bright glow at night) within 10-20 miles of travel. Consequently, I tried to avoid out-of-town dance jobs and country girl friends.

Following that clumsy, but in many ways wonderfully tender beginning, I let myself be seduced by outside appearances. Thus, by the end of the summer vacation and with funds from a cement crew job, I abandoned the '36 Dodge 4-door sedan, and took up with a very spiffy '37 Chevy 2-door coupe. She was blue and had hardly a dent. I noted that she smoked a lot more than I approved of, but I bought her anyway. Soon, I realized that the relationship was a mistake. We were not at all well matched. True, there was no question in my mind that she was beautiful, but it was only skin deep. Underneath her hood she was sick; really sick! She was unreliable, disappointing and expensive to maintain. It became evident to both of us that I lacked the patience, money and skills necessary to deal with her problems. We soon went our separate ways, but not sadly. I learned a thing or two about looking beyond outward appearances.

I also became more conservative, as is often an outcome of experience. I damn well decided to play it safe. No more risky, eyes half-shut with desire for adventurous relationships for me. No sir! I had my mind on a dependable, predicable, no-nonsense arrangement. It was my good fortune to find such companionship in the form of a '39 4-door Chevy. Oh my, she was sweet. Blue, quiet, free of leaks, no apparent engine problems and the drums fit in the rear seat. She was even good on the road. That summer I commuted nearly every weekend to Portland in order to be with a young coed to whom I had taken a fancy. I recall that her father was somewhat assured of my character and honorable intentions regarding his daughter when he saw I had the good sense to drive a '39 4-door blue Chevy sedan. He should have been more heads up. It turned out; the young lady in question ran off with a roofer at summer's end. She actually sent me an announcement, after the fact so to speak. In spite of that, the '39 4-door blue Chevy sedan facilitated a very nice summer indeed.

But tragedy, as it can be, was lurking just around the corner in the form of a beat up raunchy logging truck. It was fall term of my senior year. I was nearly late for a class, a philosophy of science graduate level seminar. I had absolutely no business in the course but several slightly older graduate school friends were enrolled and so foolishly I joined them. Within a week I developed great respect, and more to the point, tremendous fear of the instructor. He was a terribly bright, young German philosopher of science whose special interest was logical positivism. Compassion and empathy were totally absent from his personality and about the worst offense I could imagine was being late for his class. That Tuesday afternoon I started for campus with less time to spare than was my custom and in order to make up time took a route through side streets. Nearly arriving at campus, I approached one last intersection when all of a sudden to my right appeared a dirty, old, rickety, log truck. He was empty, probably on his way to a tavern to meet his buddies and clearly exceeding the speed limit.

He got me and my '39 4-door blue Chevy sedan square in her rear right door, spinning us around and up onto the porch of a Mom and Pop grocery store. I was stunned! Not physically; I just couldn't understand how this could happen to me. Of equal concern was what dire consequences awaited my late arrival to class. That, of course was totally out of my hands, because of the necessity to hang around and interact with the patrol officer and give my side of the story.

As soon as the officer left, I wondered again what I had done to deserve such a fate. Hadn't I played it safe, been content to stay with this respectable middle-of-the-road motorcar? As I regained my wits, it was clear that the rear fender and wheels were jammed into a solid mess and the '41 4-door Chevy would have to be towed home. I wondered how I could afford that. Of equal concern how would I explain the placement of a pile of junk sitting at my father's curb. To my great surprise, all I got from the great Herr Doctor Professor when I entered his class room 45 minutes late was a short, but nasty, glare. My father was surprisingly understanding.

Later, the insurance adjuster dealt the fatal blow. "Totaled," he said. "You totaled her out, Buddy." I totaled her! I did no such thing. It was the irresponsible nincompoop driving the raunchy log truck at fault!

The insurance claim business took considerable time and the wreck remained parked in front of the family home for several weeks. Seeing her there had a depressing effect and I was glad when the tow truck finally hauled her away.

I was also confused. What values should underlie a relationship? If not beauty, stability, appearance, then what? Now, as I look back, my confusion was much greater than I understood at the time because I began a series of disastrous relationships with automobiles that I should have had the sense to avoid. After all, I was nearly a college graduate!

What quickly developed into a less than romantically satisfying relationships was with a '41 Oldsmobile V-8 4-door with red leather seats. She was some machine, at least to look at, and a good firm ride too. She had class and style, or at least did in the past, but she really was on her last legs when it came to performance. Shortly after acquiring her, a coed I was squiring at the

time and I ventured up the McKenzie river anticipating a pleasant afternoon recess. About 20 miles into our journey, the '41 4-door Olds began to cough, sputter and jerk. Fortunately, we were near a gas station. Engines were a mystery to me, but some hick at the pump looked under the hood for several minutes and then asked, if she might not be out of gas? "No," the soon to be college graduate replied knowingly, "the gauge reads half full."

"Might try puttin' in a few gallons," he suggested, ignoring my technological analysis. So, I sprung for \$2 worth of gas, and the old girl responded immediately without a miss. Nevertheless, the experience confirmed my hunch. I recall I paid \$400 for her, and about three months and several repair bills later felt fortunate when the same vulturous dealer bought her back for \$100. He must have been into junk metal on the side.

Still the carefree romantic, I next acquired a '36 Ford 2-door sedan with—get this—a '46 Mercury V-8 engine. It had several other notable features including mechanical brakes and a missing engine fan. The genius who installed the '46 Merc engine thought she would perform hotter and thus better without the fan, so he removed it.

By this time, the aforementioned coed and I were married, graduated and set off to find our fortune in San Francisco. If you know San Francisco, you understand it is mostly hills; steep hills. Steep hills had several negative effects on automobiles in those days, especially '36 Fords with '46 Mercury engines sans fans. Such engines often overheated, that is to say their radiators boiled over, and sometimes had to be shut down and cooled off prior to reaching the intended destination. Once we shut down on the Golden Gate Bridge for a cooling off period, and another time in the main entrance drive of the St. Francis Hotel. Hills also requires that brakes be used frequently. The mechanical brakes of a '36 Ford, when used even a little, heated rapidly, expanded and soon locked the wheels. Sometimes it required 20 minutes to descend a 2 block long steep hill.

Well, enough was enough and it was at this low point that I succumbed to the charms and mystery of foreign motor cars; a costly, addictive vice which has not yet seen an end. Most young men with any class in those days knew that if you desired your automobile to be attractively distinctive, the answer was to look to things foreign. American automobile dashboards, at this time looked pretty much the same (except for the smiling classical face of a Model A Ford). So, when I had a first glimpse of a Jaguar dashboard my fantasies were activated. A Jag was far beyond my conservative working class standards, but by 1952 California had a fair supply of lesser priced foreign cars. One which I admired was the Hillman Minx, an English breed. It was small, very well appointed, handsomely designed, fun to drive and, of course, looked very, very British. The turn signals consisted of little plastic electric indicators that lighted and popped up to alert other drivers of the intended maneuver, and then recessed back into the door pillar.

The day that I spotted a four-year-old Hillman Minx on a Van Ness Avenue car lot, I was immediately hooked. The car seemed to run fine and looked exceptionally clean (I was naive regarding detail shops in those days). With my increased maturity the recent paint job on a four-year-old car should have told me something, but it didn't, at least at the moment. I made the trade, receiving a pittance for the '36 Ford with the '46 Mercury engine, and all went well for

about a week. Then the ignition system went out on the Hillman. Next the transmission fell apart. Soon there was a serious knock in the engine. All of these needed to be repaired, given the nature of my position (entry level, I must acknowledge) as a field insurance investigator for Retail Credit Corporation. I was, understandably, becoming increasingly irritated with my foreign companion.

Then one morning I noticed that she had a chip on her hood. Underneath the tan finish, a chartreuse spot was emerging. Within a few more weeks and with the help of the San Francisco sea air, the chip spread over half the hood and most of the right front fender. The new tan paint was concealing an embarrassingly ugly coat of chartreuse. I felt like a bridegroom on his wedding night discovering that his bride wears a wig and padded bra.

It was clear that there was more beyond the new tan paint job than I had thought. Needless to say, my carefree flirtations with automobiles was doing me in. My poor decision making skills were showing, and badly. It was then that I learned something that restored my self-esteem. It came when I was telling my chartreuse Hillman Minx story at a social gathering and this fellow from Southern California said, "You know, about three years ago there was a taxi cab company in San Diego that experimented with a fleet of Hillman Minxes. The cars were repainted chartreuse as a PR stunt but it didn't work out. The venture was dead in less than a year."

God! I was involved with an ex-taxi cab! You bet I kept that quiet for awhile!

As the family grew larger and career goals became prime, motor cars took a back seat to other concerns. Following the disappearance of the English tart, came a 1955 Nash Statesman. Remember the post-war Nash? They resembled overturned bath tubs. The '55's had a little more style. This one had been a demonstrator and loaded with accessories including a metal sunshade across the top of the windshield and a periscope like-device allowing the driver to see traffic lights that were blocked from vision by the sunshade. Another accessory was a fishnet strung inside the car just above the windshield. It was neat for storing all kinds of articles which should have been thrown away. It was also embarrassingly underpowered. I was in my first real post-college job by then, a teacher in a southern Oregon high school in a town named Talent. The run from southern Oregon to almost anywhere else in Oregon entailed climbing a few hills. I stopped counting the number of times I was overtaken on hillside freeways!

The Statesman lasted nearly through graduate school in the Midwest, and while I appreciated her faithful service, I was tiring of her uninspired performance. Overreacting as usual, I was attracted to a femme fatale in the form of a '56 Ford V-8 Station Wagon. Boy did that baby have power. And what handling! She could even accelerate climbing steep hills. As much as I admired her, that was also about the time when we became a two car family and my wife took over the station wagon, actually a series of them.

Needing a work car, I reverted to adolescence and bought a much used black '49 Studebaker Hawk coupe, the one that was pointed at both ends. Sort of a junker, but there was a certain pleasure in not having to share her. We traveled Southern California briefly. Gaining more affluence or at least a raise in salary, the Black Hawk was traded in on a '59 Volkswagen Beetle.

She was my first new car, a virgin, coal black and free of an inhibiting fuel gauge. Volkswagen had yet to introduce this wonder of modern convenience, so when the gas tank was empty one simply flicked a little lever on the floor to release a gallon of fuel held in reserve. This worked very well, unless of course you forgot to return the lever to the default position when you refilled the tank. This would result in running out of gas, which we did on several occasions, one being on the San Bernardino Freeway around 5:00 p.m.

The Beetle and I had a nice relationship. We both knew what she was. A simple immigrant German Fraulein without refinement, but nevertheless dedicated and very willing to please. We sometimes pretended she was a Porsche—she did have a 4-speed gear box and a rear mounted engine—but there was no lasting illusion. But all that aside, I still think of the '59 Beetle as one of the most fun to drive cars I've owned. She was quick, reliable, durable and responsive. Pretty much the basics.

The inevitable moment came in 1963 when I felt my development would be enhanced significantly by a relationship with a genuine foreign sports car. The Beetle had been a cheerful companion, but I was simply overwhelmed by the charms of a 1960 Sunbeam Alpine soft top. What marvelous new experiences were to be had with the Sunbeam soft top. Sunday sports car rallies and races were approaching a peak about then, and while we never raced, the whole family would climb aboard and attend the local festivities. We piled into the Sunbeam and drove, with lunch, to a lovely, hilly wooded track. Seemed like everyone in town who owned a sports car participated. We all mixed well, except for the swaggering Porches who arrived early and staked out a private parking area. They literally drove stakes into the ground and strung nylon rope with little German beer haul pennants hanging from it.

If all of this sounds like the recollections of a carefree gadabout, then let me note that it was about this time when I spent a glorious year in Europe with a nine passenger VW bus. Actually, there were nine of us; two adults, six kids and the VW bus. We picked her up at a dealership in Luxembourg. She was an earth mother to end all earth mothers and looked after us with devotion. At the end of the year in Europe she came to the US on a Spanish freighter. Within a few weeks I sold her to an office equipment store manager. I felt sad. She deserved better, but I believe he treated her well. Years later I would fantasize about a different kind of adventure we could have had; just the VW bus and me.

I once thought that the climax of my automobile affair would be a six year adventure with a Swedish beauty; a new white 1966 Volvo 1800S. My dream car! Tight, well built, responsive, comfortable, fast, flexible, beautiful inside and out, adjustable seats, over the shoulder seat belts, luggage space that made into a back seat for kids and a 4-speed gear box with a short throw and an electric overdrive. I loved driving that car, especially over long distances and mountain passes. She was nimble and brilliant in traffic, too.

I have never had so much pleasure with a motor car as with the 1800S. The Swedes don't make them any more. Too bad. Nearly 100,000 miles later the \$50 repair bills became too frequent and I sold her to former student. I would see her around town occasionally, then she dropped out of site. One afternoon I was riding my 10 speed and passed a garage that specialized

in repairing Volvos. I just happened to glance toward the rear of the place and saw the twisted body of a white 1800S. I should have known better, but I simply had to see for myself. The license plate was still intact: 047. She had been totaled, the mechanic told me, but they hoped to salvage the engine. It seemed silly to me, having genuine feelings about the passing of a motor car. But, I did.

For a time the affair did appeared to have ended. I tried making it with a used English Rover 2000, but she was in the shop six of the 24 months we were together. I would make \$25 phone calls to a friend in Yorkshire, asking him to visit a spares shop and send me twenty five cent washer replacements. The local mechanic was without compassion and a nincompoop besides. He had no feel for her, in my judgement. Nevertheless, part of her problems was generic. The English built some beautiful machines over the years, but inevitably could never get the job quite done.

Then came a shoddy 4 month interlude with a Chevy Vega wagon. Oh god! What she did to my image and self-esteem. It was horrible. The less said about her the better. I bought her new at an end-of-the-year sale and was fortunate to unload her on a naive, unsuspecting community college student. He was impressed by her warranty and, from what I could gather from his remarks, the potential entailed in the fold down back seat.

Similar to a middle age man cutting back from squash to jogging, I next went for a handsome if worn '66 Mercedes 230 Sedan (I still had an urge to play, but not so fast). She was steady and comfortable, but soon became afflicted with a broken head. I had that replaced and sold her to my oldest son who said he had a lot of respect for the old girl and would be good to her. He was, but it was a poor match in regard to ages and after a difficult winter in Montana for both of them he and the Fraulein drifted apart.

That seemed to be the end of the long running affair with motor cars, although I did try again shortly after with an American. She was a Monza coupe whose rear end vibrated terribly whenever we went over 50. That was embarrassing, to say the least.

My luck turned when I traded the Monza in on a new Audi Fox 2 door sports sedan. The Fox and I got along swimmingly. Ah, the foreign connection again. She was good value for the money; seldom needed attention and always ready to go. Appropriately named! However, at 75,000 miles, she began to appear too young and uncertain of herself for my tastes and coincidentally I decided it was time to forget the great motor car romance and settle down. I was aroused for a time when it was rumored that the Morgan 4+4 was being grey marketed into Vancouver, B.C., but I never really investigated, unless you can count a brief encounter in the Yorkshire Dales. That was a telling sign, I must admit.

I'm not sure the appropriate term is metamorphosis, but I knew I was experiencing a change of some importance the day that found me admiring a Ford Thunderbird 2 door coupe I had seen them on the street, and I must admit I thought they were essentially an easy date for guys who didn't have the courage to put it on the line any longer. I just happened to be wandering around the local Ford dealership showroom when I spotted her. She was bright, bright red,

looked extraordinarily authoritative, sophisticated and subtly cosmopolitan except for the tacky chrome plate that read Supercharged. I mean, it is not necessary to advertise charms. I walked around her a time or two, admiring her features and also recalling that looks can be ever so deceptive. When heading towards the showroom door, a non-obtrusive salesman asked if I would like to drive her? Well, not really I replied, noting that I wasn't in the least interested in purchasing her. "That's perfectly okay," he replied, making me feel comfortable accepting his offer when we both knew my intentions were not serious.

Well, what an awaking that was! I had never been astride such powerful performance in my life! I had read about such experiences in the magazines, but this was beyond my imagination. I put her through a number of intimate challenges and she came through marvelously, time and again. I was hooked and against my better judgment, I was soon back in the world of car payments. We had a demanding relationship that lasted over four years. However, even I was not blind to the deterioration of her steering gear. We had moved near Portland where the trip into the city from our suburb involved a hilly stretch of I-5 freeway referred to as "The Curves." The curves brought one either up or down to the banks of the Willamette River to a raised plane. Over the years, the pavement developed more or less permanent ruts that emerged regardless of frequent resurfacing. Depending upon the size of a car's tires, the ruts would grab the front wheels and make it nearly impossible to steer the car. The T-Bird developed a very serious addictive attraction to the curves. Responding satisfactorily to her urges once she was into the curves was next to impossible. Even after replacing some of her undercarriage, the battle continued until in the middle of one particular gut wrenching trip into the city, my wife pointed out the seriousness of the situation. "It's the T-bird or me!" she announced, her flour white hands gripping the dash panel handle. There was no argument or discussion. The T-bird was soon a fling of the past.

I had developed, nevertheless, a liking for the Ford crowd, and since the foreign types had lost their style and appeal, for the time being at least, a small, sassy and classy Red Ford Probe with black stripes moved in. She had the big six engine, short throw shift stick, overdrive, and wonder or wonders, a sophisticated travel computer. As I recall, the computer had ten functions that provide, if nothing else, the passenger seat occupant a real feeling of involvement and contributing participation on journeys both short and long. It was the Probe in addition to a new laptop computer that motivated us to engage in an adventure we dubbed "Probing America." My wife's family roots are in Illinois, and I had spent three intriguing years scheming for the best way to exit graduate school in Iowa and escape the Midwest, so it was easy to agree on a journey back in time. The Probe was small, but yet fast and comfortable and turned out to be an ideal car for the adventure. We traveled on little used highways across the northern United States. Small towns and what passed for cities were a hoot, the lodging was adequate and inexpensive and when one confined meals to tuna fish sandwiches digestive disorders often associated with eating on the road did not develop.

Somewhere in the neighborhood of 75,000 miles, the Probe lost her sparkle when serious repair problems seemed just over the next hill. At this time we were living in a development

inhabited extensively by retired people. Many of them were widows, and as my wife turned her social service interest to organizing various educational-social groups, it occurred to me that having a comfortable family style sedan might be an appropriate vehicle. With a mid-size sedan I would facilitate transporting her mature women friends to and fro. (As it turned out, this was a function that didn't emerge but impossible to have known at the time.) It was at this point that a very safe but attractive Honda Accord 4 cylinder sedan took up residence. You know, I did everything I could imagine to make her happy, even going so far as modifying my own desires and behavior. I really did like her image; handsomely mature, respectable, smooth lines, soft and comfortable interior, but to tell you the truth, she just made me feel older than I wanted. I think it was primarily her 4 cylinder engine that discouraged me. She simply was unresponsive.

Feeling that I couldn't afford what I desired, I settled for upgrading to a Honda Accord 6 cylinder sedan with leather. The larger engine was a significant improvement, but to be perfectly honest I was still appreciably short of being in a state of ecstasy. Nevertheless, we made more than do and had three comfortable if not stimulating years and many enjoyable trips together.

It was when my 70th birthday was in sight that I was the first to acknowledge that what appeared to be my diminishing passion for motor cars probably was not entirely the fault of said machines. At the same time, I knew that more than a spark of affection could be generated for a particular automobile. What stood in the way of consummation was not money, for I could afford such a car. No, the problem was good sense. Being a child of the depression, I never escaped from the mores of living within one's means or at least the guilt when not. Overcoming such conditioning would require outside help. That appeared in the recollection of a discussion I once had with a esteemed friend. He purchased a wonderfully attractive Mercedes Benz years earlier, prior to their becoming relatively common, and I felt comfortable in asking him how he afforded such a machine. I had great respect for his scheming talent, and while I had no interest in a Mercedes, thought I might become privy to whatever car dealing skills he would share. His answer, which seemed obvious once uttered, was "Tremendous rationalization, Jack. Tremendous rationalization."

And so with the support of my good wife, that is how I came to reignite the affair with motor cars with the company of the finest machine I hope to drive, a 2000 BMW 328i. She is a marvelous piece of engineering and superb good taste: a sort of Wonder Woman, if you know of what I speak. There are potential dangers in such a relationship, I acknowledge. Ever present challenges to one's self control skills and the ability to adequately anticipate performance peaks, to name two. Thus, I am especially prone to be careful, considerate, and compassionate with her. She goes 20K miles between servicing, so that is comforting as well as reassuring at my age. Some might wonder why I waited until 70 to experience such a relationship. Looking back, it seems to me it seems perfectly obvious. Save the best to the end. It has also been noted to me that with my last five cars I have moved from two reds to three silvers. That too seems fitting my maturity and wisdom.

I doubt there is much left to this story, but who knows? You may wonder which car relationship in this life long love affair that began with a '36 Dodge 4-door Sedan was the most

joyous? I truly loved them all, some if damn briefly, but I have wonderful memories of each in their separate contexts, so I could not say for certain that there is an absolute favorite. I do acknowledge nevertheless, that one was more joyous than the rest.

Tuesday Letters 1993-99

The Tuesday Letters started with a trip to Scotland in September 1993. By the time this trip occurred we had a number of friends who were on email. The summer before we had taken a car trip across the U.S., emailing friends every day on the trip. We decided to do the same the following September when we were to visit friends in the Scottish Highlands at their ancestral home with a visit to London and Edinburgh prior to going north. The trip led to the idea of why not continue emailing friends weekly, and thus the Tuesday Letter began in October 1993. Normally Jack would start the letter and I would add comments at the end and give it a subject line. It was clear, though, that the letters were Jack through and through. There were over 850 Tuesday Letters written. The reason for selecting Tuesday is it seemed to us the day that gets short shrift. Saturday and Sunday speak for themselves, Monday is the beginning day, Wednesday it's half over, Thursday, if you play it right can get you a head start on the weekend, and Friday, if you have any imagination at all, kicks off the weekend. That leaves Tuesday. We thought an email letter on Tuesday morning would brighten the day. Some Tuesday Letters from the early years have been lost to cyberspace, but the collection is complete from 1998 through April 2010. This ebook will feature some of the best through the years starting with the trip to Scotland in 1993. The trip started with a stop in Washington, D.C. and then on to what we labeled *Stumbling Towards Enlightenment* as we crossed over to the U.K.

SEPTEMBER 7, 1993, WASHINGTON, D.C.

L'enFant Plaza Hotel

Washington, D.C.

September 7, 1993

So far the highpoint was not the Holocaust Memorial Museum, but instead a long night's cab ride with an Iranian driver. That's not really true, but the taxi trip is worthy of mention.

We arrived at Dulles on time, about 9 p.m., deplaned into the outer docking area, boarded a people mover, and within a few minutes were in the main terminal. One flight down the escalator to the taxi stand, received a card with a number 4 on it, and within 30 seconds the taxi rolls into place, the dispatcher hollers "4", we load the bags into the trunk and the 28 mile trip from Dulles to D.C. is off.

The driver is a grey haired fellow, probably in his early 60's (I can relate). He has a slight medium strong accent, but an effective vocabulary and very good command of English. After getting checked out on D.C. weather (supposed to get down to 50 degrees tonight) and a few other bits of chatter, Theresa asks him how long he has lived in the area.

“Ah,” he says, “I am not a professional driver by trade. I was a hydro engineer in Iran when the trouble began in 1979. It became very difficult for many of us. I have a brother who is a neurosurgeon in Youngstown (a surprising number seem to) and so I went there. When I returned to Iran I could not get my job back and the government took my house and everything else.”

He gave us a brief modern history, including such topics as the treatment of women and intellectuals. As we neared the city he asked when we would be going back and offered his phone number. We said let’s make a deal for Thursday afternoon. Ali (one L he said) wanted to phone and confirm, but we said no, we were certain 4 p.m. would be fine. He agreed, and began going on about some other interest but suddenly exclaimed, “Whoops, I just missed exit to L’enFant Plaza.”

We knew the area and had spotted the building just a second before. Ali took the next exit and made a smart right turn into a dead end street. We guessed he had exhausted his options for exiting the freeway to the hotel. We were sure when he made a u-turn and drove out into the middle of busy boulevard. Horns began to honk, drivers screamed and shook their fists, and Ali continued to lose it. We went around in circles for 20 minutes, always with the L’enFant tower in sight. Ali began muttering to himself, but still kept going in circles. The second time he passed in front of the Holiday Inn I urged him to stop and ask for directions, but he didn’t. Instead he stopped in the middle of the street, opened the window and shouted at a lone black pedestrian crossing the street whose response was to quicken his pace on his way out of there. During most of these iterations Ali managed to re-enter the same freeway.

Finally, after yet another false pass and a re-entry, he pulled the cab to the shoulder land of the road. I thought he had come to his senses and was going to study the map that all cab drivers carry. Nope. Instead, turns his head toward the rear window and began backing up on the shoulder of the freeway. Horns honk and lights blink but he continues to back. I objected mildly, not believing that this was actually happening to us. Been in lots of cabs in lots of cities, but never anything remotely similar to this. We turn our heads, hoping probably that three will be better than one, and instantly we see that another car is parked in the shoulder land about 100 feet behind us. The driver begins honking his horn and blinking his lights, but with no effect on Ali, who just keeps on backing. Ali must have decided that the car to the rear is a permanent obstacle, and thus proceeds to back around the car into the actual outside lane of oncoming traffic.

“No way,” I insisted urgently. “You just cannot back into oncoming traffic.” He seemed to agree, and pulled the cab back onto the shoulder. By this time the other car was pulling along side us, entering the traffic with both the driver and passenger shouting at us through the window. I sensed Ali was near his end, because we had passed it several times. “Take the D Street exit and then turn left,” I said as we started back into the traffic pattern. “Yes, of course, that is it,” he acknowledged. It was a T junction and had to be either left or right, and as luck had it was left, and there was the sign pointing to the L’enFant Promenade then an arrow reading “to Hotel Lobby”.

Ali is apologizing profusely, saying there will be no extra cost. We had known that all along. He just wouldn't stop apologizing. We paid him the \$40 he asked for, not the \$59.60 on the meter. We are still trying to decide whether or not to cancel the return trip. But enough of trivia.

The Holocaust Memorial Museum is awesome. No doubt you have seen pictures and read several descriptions. They are all true. We visited it today, and one volunteer said this was the first day this summer that it had not been swamped. We had an 11:00 entry time, but were admitted with the 10:30 group. The news pictures do it justice. Four stories, done in deathly prison grey. The first section was crowded, and we thought unpleasant. Killing of the kind the Germans perpetuated for years is not something to contemplate in a milling crowd. At least not at first. It is not that the topic is new. You already know what happened, and have thought about it previously. Maybe even seen it staged. The Germans stage it in Berlin museums. But the beginning of this staging is of the sort you would prefer to view alone, or with no more than a few people. Certainly one would like the privilege of viewing each panel, picture, artifact, or TV monitor without someone pushing you aside in order to make a place for his not especially interested wife and totally bored kids to get a better view.

But, the people surprisingly thinned out. I don't understand how this happened, but once off the top floor things became more reasonable.

If you ever have the opportunity to spend time at the Memorial, take it. After the emotional ride of the standard display (including, for example the medical experiments of the Germans complete with a body parts inventory) we visited the Wexner Learning Center. It is an interactive graphics data base program which uses advanced technology allowing you to study the Holocaust starting with what little or lot you may know about it and with absolutely no prerequisite computer skills. Just read and touch the screen.

SEPTEMBER 22, 1993, SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

The 1993 trip went from Washington, D.C. to a residential stay in a London apartment, then a train trip to Edinburgh to pick up a car and north into the Highlands. Jack, a veteran of left-side driving, describes this experience in Scotland.

Enlightenment comes in small doses, or at least one is willing to settle for same after so many days on the road. So, if you are interested I can share a bit about Scottish roads and their impact on car passengers, and shower 'systems' made in Ireland.

There is a positive correlation between degrees of latitude and width of roads, at least in the UK. We are now at the point that a white line down the middle means that if you use your imagination and are lucky enough not to encounter any lorries you are on a two-lane road. When the line disappears, even though cars continue to move in both directions, it is dangerous to believe that you are still on a two-lane road. It is probably not surprising that we do best on the

latter sort of road. There is simply no question that the larger car has the right of way, and because we have the tiniest car in the world, we quickly give way.

It is the lined road where hope and optimism remains eternal. This is more upsetting to the passenger than the driver. Having an outside mirror on each side, it is possible for the latter to see how much space exists between the left rear wheel and the edge of the road as well as between the right rear wheel and the middle line. Granted, there is usually very little of either, but the passenger, lacking mirrors, is not reassured. Thus, as we journey further north more mumblings emerge from the passenger seat. First it was general non-specific comments such as “Jesus!”, “My God!” and “Mighty close!” That soon gave way to, “God Damn, Jack”, “Oh for Christ’s Sake!”, and “Can’t you keep the damn thing on the road!”

Well, all and good for her, and I can understand. From her side of the car it appears that there is about 6 inches of space between the outside edge of the left front wheel and the edge of the road, which is essentially correct. What one cannot see from the passenger side is that six inches on the left means that the right front wheel is riding exactly on top of the middle line. Puts a marriage to the test, I’ll tell you. Glad I’m not in the old girl’s seat on this one.

As for showers, there is something called the Mira Supreme on the wall over the bath tub. It is made in the Republic of Ireland, which should tip you off right away. It displays instructions for the installer and the user, respectively. As a user you are told to turn the dial to position one, wait for the hot water to reach the hand set, and then make any necessary adjustments of the dial. So I did just that. Nothing happened. So, reread the instructions and did it again. Still no action in the hand set. As I was about to settle for a bath, I spotted a string dropping down from the ceiling across the room. Enlightenment dawned, I pulled the string, and the hand set came alive; well, nearly. When I was finished teasing out a ration of hot water, I turned the dial to off and then noticed that at the end of the instructions to the user was a phone number in the Irish Republic.

This shower experience contrasts with last night’s experience. An aluminum pipe runs up the back of the bath tub and at the top it loops back down. Attached to the pipe is what can best be described as a number 10 tin can with holes in the bottom. About half way down the pipe is a faucet with four settings: off, cold, tepid, and hot. To make a difficult story short, I set the mother for tepid and stepped in. Wow! If this is tepid, spare me from hot. Somewhere between off and cold I found steaming, and that was that. The socks and shorts I washed set out to dry didn’t and I had to find a discrete means of getting them past reception and out of the hotel. They, the socks and shorts, spent the day displayed on the back area of the car drying along the way in the tiny car on the tiny roads.

SEPTEMBER 28, 1993, YORK, ENGLAND

The car was left in Scotland and we came back via The Flying Scotsman train to York, England, where we were met by a friend who lived in Leeds, England.

This is a railroad hotel. Very traditional in Europe dating from the time when most passengers arrived by train. As you would know or guess because train is no longer the choice of travelers, railroad hotels have gone down in status and are mostly tacky. Avoid them, is a good rule.

We tried, but circumstances dictated otherwise. Our friend Barrie was there on the platform as our train pulled in to the station after the four-hour journey from Aberdeen. We could see Barrie, waved to him, and he waved back. He was easy to spot because he was wearing black slacks, a yellow blazer of the shade Hertz attendants wear and something akin to a Aloha shirt, except it was done in black and white. It was good to see him, and after making reservations for the next day's trip to Oxford, he suggested we all go to his car and arrange for a hotel from there.

He apologized for still driving the Porsche, but it worked out well. He pulled it out of the parking space in order for Theresa to crawl into the tiny back seat, he and I settled in the front seats, and then he backed it back into the parking space. He proudly produced his Guide to Better B&Bs and pointed to a couple low tariff places he had found. We said we preferred a room with shower and bath, TV and telephone. We actually had a couple possibilities, and he dialed on his car telephone. It is a voice-activated model, so among other features it need not be held. It just rests there in its cradle and one talks into it.

The first place was nearly out of rooms. Just two singles left. But they suggested another place, which Barrie phoned, only to discover they closed recently, but her recorded message suggested yet another place. We managed to go through about 7 hotels looking for a room with twin beds. There is no objection to king size beds from this quarter, but an English double you may know is good only for the first few minutes of a passionate affair. It is not for sleeping.

We finally contacted a reservations desk at which the receptionist thought she might have something that met our requirements.

"A twin," she said, "yes, I have a twin for the 26th." "That is nice, Barrie responded, "but this is the 27th."

"Are you sure?" She asked. "I have a very nice twin for the 26th."

"But the 26th is gone," Barrie repeated, "my friends would have liked a room on the 26th, but it is now the 27th and that is when they need a room."

"Well if you say so," she continued. "It is really too bad because the room on the 26th was very nice."

There was one place on our list left to contact, the Royal York. "I think that is it over there," suggested Theresa, pointing to the building next to the Car Park and 20 feet from the depot. She was correct, and soon Barrie had them on the phone, negotiated a room for £20 less than the quoted price and a full breakfast thrown in.

MAY 23, 1995, HARROGATE, ENGLAND

Tuesday Letters continued in 1993 and 1994, but were not saved. A trip to England in 1995 held the next collection of saved Tuesday Letters. This is the first letter after arrival in London and motoring up to Harrogate, England, for a month's stay. In the Victorian Era Harrogate was the place to come for "the waters." The century old sign in the Pump Room museum stated, "For fashionable society, the Harrogate Season came between the end of the London Season and Grouse-Shooting Season in the early autumn in Scotland." It is also near the Yorkshire Dales of All Creatures Great and Small fame noted for the pastoral beauty. For these reasons we knew this was a good place to make a central location to stay.

Ah, so much to tell, so little time. First, the digs are okay. On the plus side is the kitchen which the English call fitted, which translated means built-in cupboards and sink, and lots of room. Harrogate is dripping with character, full of parks and gardens and everything in town is close enough for walking. There was one small problem which only goes to show how we do take things for granted. Well, two problems, to be accurate; sitting and lying down. The place is decorated with 1945 Goodwill beach house chairs, if you know what I mean. That is somewhere between "Put it with the garbage, Dear", and "Let's phone Goodwill." The place has four beds, and the color (wheee) brochure claims it will sleep five, one bed being an English double.

That is correct, unless you assume it means at the same time. The double bed is very, very hard and bumpy. Bumpy as in pot holes to hell. There are two singles in another room. One is normally placed on the floor next to a wall which allows for easy entrance and exit, and the other in a small alcove with a 3-foot ceiling, which does not. Both beds are okay in a pinch, which they do. Finally, there is another single cot located in a small room in which is also located a loo and a shower, both installed one can only assume by the landlord, a man of Scottish ancestry, who is clearly in some other trade. The shower is interesting in that it was installed at floor level minus any sort of curbing. Water, seeking its own level as it does, seeks its only level which in this case is the bedroom floor. No real problem, however, because there is a regular shower and bath on the ground floor.

Theresa raised several important questions shortly after we arrived, one of which was, "Where do you plan to sleep? I only ask because the double bed is not large enough for two." It took only minutes for me to size up the situation and answer brilliantly, "In the double, where did you think?" After what, given our state of jet lag, passed as a discussion of alternatives, she agreed that she might try that also.

About 1:00 am she awoke me to ask me if I was awake, and voiced the conclusion that, as she thought all along, it was impossible for two to sleep in this awful rack. I agreed amicably, and wished her god speed on her short journey and hoped she would tell me where I might find her if there was a need to do so. "On the single in the double twin, single room," she noted. Then, about 4:30 a.m. she crawled back into the double, asking me, again, if I were awake? I told her that I was now, and reminded her that only recently had we had a similar discussion and concluded that not even one person good get a good nights sleep in this contraption. She

responded saying that was true, but once she got to sleep she could nod off again about anywhere, and then proceeded to do so. I complimented her, noting as always that I admired her accomplishments, but I doubt she heard me because she was fast asleep by then.

Sometime later in the day while I was nodding off while washing the lunch dishes, she shook me lightly and brought up the matter of sleep again, the deprivation of which was in the forefront of both of our minds. I said that I would look into it, recalling that the brochure did say the house could sleep five. As I looked around the second floor where all the bedrooms are located, it wasn't long before I discovered an electric switch and a small timer on the wall just outside the double room. There was also a small, handwritten note of instructions which had fallen to the floor and under a chair. To summarize, the note suggested that in order to accommodate one to five sleepers, the starting and ending times of the snooze, the length of sleeping intervals, and the wake-up times for the intervals should be punched into the timer. Then, just prior to reclining, power should be put to the device.

So we set the snooze for 8 hours and the intervals for 2 hours and activated it just prior to retiring. It really is not a bad system, given that the landlord is not likely to change the beds and that we prepaid the four week's rent. What happens, in our case, is that at the end of the first two-hour interval, the alarm rings, everyone wakes up and quietly changes beds, and then nods off in the new and as yet not uncomfortable environments. Then, at the end of the next 2-hour interval just as the bed lumps are getting really annoying, the alarm goes off, and everyone arises and changes beds again. One more round of this and it is time to get up for good, and the participants have had, given the conditions of the beds, a reasonably good sleep.

That took care of sleeping. Now, what about sitting. Fortunately our good buddies from Leeds down the road had us to lunch at their Castle, and after listening to us whine, suggested we borrow a couple chairs from their furniture warehouse. We made our selection, crammed them into the back of the world's smallest Rover, and before the hour was over were sitting comfortably in our new sling chairs, in front of a warm May fireplace, watching the travel show on BBC 2 of Sunny Spanish Holidays.

Thus, the good life became firmly established among the hills and dales of Yorkshire. The pleasant walks have become part of each day, as does a morning stop at Bettys, the worlds greatest bakery/café. Every item scales out at 20 plus scrumptious fat grams and an entailment to walk another three miles. In case you should be concerned that we are wasting our time, rest assured. Our place contains a wine cooler consisting of 28 round red tiles imbedded in mortar. This thoughtful amenity would have been lost to me until Theresa came up with the brilliant notion of her anticipation, doing, recalling device. Each round tile tube is now dated with a post-a-note and is ready to store material and notes for each day's adventure.

Its Wednesday, so this must be Fountains Abbey! Each tile gets stuffed with folders and other information anticipating the visit of the day that gets read from ahead of time, and then upon return, supplemented with the sort of material one collects on such visits.

Get-it-organized Ripley here! Ah, yes, I am sitting in front of red tiles right now and am eagerly anticipating later today stuffing some of the "containers" with brochures we collected at the Harrogate Information Center yesterday. You need to know where you have been, where you are, and where you are going. At least that's what I would do if you were here alone. I, mean, really, there are only so many days and there is so much to do...that is, after you are rested from a lovely night's rotating bed sleep with bird chirping starting in earnest at 4 a.m. and from leisurely sitting on the collected chairs from our friends down the road. Harrogate is 200 miles north of London and 200 miles south of Edinburgh, the halfway town between the two capitals. I plan to go to the library today and become a patron for a month (already noted on a paper in today's tile!). The first book to borrow is a short history of the area. Until then, all I know is that Harrogate has a population of 70,000 and was an "in" destination in the late 1800's when it was spa town for the wealthy. The Roman and Turkish baths still remain and I, for one, want to try them out. Jack is less sure. Perhaps a few more sleepless nights will help his decision on that score.

Charmed civility is my current term for Harrogate. The downtown shops remind me of the expensive shops of Zurich a bit as they line the angular roads with jewels and clothes boutiques, interior decorating centers, antique stores, and most important the coffee and tea shops. Bettys, already noted above, makes 400 varieties of breads and pastries in its kitchen, located in the shop. The lineups, I'm sorry queues, on the weekends run out of doors nearly a block down to Montpelier street. The walk from our place to Bettys has been timed more than once, and yesterday's excursion took 11 minutes, 33 seconds. Our current Personal Best. I shall try to better my time daily.

One personal goal of this trip was to practice writing. Since we only have one laptop along (a sign of real frugality on our part), I purchased a notebook with a picture of Virginia Woolf on the cover at the local WH Smith shop. I also bought a real fountain pen with ink cartridges. Now the routine might be a 11 minute, 33 second walk to Bettys to check out the pastries; waffle briefly about my high cholesterol count; take out my pen and Virginia Woolf notebook; watch the people go by and write. How's that for an image in Harrogate?

JUNE 25, 1995, AH! LONDON

After leaving Harrogate we went to Ireland and then came back to London before going back to the U.S.

First off was a visit to Harrods, which should be done every two years if at all possible. Since the Saudis took over, the place is even busier and more expensive. There is now a room devoted entirely to products with the familiar Harrods Logos. You can even buy Harrods plastic carrying bags, the kind they used to give you when you made a purchase. The little trooper held up so well as we traipsed around the food halls that I suggested she treat herself to a go, so to speak, at the ladies luxury loo. The admission is £1, but after a little coaxing she agreed to the experience. And what an event it was, or so she reported. She couldn't talk about anything else for the next 45 minutes.

At her urging, I decided to try the gent's luxury loo, also for £1 admission. The ritual for gaining entrance requires standing in line in front of a the door to the loo. So that visitors won't panic, a uniformed lady attendant is posted just outside the entrance. When your turn comes, she instructs you to drop £1 into the slot and after you do, she throws you the high sign and gives the door a push. It opens, and before you can say Standard White Fixture, you are standing in a large room which is tiled from top to bottom. Along one long wall are wash basins, shelves with jars of smelly stuff, mirrors, and electric blow drying machines. Along the other is a row of tall, narrow doors, each with a little metal sign indicating either "available" or "in use". Available is in white, and in use in red, as to prevent wrong choices. The signs, however, are small, necessitating getting very close to the door to determine the status, which, if it happens to be "in use", can be embarrassing, especially if during your inspection the sign suddenly changes and you are face to face with the former tenant.

Incidentally, the task of the attendant is to keep the flow of customers even. It would be unpardonable to admit a person, only for him to find that all the booths were marked in use. Well, I suppose you could stand around a drying machine pretending that you were through and just about to leave, but then, there would be the embarrassing moment when a booth became available and you were confronted with reversing your order and going for it, leaving the poor bastard who just entered standing in the lurch, or loo, as it were. Once such a chain of events began, there would be no stopping it.

Anyway, once into your booth it is entirely yours for as long as you desire. Well, I'm not absolutely sure about the occupancy rule, but let's say plenty time enough. The booths are tall, about 12- foot ceilings, within the room itself which must be 16-feet high. If you were insecure to start, it could precipitate a bit of panic, but assuming you have a high adventure threshold, it is well worth the experience. There comes a point, as you well know, when you are finished with your business, and as a matter of conditioning reach for, or in this case search for, the paper tissue dispenser. Now, the real tests begin. There is none, in the usual sense, but instead a smallish panel which reads tissue. But there is no tissue, and worse, or so it seemed at the moment, no sign of a lever. But, reaching towards it instinctively, a quiet whirring sound is heard, and toilet tissue emerges. I can't tell you how it works, but it does. (There is still, let me say, a lingering apprehension, and that has to do with the spare, what shall we call it, roll, to which we have all become accustomed, and one might say reassured? There isn't one, and anyone who has spent anytime in an English gents knows, the spare roll is absolutely essential because as often as not the main roll is either gone or empty, leaving only a bare cardboard spool. That has to be one of the most frustrating situations of modern civilization: so close, yet so far. Thank god I didn't have to solve that one!)

As I'm sure you are anticipating, there was still the matter of flushing. You must be on to it now, there was no flusher lever to be seen in what was now turning from a comfortably private loo into a horror chamber of electronic solitary confinement. Further searching revealed what I will refer to probably incorrectly, due to lack of background in these sorts of things, as an electric eye in the wall. (No, walls I know about, it is the eye thingie that confuses me.) I admit feeling a

sense of personal pride as I recall waving my hand, with a bit of a flourish admittedly, in the eye's direction and was rewarded with an instant, and one must say, sufficiently strong flush. Emerging from the private tomb is simply a matter of turning the stainless steel door handle, opening the door, and taking a couple steps forward.

All was not over, however. In spite of becoming alert to the spirit of Harrods executive gents, I had no specific expectations regarding the hand-washing business. What scared me was not the thought of automation, having learned that the fear of that is merely fear of fear itself, but rather the large, well dressed male attendant with soap, a substantial sponge, and towel in hand standing beside the row of sinks. Thankfully, a fellow client exited his vestibule just seconds prior to me, and as he did the attendant entered the empty cell with the look of a person intent upon on tidying it up. Taking advantage of the diversion, I approached the basin, waved at the spout, wetted my hands with the forthcoming water, ignored what must have been an automated detergent dispenser, genuflected in front of the drying machine, and found the exit just as the attendant emerged again.

City life! So out of Harrods, down into the Knightsbridge tube station, a short ride to Green Park, and then up the stairs to Piccadilly, and what should we find? You may have read about it in your newspaper. The police person we chatted with said there were at least 70,000 marchers in the gay awareness parade. No special protest, a marcher who was resting a bit said in answer to Theresa's question. Just having fun, she said. We watched the passing parade for about 30 fascinating minutes, and then braved our way through the line, across the street and into Green Park which by then was nearly deserted. It was only about 10:45 and so we moved on until we located a small tea shop in Berkeley Square, where a couple birds, perhaps even nightingales, were singing. Just another day in London.

Just-finished-reading *The Sunday Times* Ripley here. Ah, yes, the day in Central London reminds one why they choose to go to Yorkshire Dales and the Midwest of Ireland. But if you didn't have London, you would not know that. The Times says the Gay Pride March was 40,000 as estimated by police and 120,000 as estimated by the march organizers. Splitting the difference, we have 80,000. All I know is that there were seas of people with t-shirts and costumes of all imagination, everyone having a stainless steel police whistle in their mouth, blowing them loud and constantly.

I talked with a local vendor selling hamburgers on Piccadilly sidewalk and he said his business was ruined for the day. The police edged him off the street and the Green Park police edged him out of the park where the police had directed him. He said, and *The Times* verified this morning, that the parade is the largest in London every year. And we were there!

Parade participants came from several countries. A fellow from Hong Kong came over "just because we don't have anything like this in Hong Kong." One wonders if there is a luxury loo in Hong Kong. Well, maybe, at The Peninsula.

The parade was in contrast with the prior day in Windsor where we were strolling along The Long Walk from Windsor Castle up to the statue of King George. For those who have been there, the surprise was the utterly blue, clear skies. Jack lived in Windsor for the better part of a year and said he had not seen a similar day. As we were walking almost by ourselves on the nearly three-mile route, what should suddenly appear from the west but grandly groomed horses pulling fine, brilliantly polished, shining carriages accompanied by the red clad Queens Mounted Guard. It was Ascot time, of course. The Queen had departed the official transportation ensemble earlier and was on her way back to the castle in her Rolls. But the procession, sans Queen, rolled on up the Long Walk towards the gates of Windsor Castle.

What about that! Two days in London and two parades. Today we visited Kew Gardens, a personal favorite, and exactly the experience I want on our last day in England. Tomorrow it's back home and to our very own loos which will look very good no matter whether they are luxury or not.

NOVEMBER 19, 1996, CHRISTMAS LANDING

Christmas finds us at home in Eugene (or variously known as UUUUUgene, or how many other variants of spelling we can find.), Oregon.

PreChristmas concerns are approaching and must be attended to. What to give who? How much to spend? Plastic or real tree? If real, live or cut? not much fun, but better to take care of these things now so that one can get the full experience of the holidays, unburdened by trivia. One concern that more or less crept up on us this year is the development of a Christmas Village. Each year for the past several we have acquired a house or some other article in the Dickens Collection manufactured by the Department 56 Company. The first piece, as I recall, was a horse and carriage. It sort of got set on the mantel. Then, the next year we added the Ye Olde Curiosity Shop and a few figures. The mantel didn't seem the right setting, so we sprung for a package of cotton and arranged a little scene. Then the next year lights were added and a post office and Scrooge's house, and we created a little bigger scene at the end of the bar.

But that was to be it. No more of this nonsense. Sure, the collection added a little cheer to the home, but enough was to be enough. Then, this year my sister gave me the newest Dept 56 Dickens items, a hat seller and his cart of hats for my birthday. With that in the back of collective mind, I suppose that was the reason, we wandered into the Northland Gift Store at the Mall that specializes in such village collections. You've seen them, they run all the way from Bethlehem to Dickens to some 1950's chromesville. I must say, their Dickens collection was exquisite, if that is the proper word. To top that, the saleslady was very well informed (and more than moderately attractive, I thought) and so after a short discussion we learned from her that Dept 56 closes out certain models each year. One of our houses, she informed us, had been closed out a couple years ago and its value had grown so much that we would be surprised at the amount. And,

wouldn't you know it, two more houses were being terminated this year; a brew house and the St. Something Or Other church. I don't know what came over me, but I found myself arguing to Theresa that we acquire them both. She didn't object noticeably, after picking up a few more evergreen trees, we were on our way home. Once we got there and took stock, we realized that we had a village of 7 houses, churches, and business establishments. A neighborhood, in other words. This had gotten out of hand, and it was clear that it was too big for any mantel or bar. A proper display would be needed for the neighborhood, and we have the perfect place on the landing of our stairway.

It was about that time that I had the first inkling of trouble. You can probably understand why I referred to it as the Dickens Village. After all, with one exception, the pieces were Dickensonian. There was a certain hesitation in Theresa's manner, and then she wondered aloud why we had to call it Dickens Village. Couldn't we be more imaginative. Like what, I asked. Well, it is English, she answered, and since the only genuine English name between us is Ripley, why not the Ripley Village.

So the Ripley Village name was established. Then, as we were assessing the display space and wondering what might go where, she pointed to one corner and said that was a good spot for a couple of her favorite Christmas ornaments. Then, she thought that some little antique farm toys of hers would look very nice beside the church. Being a relative purist in matters such as these, I began to cringe at the thought of the potpourri she was concocting in her head. But rather than hassle over each item, we hit upon a much better solution. Let's agree on a principle or two, and then let them guide the decisions as to how much she could junk up the display. And that is how the Ripley Village came to have its own set of CC&Rs. They are not complete, but will be before construction begins. It is clear by now however, that mechanical devices of any kind are prohibited, no flashy colors are allowed, and each and every house must be properly lighted. In addition, while snowfall cannot be controlled, each home must provide for the immediate removal of unsightly drifts. All vendors must be properly licensed, and children kept under control at all time. Unleashed dogs and cats must be confined indoors.

Construction is to take place on November 28, Thanksgiving Day, when daughter Kelly is coming to oversee the work and assure that CC&Rs are respected.

Mayor Ripley here...I really do not have much to add since so much of the above has gone in the proper direction. Who would believe that Minimalist Christmas Loughary would be arguing for more decorations to be bought...for proper displays to be enacted...and that the holiday spirit would arrive before Thanksgiving. It just goes to show you that perseverance and proper holiday attitude year after year pays in the long run.

Next year I have been warned that the Irish might rebel and that the English Village might have a new name. But those in the house that have studied English and Irish history quite thoroughly in the time frame of our village have no concern. If the Irish do rebel, it will be the Lougharys and O'Sullivan's overtaking the English. It's about their turn.

MARCH 11, 1997, THE CAT SHOW

It's that time of year again. The past weekend the McKenzie River Cat Club had their annual show and contest at the Lane County Fairgrounds in Eugene. We try not to miss these, not so much for the cats, but for their owners. If you think dog owners begin to look like their animals, you should go to a cat show. A new wrinkle since last year, or whenever we attended the last show, are elaborate...well, what one can one say...cat houses. Some are homemade, some a plastic, some even come with locks. More notable than the cat houses themselves, are the cloth draping hung on them by the owners. I suspect the intent is to enshrine the felines, but the effect is more like a room full of Sears and Roebuck bargain basement caskets. These are lined up on folding tables. Must have been a couple hundred in the 'waiting room,' which other times of the year is the canned preserved area. Each owner sits nervously in front of its cat, waiting for its number to be called. Some are feeding their cats, others are filing away on cat nails, and some just hold the cat's paw, staring off into oblivion. One woman had several cats in her family, and systematically fed each with a tiny silver spoon.

About every few minutes a voice booms over the PA system, calling for cats number from this to that to appear at one of the 4 judging areas. This is serious stuff, and pity the person who gets in the way of a cat and owner moving out of the waiting room for the judging area. Each area contains a 3x5 foot table with a swivel spotlight attached to it. Around the back of the area are cat cages with number cards on them. As owners arrive they slip their kitty in a numbered cage and then quickly move to the back of the area and wait for the judging to begin. There are also a couple rows of chairs in front of the table. but the owners seem to prefer standing behind these. Even though billed as a show, it becomes clear that the cat owners only have interest in their own pussy.

It is an ugly scene. We began by standing casually back of the chairs, but when it became obvious that this is where the action took place, Ripley moved right into the middle of the front row just in front of the judge. Nothing I could do, I thought, but shove right along with her.

And hear come de judge! The first was a guy in his fifties with wavy grey hair (greasy, actually), heavily pleated pants, and patent leather loafers who was a real showman. He moved one cat after the other out of its holding pen, pulling and stretching it and often holding it upside down. He whispered to the cats, made asides to the audience, castigated the owners when something was out of whack with a cat, but most of all spoke kitty talk to the animals. He even got into a harangue with one of the owners whose cat would not cooperate, began to pout, and refused to show it, forcing the woman owner to show her own pussy. He rewarded those (the kitties) who pleased him most with kisses on their lips.

He broke for lunch, and we wandered over to the second judging area. Here the judge was a middle-aged woman dressed mostly in gold rings and who sported a yellow bleached blond .5 inch butch cut. Well, that's what I called it anyway. She was great. When we showed some

interest and ignorance, she rewarded us with a brief overview of each brand of cat as they were displayed and inspected. She commented that a Egyptian something or other was the absolute best specimen she had seen and holding it just gave her goose bumps.

The third judge, a middle-aged male, carried on as if he and the cats were the only people in his area. It was so private that I was embarrassed, so we left early.

I can say that I have never seen people so knowledgeable about cats as were those 3 judges. I admired how intimate they got with the damn things and never once did the cat fight back. I have not picked up many cats, and never got anything close to intimate with one, but 2 out of 3 times I would pick up a cat, the thing would scratch me. So that's what we did on part of a rainy Sunday afternoon. As I often say, Ewejean just has so damn many fun things to do it tuckers a fellow out trying to do all of them.

APRIL 29, 1997, THE WATER PLACE

We are just into the second year of our home on Sand Avenue in Eugene, and one by one projects are being completed. A good start has been made on the Japanese garden. We still need to stick a few bamboo stakes here and there, and hopefully this summer we will get to the 'The Water Place.' Water is a feature that Theresa has wanted from day one of the garden, but is not a simple challenge. One must get the water from the source, in this case a faucet at the back of the house, to The Water Place. That seemed all there was to it, but as any landscaper would have predicted screwing a hose into the faucet and stringing it to The Water Place is more than a bit tacky. No, the hose must be buried. No big problem, but what about the issue of the exposed hose emerging from the earth and reaching up to the faucet. Not acceptable. So, the connection must be buried, and the burying process requires digging, pipe cutting, and pipe fitting among other tasks. So that will take awhile, and a little learning.

All that is simple compared to selecting or designing the actual Water Place. have you ever shopped for such a contraption? If not, you will be appalled at the costs of many. Five hundred dollars for a crude little number is nothing. of course they can be custom designed for lots more. Or, most any garden shop sells components and you can assemble your own. Buy an inexpensive pump, a little clear hose, a large container, only problem with these, at least those I have seen, is they look like an inexpensive pump, a little clear hose, a large container, and a sprinkle of a few pounds of rock. So The Water Place is going to take some creative thought.

In the meantime, Theresa still had her mind set on some water. Why not do an inside job, she suggested. Well, essentially, one faces the same, if smaller, design problem. The big difference, is the source of the circulating water. Instead of a faucet, there is a water reservoir that must be refilled as the water evaporates. The price is still outrageous, and the option of do-it-yourself is still open. I asked TR to be a bit more analytical in determining what she wanted in an indoor Water Place. She immediately took to the challenge with enthusiasm, as she does with any involvement in a problem solving exercise. Sound, she reported after an afternoon of thought.

Sound is what I cherish; the sound of gurgling water by the the kitchen sink running anytime she wanted. No, in addition to the sound of the bubbling water, it should be near the window. How about hidden in the corner of the room, I wondered. No it should be int he center of the window.

With those specs in mind, we began to shop. We hit Jerry Home Supply, a local competitor of Home Depot, first, and much to my surprise we found a self-contained Water Place that TR said would do just fine. It is a “Tabletop Found Gargoyle featuring 115v pump and connections, self contained fountain which provides relaxing and soothing waterfall sounds. A perfect gift for home, garden room, office and patio.” All for \$35.99, made in China. Well, we reasoned, China is a part of Asia, as is Japan, so we have her a generic Asian gargoyle fountain. So we purchased it, along with a bambooish looking plant that we put in a nice dark green pot.

It was a cinch to install, if that is the appropriate term. Deciding how to hide the electric cord was the only issue. So now we have a gargling Asian gargoyle just inside the large picture window. The gargoyle sits inside a little alter like shrine, which looks more Mayan than anything else to me, and water flows out of its mouth into a little holding pond then flows behind the shrine to a 115v pump and up and out of the gargoyle’s mouth and into...well, you get the picture. The mini-green bamboo plants sets it off nicely. It doesn’t look bad, and fits into the Japanese garden motif. The gurgling water, it turns out, can be a bit much. When the air conditioner and fridge are off, you can hear it in any room in the house. Faintly, but the gurgle is not to be ignored. It does have on strange effect; we both seem to be urinating more frequently than in pre-gargoylian days. But, hey, with three WCs that’s not really a problem. And it should get us through until the outside Water Place is developed. I never would have predicted how fun life in the fast lane could be!

OCTOBER 13, 1998, COOL!

Saturday turned out to be our next to the last shot with the grandchildren prior to their beginning their journey back to Sydney, Australia. The weather was brisk and sunny, so we headed out for Detering's Family Orchard, up north on Coburg Road, just a bit south of Harrisburg, outside of Eugene. That's about 4 miles north of Junction City, in case you don't know these parts. None of them had been in a real orchard, let alone pick an apple from a tree. The routine begins when you turn off Coburg Road and drive a long country mile to the farm house and fruit warehouse. There is a fairly large display area in front of the warehouse with two cash register set-ups. One never seems to work, so the process is slow, but then what the heck, no one is going anywhere anyway. The first part of the ritual is to meander over to the free cider cooler, pick up a paper cup and then draw it full of ice cold sweet cider and drink it. The next thing is to exchange a few words about how it is really hard to beat fresh ice cold cider. Everyone agrees and has another shot.

Feeling refreshed, we wander over to the huge pile of pumpkins and the kids began sizing up the options. There seems an endless variety of shapes and sizes, but sooner or later each kid has a short list in mind. When the selections are finally made, we send the youngest over to the cart corral with instructions to pull one back to us. Then we load it and walk about the fall produce displays, finally selecting some Hubbard squash and a couple good looking yams.

Interest is beginning to wain, so we haul our cart over to the register, get our purchases weighed and loaded into the trunk of the car. Probably over half of the working hands are Mexicans, and the kids have their first real opportunity to hear Oregon Spanish. I think that was unexpected. The area reserved for self-pick is less than a half mile away, but no one walks. The thing is, you get a very large white plastic bucket, load it into the trunk, and drive to the self pick section of the orchard. Each long row features a different variety of apple trees, identified by a variety of hand painted signs. We always concentrate on Empire because they make the best applesauce; no need to add sugar, just a few shakes of cinnamon. But, all apples cost the same at Detering's, so you are free to mix as much as suits you. I don't know if you have every been apple picking, but a long standing custom in most orchards is that it is perfectly permissible to pick an apple for free and take big bite out of it to see how it suits you. But before biting into it, it is important that you rub off the dust and spray residual. The kids were not privy to this custom, and experiencing it for the first time was a real winner. They were surprised that the more you rub a fresh picked apple on your shirt, the greater the shine you get.

The second part of the custom is that you are not required to eat the whole apple. If it doesn't suit your tastes, it is acceptable behavior to toss it on the ground. So it didn't take but a couple minutes until the three of them were working their way down the rows, picking, shining, biting, and tossing one variety after another. By the time they had enough pickin' and spittin', and each had decided which variety they liked best, the white bucket was full of Empires and we load it into the car and head back to the paying place.

We returned to Yoojeanne to our second main venue, a wonderful grocery store called Oasis. It features a huge assortment of food products, health foods, a bakery, and full deli. It also is fairly generous with give away tasties. Well, when we arrived mid-Saturday afternoon, it was give away tasties heaven! So while I shopped, and paid my respect to the wine steward who was doing a nice little selection of expensive reds, Theresa led an expedition through the delightful jungle of food stuff tasties. Oasis is the sort of place where kids with foreign accents (especially if it is a brand of English) have really easy pickings, so it was good eats and fun for all.

You know, I think they are too polite to tell us if all of this was a drag. They kept saying it was Cool, and since that is how I felt about the whole experience, I wasn't about to argue.

Way Cool Ripley here. I have heard more things being "cool" this past two weeks than I ever expected were. My Beanie Babies were "cool"; my genealogy charts were "cool"; our t-shirt quilt was "cool"; our computer room was "cool"; Jack's stamp collection was "cool"; Valley River

Center was "cool"; the bike paths were "cool"; the folding bikes were "cool"; and almost everything in Yewgene was "cool."

Well, I thought they were "way cool" myself. We have a ritual in our house that a number of you have experienced. We have a guest book we have people sign when we see them. The last time Sarah signed the book she was four and we were living in Tucson. Her name is there in big scrawny letters. Her mother asked what she wanted to say in the book and she said on May 24, 1988, "I like this place. I like the swimming pool."

Now we are over 10 years later and Sarah has signed once again and this time she said, "This place is soooo cool!! I love the carpet!" And she drew a picture of a dog. Younger Carly signed and she said, "This place has sooo many cool things!!!" And she drew a more abstract person. Seven-year old Ian signed but did not commit himself to anything and drew something that looks like a submarine.

I hope the next signing is sooner, or better yet, that they are here so much that it is not an event. That would be cool. This was a way, way cool time.

DECEMBER 22, 1998, MIRTH

Under the weather
Under the bed,
I'd prefer to be either
Than taken for dead.

Waiting for snow
On the wings of a blow,
A rare event here
Not especially dear.

Christmas confusing
Occasionally amusing,
More stress than hope,
But never say nope.

Short reprise from Congress

And a certain dress,
Certainly brief,
Ultimately drive us defe.

Elected stupidity
Much about nudity,
Embarrassment and devastation,
Not unlike constipation.

Lights in the East
In search of the beast,
Not all agree,
But difficult to see.

PCs and Macs
G-bites in stacks,
Remember the times
We saved a few dimes...

and went down the 5 and 10 and bought a little something for everyone and strayed up late making chocolate with nuts and pulling taffy and peeked if you could at what was wrapped under the tree or perhaps on the top shelf of the folk's closet and hoped that the relatives would not stay long or even better not come at all because it was more fun for just the family to be here, until about 2:30 p.m. when it seemed like good time to call a friend of two and see if a 10 cent movie matinee could be organized.

Movie Matinee Ripley here...geez, I don't think I've seen more than one or two other poems from Loughary. 'Tis the season as they say. But this season has religion, and politics, and war, and combinations of all kinds of strange things. It makes a person stop and wonder. And speaking of wonder, remember when you really did wonder about the magic of Christmas. I remember. I was about 5. My brother and mother took me out to the cob house in the early evening. (The cob house, if you wonder, is the place we really kept all the old corn cobs, which we used as fuel in our cookstove.) My brother asked me to listen, listen carefully. I did. I heard bells. I really did.

"It's Santa," he said. I believed. I went back inside and there was my father pointing to a new doll underneath the tree. Dad said Santa had been there when we were in the cob house. In the corner of the room were the old sleigh bells used on a horse and buggy when Dad was a kid. I never even suspected that Dad rang those bells. I really didn't.

If I can believe in that, I can probably believe again in politics and peace on earth good will to all. I'll really try.

APRIL 20, 1999, ANTS!

Spring came to the Willamette Valley. After an iffy Monday we are "supposed" to have several more days of sun. Many wonderful things come with spring such as leaves, beautiful rhododendrons blooms, and a growing number and kind of birds. The ants also arrive in spring, and that means war. We were surprised when they arrived, the house being only 3 years old. I spotted the first few near a kitchen window and after 4 hours of careful reconnaissance found the small crack which they were using as a launch pad. When our intelligence seemed to be reliable, I arranged for a strategy consultation with the head clerk in the hardware section of our BiMart store. After listening actively and thoughtfully, he made a strong recommendation for a TERRO ANT KILLER II campaign. This consists of putting a couple drops of TERRO ANT KILLER II (TAK2) on tiny pieces torn from the TAK2 carton, each marked "Place Terro Here". He, George the clerk, was kind enough to walk me through the exercise using an old sales receipt and couple drops of water to simulate the process.

I launched the attack as scheduled. There is a message on the TAK2 carton that reads, "First they (the sugar ants) come in large numbers, but soon disappear. Ants carry Terro back to their nests, often eliminating the entire colony. (Wow!) Complete control may take up to two weeks. Repeat as necessary."

That was two weeks ago. Sure enough the ants did as predicted. In a couple days we sealed up the tiny crack with some goopy sealer stuff. No more ants. Until yesterday. I returned to the reconnaissance and observation mode for most of the morning. Sure enough, another tiny crack at the bottom of the window sill. This came as a surprise, because in addition to TAK2, we had implemented a second line of defense, viz., ringing the house with Grant's Ant Control System stakes (GACS). GACS "contains a special formula that attracts scout ants seeking food for their colony. They take the poison back home, where it is eaten by both the queen and the workers ants. The weakened or destroyed colony can no longer infest your home." It doesn't say what happens to the scouts, but you can probably draw your own inference.

So, only a few minutes ago we completed loading up a couple 'Place Terro Here' tabs and setting them on the window sill. There are only two tabs remaining on the carton, so you can imagine that the mood is cautious to say the least. Theresa says that the damn ants can't read so we could probably use any old piece of card board. Maybe, but this is really not her area of expertise.

This reminds me of the time when I was a kid and my Uncle, on my Dad's side, had an ant problem to beat all ant problems. (I nearly slipped and wrote aunt, and while he had difficulties there as well, that is another story.) My uncle had been fighting ants in his kitchen for about a week. Every time he thought he had them beat, they would appear again in great numbers. Finally, he asked his older brother, who was my dad, if he had any ideas? Well, Dad who considered himself quite a good thinker and problem solver, said sure and drove our 32 Ford over to his place. I went along.

The two of them decided that the first thing to do was complete a thorough inspection of the area in question, which by then was the whole kitchen which spanned the back side of the house. Within about 30 minutes they had cleared the cupboards, drawers and shelves of dishes, utensils and food. The good news was that there was not an ant to be seen. Next the flashlights came out and we peered into every nook and cranny. It was Dad, as I recall, that spotted the thin line of ants marching along under the sink. We pointed all three lights under the sink, and the original sighting was confirmed. There was an ever so tiny crack where the wall met the floor under the sink. The ants wandered in and out. Then my uncle noticed that there were more ants moving in and out on the drain pipe where it passed through the outside wall.

I figured this was the first step and wondered what came next. Seal the cracks, I supposed. But my uncle thought it best to follow up and find out just "where in hell the damned ants were coming from." Dad agreed, noting to me that where there were a couple ants there was probably a colony. So, they started prying here and pounding there and before you knew it had the drain pipe unhooked and the sink removed. That didn't help much, so next my uncle went outside and pulled the pipe clear out of the house. Still no ant colony. My uncle, who was not known for his patience, grabbed his claw hammer and a small nail puller and proceeded to remove a strip of shiplap siding. Finally, he found more ants. Much encouraged, he pulled another piece of shiplap, each rendering a few more ants, but no colony. Things sort of got out of hand at that point, and sooner than you would think he and Dad had removed all of the siding from the back of the house.

Actually, as Dad reminded me later, it really wasn't my uncle's house. He was just renting. We stopped to eat some cold beans and warmed over coffee for lunch, and when we came back to the battlefield, there was not an ant to be seen. Dad reasoned to us that maybe all our stomping and banging around drove them off. My uncle was prone to take the conservative route, as he saw it, and argued for removing random samples of shiplap from the remaining three sides of the house which might reveal ants on the run. Dad persuaded him that waiting until morning may be a wiser way to go. And so it was. As far as I ever learned, the ants never returned to my uncle's house. Fortunately, it was several days before my uncle got around to replacing the shiplap siding so if the ants were going to return they probably would have by then.

You would think that I could learn something from my uncle's experience, but unfortunately our house is sided with drivet, a sort of stucco like material. You just don't pull drivet off and then nail it back again. When it comes off, it is a pile of rubble. So, if TAK2 doesn't work, we are

in real trouble. I just ran downstairs to find, much to my relief, the TAK2 seems to be doing its stuff! So cross your fingers.

JULY 27, 1999, COMPETITION SORTING

The finish to the annual sorting effort is near. It began about three weeks ago and I am told should be done by not later than this coming Friday. Theresa is a very good sorter. If competition sorting were possible, she would be in the final four every year. She is not nearly as good at throwing out. Being the trash taker out, I monitor such behavior and can attest that there has been no statistically significant increase in the amount of material deposited in the waste basket in her room. The purpose of sorting, I thought initially, was deciding what to throw out. Otherwise, why sort? I have not discovered the answer yet, but values do change. For example, when I finished sorting the shirts in my closet, I had pulled about eight and transferred them to St. Vincent de Paul box in the garage. (Being raised Catholics, we lean toward St. Vince, secretly believing it has a bit more class than Goodwill Industries.) But, one by one I retrieved all but 2 shirts before the day was over. Overall, however, I can hold my own with the best of them when it comes to throwing out.

Sorting is organized into three efforts; hers, mine, ours. The first two are very private with no kibitzing allowed. The third is dedicated to a review of family and joint professional material and projects. Needless to say, that collection remains relatively stable. Materials are regrouped, moved to new files or shelves and occasionally something is given the heave ho. But, not often.

Sorting has led to a fast decrease of my own possessions. Several years ago, I had note pads from 27 hotels, foreign as well as domestic. I think I have 5 now. During the same time period, I've managed to sort and discard nearly 4 mugs full of ball point pens collected from a variety of hotels and other sources. Last year, I disposed of five decades worth of correspondence, which suddenly seemed boring and irrelevant to anything I cared about. What is left, except the trombone I played in high school and college and two large Zilgen Cymbals from my band-leading days, are several folders of brilliant, but unfinished manuscripts. These include several potentially Pulitzer class novels, world shaking pieces of social commentary, 23 introductions to insightfully humorous books and stories based on my own much admired life experiences and 43 first pages of excruciatingly revealing personal diaries. The fate of all these is to be determined this week.

Other decisions that must be made are about giving away my first computer, an Osborne if anyone recalls, and the manuals for the second version of WordPerfect. The Osborne, invented by an Englishman with the same name as the first portable and about the size and weight of a 1999 desktop machine, has an approximately four by four inch monitor. Not much call for them. You loaded whatever program you were using in one floppy drive, and your data disk in the second one. We were elated the day we discovered, by accident, that we could generate LARGE print.

Winter would seem a more appropriate season for sorting, but when playing with the pros it probably is wiser to stay the course as defined.

AUGUST 10, 1999, DIRTY LINEN

You may find this hard to believe, but in our nearly 15 years of living together we have purchased a total of 2 (count em, 2) sets of bed sheets. I don't have any normative data on bed clothing, but I wouldn't be surprised if that is some sort of record, at least for people who sleep on sheets. The first set, still serviceable, is easily accessible as a back up vehicle, if you are willing to stretch the metaphor. But, alas, as I was stripping the bed Sunday morning I discovered a hole in the fitted sheet large enough to drive the Orient Express through. I noted this to Theresa, and her response was plain and simple denial, asking if I knew what a set would cost? I didn't, so she answered her own question in a slightly condescending manner that it would be around 100 bucks. But, when she stuck her arm through the hole, she agreed we could at least look.

I recall being told some time back that the local May Company outlet always has sheets and such things on sale every weekend. Doesn't make any sense to me, but it turned out to be correct. There was even a special sale. Theresa decided that we had to go for top of line stuff, but the bottom line was that the bill was still just under \$100. Had we gone for new pillow slips, we would have been over the century mark. But, because for some reason we have a surplus of pillow slips, all in better than average (I assume) condition, we skipped the slips. But, thinking of pillow slips reminded me of just how disgustingly ratty one of my pillows is. A year or so ago, I treated myself to two feather pillows, but within 30 minutes after hitting the hay realized they were measurably over my allergy threshold. So they were trickled over to Theresa, which I didn't resent in the least, but nevertheless resulted in my taking up again with my miserable rat's nest. So, I asked the saleswoman if she could show me pillows. She was too busy at the moment, but passed me on to a young, pimply faced fellow with a tarnished ring in his ear. The kid was obviously new on the job, and after I led him to where I thought we would find the pillow section and did, he turned and started to leave. I was surprised to discover that a pillow stuffed with shredded plastic could be purchased for \$9.99 on that particular Sunday afternoon. Even though he had not yet demonstrated any interest in us, I asked him if he was informed regarding pillows, and if so, could he share some of his knowledge with us. Sure, was his reply. I see there is quite a price range, I noted. "Yup," he confirmed. And size, I asked? "Reglur, queen and king," he offered.

Even though we do a king bed, the pillow arrangement of our choice is 4 reglurs, so that could be an easy choice. He was warming up to us by now, and even though I thought the dialogue had ceased, he seem interested in continuing it.

"Stomach or Back?", he asked. I requested that he clarify the question. "Do you sleep on your stomach or back?" he expanded. Apparently, Theresa took my lack of an immediate response as either confusion or an aging moment, and said the I was a back sleeper.

"Well", I corrected as soon as I was able to regain my wits, "that isn't actually the case. The truth is I'm a side sleeper." As she tossed a questioning glance my way, I explained that when I start to sleep I'm on my tum tum, but soon assume a side position, and because that was usually after she had nodded off her misperception was easily understood.

The kid was really into the exchange by now, offering that he was also a side sleeper. As we bonded, I gave him a kind smile, and asked what difference does my sleeping position make? "Its how you pick out hardness," he replied. I admitted that I was ignorant of any options in that regard and asked what they might be? "Soft, medium, and hard. Hard is best for side sleepers. I got two pillows, medium and hard, and sometimes I switch around, but hard is really the best for side sleeping."

Okay, I said, and he handed me a pillow which we took, along with our sheets to the cashier. I was eager now, so as soon as we arrived home, I unpacked the pillow, yanked the ratty number out of its case, and began replacing it with the new one. It simply wouldn't fit. Theresa offered that I wasn't using the correct technique, and that she would in-service me. Ha! She had the same problem. Quick witted as I am, I retrieved the plastic wrapper and was able to read in large print the world Queen.

Needing a sense of closure, I repackaged the queen and returned to the store, found the cashier who had observed most of this event, and asked if I could simply switch pillows. Not that simple, she noted asking for my sales receipt. Turns out that the queen I had been given was \$11.99, so they needed to do a credit and new charge, thus adjusting my Visa account by \$2.00. The side sleeping kid with the ring in his ear was nowhere insight.

Nowhere in sight Ripley. Geez, I just knew Jack would, if he told this story, reveal we had only owned two pair of sheets in our life. Embarrassed or proud? My embarrassed side says most people must buy new sheets at least once a year and throw out any old ones in the linen closet. My proud side says my mother would think it damn thrifty and would totally approve of my ability to take care of 220 threads of cotton thread per inch with such care. But, I admit, it seems a little silly that we've had more new houses than new sheets in the last decade. (By the way, the hole was on Jack's side!)

Most couples start out their married lives by having umpteen wedding showers and friends and family "shower" them with pair after pair of linens, including fine sheets. Since we said our vows unknown to anyone of the isle of Kauai, we skipped the shower part of the event. Thus, no sheets. Too bad, since I'd bought many a linen gift in my life for others. Need I say none of the homes we've built has a linen closet, more like one drawer in a bath vanity is needed.

But not to obsess on my keeping up with the Jones' linen paranoia, let us get back to the method of sleeping story as told by the bleached blond young man with the ear ring in his ear. Being interested in good sleeping, but lacking time in the linen/pillow area of major department stores for years because of our lack of need, I had no idea that pillows were labeled back, tummy, and side sleepers. One wonders what to do if you go from one to the other position over a course

of an evening. Should you have all pillows by the bedside, covered in a different feel of cloth, so you easily move from one to the other as needed? Or I could put a mountain of pillows between Jack and myself and we could both pull off the same pile as positions changed.

I'll think I'll think about this more tonight if I can't sleep, no matter what the position, and perhaps check out the blond wonder boy tomorrow for further advice and education. Have a restful evening and a very good Tuesday.

Tuesday Letters 2000-2002

As we wound our way into a new century and past Y2K, which had us all excited, the Tuesday Letters continued. As Jack counted down to his 70th birthday in November 2000, the Tuesday Letters were in their 7th year.

AUGUST 15, 2000, PATIENCE (?)

There are projects one takes on willingly, knowing full well the pitfalls that may be on the road to completion. Home remodeling is one of those. Several months ago, we decided that doing some minor changes to the Youjeanne abode seemed the right thing to do. We checked our assumptions with our contractor, namely that our desires were relatively simply and easy to achieve, and he said, "Sure, piece of cake," or something to that effect. "What's a little tile and a hunk of new carpet?"

So, after a reasonably long conference, a date was set and we thought it was all settled. Then weeks went by and we heard nothing about further developments. We assumed of course, that, 1. he was OUR contractor, 2. He was hungry for work, and 3. Whatever else might come up, OUR project would be foremost on his to do list. After all, he built our place only 5 years ago, and it is only reasonable to believe that he remains OUR contractor.

About 6 weeks before D-Day, we called him and he assured us that the world was still going 'round, no one to his knowledge had broken the law of gravity, and yes he would ask the tile guy and carpet woman to contact us. They did, soon, too. Both very efficient, they came, conferred, took measurements, made suggestions and confirmed dates. Then they disappeared. It was simply a mystery to us as to how they could carry on with OUR project without being in at least daily contact with us. But, they weren't. Thus, last week we came to the end of our collective patiences and put in calls. If you had a similar experience with contractor people, you will immediately recognize that we suddenly had entered the cell phone world of construction. It is a world in which little if anything gets written down, and at least a quarter of every sub's hour is spent talking to the main contractor, material suppliers, other subs, and the blond he would like to date more often and the wife who wonders why he is never home for lunch anymore. A visitor from the recent past would be totally befuddled regarding how the contracting business has evolved due to the cell phone.

I suppose we could have left well enough alone and stayed out of the whole smear, just waiting patiently to see what developed. But, of course, we didn't. We phoned, left messages, phoned more and left more messages. Finally, last night we simply gave up and began organizing the targeted area for the anticipated assault, hoping to save whatever other areas we could from damage. Paintings were stored in the powder room, dining area furniture was shoved into the

remainder of the big room, and critical kitchen cabinets were emptied into a couple large GateWay computer boxes which were more or less hanging around the garage waiting to be useful.

This created a very white and totally sparse area which was once referred to as the kitchen and eating area. I was quite a shock to enter this morning, but that was relieved to some extent by the knowledge that the tile people were coming. Except, you guessed it, they didn't. Eight a.m.; no tile people. Eight-thirty, no tile people. Then, the phone rang and it was the tile guy calling to say that he was at the supply store and would be out soon. Wondering why he suddenly decided to include us in the information loop, we nevertheless waited gleefully.

The tile guy and his brother arrived, unloaded the supplies, and then wanted to have a conference. I didn't know we were in a conference until his cell phone rang and after a bit of joking about with the caller, said that he was in a conference and would call back. Meeting, conversation, but conference? But, happy to have his attention back, the tile guy began a careful explanation of how they had worked all weekend trying to finish up another job, but hadn't quite completed it. He noted that his main purpose in coming by this morning was to bring us up to date on the situation, and then outline the strategy he had developed for our job. As he began a detailed description of his plan of attack, I asked if he could just jump to the bottom line and a summary. The long and short of it was his question, "Just how late could we work tonight without bothering you?"

We settled for seven or eight at the latest, knowing that for the first time in years we would probably be watching the tonight show. Our strategy, you will understand, was to get the tile guys started so at least we would be the job he was trying to finish so that he could get started on the next. And, we now understood why the job had been scheduled to last 5 or 6 days rather than the 3 which seemed adequate to me, a construction worker of years back.

They are actually nice guys, so, why not make an adventure out of it, we rationalized, thankful that we were the doers, not the doees.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2000, THE CASE OF THE BAD FLAPPER

Theresa is out and about this beautiful fall morning in the Willamette valley and that provides me with the ideal time to complete the last phase of our plumbing rehabilitation project. It began as a simple "The upstairs toilet is making funny noises again, Jack, please fix it" problem, but not for long. After kicking the tires, wiggling the handle on the flushing lever and raising and lowering the seat and cover several times, I reported that as far as I could determine, it was fixed. Then, in the middle of the night this muffled voice, which I deduced had to be Theresa's unless I was having an unusual kind of dream, awoke me saying, "Hear it, Hear it! I thought you said you fixed the damn thing, but there it goes again."

Well, I couldn't hear a thing besides the bugs buzzing around in the hosta plants outside the open window. But, with a quick witted effort for which I should receive some recognition, I threw off the covers, found the stairs, wound my way up to the toilet and still in somewhat of a daze turned the water valve to off.

Settled back again in the arms of Morpheus, it seemed only an instant before I felt a sharp poke in my back and a public announcement to the effect that "It is doing it again." The "it" was apparently the soft grumbling sound that could soon lead to a serious case of marital discord unless put to a stop. Rising once again to the occasion, I moved rapidly up the stairs (being sure of my footing by now) to the toilet. It appeared that in addition to turning off the water supply, it would have been a good idea to also drain the tank, thus shutting down the total system, which then I did with the flick of a handle, which corrected the tank water level condition, but only at the expense of a noisy second floor middle-of-the-night toilet flush, if you know what I mean.

I came to my senses early in the morning, and after waiting until 7:30 which I assumed was a reasonable time for plumbers to be in their plumbing shops, called good old Don who did the original plumbing of the house and has rescued us from imminent disaster on an occasion or two since then. Mrs. Plumber who handles the shop phone, the latter being in an extension of Don's garage, politely informed me that Don had retired and was not taking any new work. You can understand how crushed I felt at being demoted from regular customer status. The pain was lessened when Mrs. Plumber quickly reassured me that Don was now referring his "old customers" to an outfit named "So & So Plumbing". She is a nice and considerate lady and all that, but I admit to a sudden feeling of abandonment and a sense that someone was kidding someone. I know a little about high tech which led me to question its role in residential water movement systems. In fact, I've more than once taken some comfort in the low technology associated with domestic plumbing. It's an Everyman's kind of thing, you know; something that even I can understand, involving such straight forward principles such as water seeks its own level, doesn't run up hill naturally and has a lot more force than most people think.

There is a point in home maintenance...I'm certain some of you must have reached it yourselves...that you grasp whatever hand is offered. Trying to sound brave and knowing, I phoned the So & So Plumbing number supplied to me. The phone lady answered with a reasonably cheerful "Smith Plumbing. How can we help". It took only a short conversation to reassure me that I had in fact reached So & So Plumbing, Inc., which was owned by a fellow named Smith. She, the phone lady, had never heard of Don's Plumbing, but in spite of that could have a journeyman plumber on site first thing Monday.

Monday, the journeyman from Smith So & So Plumbing arrived. He was pleasant and immediately went about attending to the three issues I identified. By now, it seemed a good idea to also investigate the leak in the food disposal unit which appeared shortly after the tile layer finished tiling the kitchen counter and replacing the sink and disposal, and a four year dripping problem in Theresa's vanity faucet which she cleverly controls by strategically turning the faucet to a secret midpoint between off and almost off. I can never find the precise position, so when in some unthinking automatic response I turn the water on in her vanity sink, I have to call upon

her to turn it off. There was also the matter of replacing the vanity sink itself, it having an ever growing crack. Sure, said the plumber; you buy a sink and I'll be happy to install it. "Be a lot cheaper for you, that way." He told me where to go and the model number to purchase.

"Your toilet problem," he said, returning to the paramount issue, "is a bad flapper." Now that, I thought, is where the high tech plumbing issue rises to the surface. You can imagine my embarrassment, especially considering my projected bravado regarding an understanding of plumbing terminology and principles, that I had to admit not having the slightest idea of what a flapper might be. All I could think of was a dress I had seen my mother wearing in an old black and white photo. "A flapper", the journeyman instructed in his best toilet side manner, "is the little rubber thingie that flaps down over the drain in the toilet tank so that the water will rise to the prearranged level when the toilet is flushed. You know, how it stops just before it rises to the top of the drain pipe in the tank?"

I did, indeed, having been fascinated by this phenomenon since I about five and first peered over the edge and down into the dark waters of a toilet tank. So he replaced the worn flapper with a new pink one. Sort of cute, in a Beanie Baby sort of way. That concluded the morning session, not having the appropriate washer or high tech wrench to tackle the other items. He would return in a week to complete the job, god willing the parts were in and he could find the correct wrench.

By early afternoon, however, the toilet was grumbling again. Fortunately, our contractor stopped by to see how the redecorating project was going, and was able to provide an immediate diagnosis to the flapper problem. "Got the wrong brand of flapper," he declared immediately demonstrating his command of the high tech plumbing lingo. "You need a Kohler brand flapper made especially for a Kohler toilet." Further, he instructed me to contact Dottie at a designated plumbing fixture store. Dottie used to work at another supplier, but she recently moved. Dottie, as it turns out, is the best informed supply clerk in Youujeanne when it comes to plumbing fixtures, and word among contractors is, "Play it safe and follow Dottie. Damn the dealers; just follow Dottie."

Dottie, as you would expect by now, was out to lunch when I called the store, but I was told that Alex could help. What a find this Alex turns out to be. He smelled a problem, and instructed me to look inside the toilet bowl and copy down all the numbers I could see. There were a bunch of them, and a couple did the trick. Given that information, Alex went to an old edition of the Kohler catalog and located the new part number for the old part number I had supplied. The only problem, according to Alex's computer, was that the Youujeane store was out of that particular flapper. He would order it and it should be delivered Monday morning. I requested him to please order three flappers while he was at it. I know about high tech, back up systems and all that stuff.

I just phoned Alex, and he says the part is in, according to his computer. However, he has not been able to locate it per se. I have confidence, however. Three pink toilet tank flappers can't be too difficult to locate, especially if they stay together.

In the Pink Ripley here. It is now three hours later, and Jack is back with one blue toilet tank flapper. "What happened to pink?" I said. So far I don't have a cogent answer, and one blue flapper is all that could be found in the store, the other two still en-route. The second mystery is that the gold vanity parts appeared in our mailbox about an hour ago. They were not there on Saturday. Today's mail has not yet come, and our box is keyed, thus making it impossible for a neighbor to place a missent item in ours. Bottom line is we have all the necessary parts in the house, but I wonder if we will have working plumbing pieces anytime in the near future.

As all of you, I've had my share of history with various kinds of plumbing, some with fewer problems than others. Growing up, the biggest "plumbing" problem was shoving out the outhouse. That, too, caused problems but it was done without contacting High Tech Removers. When living as a single person, I had a peaceful coexistence with plumbing problems (you don't overly bother me, and I won't overly bother you.) In Charbonneau, I recall the two times of bursting freezing pipes and the possibility of our bathroom turning into the neighborhood swimming pool. One of these occurrences was on Christmas Eve and the plumber almost stayed through to Christmas day. What a guy! And here, several times, we've had overflow water, but luckily on tile, not carpet (one learns from one house to the next.)

I've asked Jack if he was waiting for the plumber to put in the blue flapper, "nope, not necessary." Ah...what words to hang on to...I wonder if going back to shoveling out is a option?

OCTOBER 10, 2000, SOLE FOOD

I spent considerable time and energy shopping for a pair of shoes yesterday. I already own more than a few pair, so this might seem a frivolous and wasteful behavior to many. It could be a function of my childhood when we children were only allowed two pairs of shoes at any one time. One was the school pair, the other the play pair. As you can easily guess, the shoes played dual roles, the school pair eventually (about every 12 months) taking over as the play pair, the latter being nearly expired, at least as a working pair of shoes. In reflecting on this in mature adult years, I think it had something to do with my mother's perspective of family economics during the great depression. While certain items are clearly consumable, groceries for example, others were not, and therein was the problem of when to replace them. School and play were obvious functions with different shoe requirements, at least from her perspective, and thus a handy criterion for purchasing footwear.

As I grew older the play part of the criterion became "after work" and until I was probably thirty I seldom owned more than two pairs of shoes simultaneously. Then, on the occasion of my being promoted to associate professor, anal retentive view of footwear ownership was revolutionized, and thereafter I have owned more shoes than I every deserved or even needed. Sunday, thus, was not a day of need but of greed. I simply wanted a pair of clogs to replace the pair of house slippers that Theresa gave to me 4 years and ago and which I have had resoled

three times. The cobbler looked at me strangely the first time, but since has come to accept resoling houses slippers as an acceptable, if not normal, request.

My shoe, or clog to be more precise, of choice was the Clarks brand. Clarks are a classy and reliable English brand that the Chinese have been manufacturing for years. They are very comfortable, as many of you may know, and the only negative aspect is that they are, as my cobbler says, "wear and throw" shoes. That is, it is not effective to repair them, the inside of the shoe being essentially compressed air. Nevertheless, I stand by them, pun not intended, and so returned home happily with my new Clark clogs, a wonderful replacement for my aging house slippers.

As I removed them from the box and started to wad and discard the tissue wrapping paper, a two inch square of thin clear plastic fluttered to the floor. Printed in successive lines, as is often the case of rolls of labels were a series of markings, each consisting of the letters WO and a series of 5 Chinese characters and indented under these, all in caps, the words DO NOT EAT. Being certain that the warning referred to the shoes, not the notice itself, I was nevertheless confused.

At first, I wondered about the intended reader. Taken category by category, it seems reasonable to assume that any adult English reader would not benefit from such a caution, having sufficient social conditioning to know enough not to eat raw shoes, or cooked ones for that matter. If the poor soul (sorry again) were that desperate, then one would image that cooking would at least lessen whatever risk exists. As for non-English readers, I think we can give them the benefit of the doubt. And any child, whether reading or not, would almost certainly have picked up via observation that people do not eat shoes. I know my kids didn't, not do I every recall my sister ever telling me about her kids having an abnormal craving for leather.

Having resolved all that, the next thing to speculate was how such a warning came to be. Was it from the corporate level, of some less educated inspector with an urge to show off his minimal authority? Corporate, I bet. And probably at the group level. I can imagine the Executive Committee huddled around the large mahogany table, charts on the wall, lap top computers turned on, attempting to create the proper message. The key to an answer, for me at least was whether the Executive Committee was English or Chinese. Were it the former, the mystery was gone. If, however, the setting was the executive offices of a Chinese factory, I was stumped. I concluded, after more thinking, that it was the Englishmen who were responsible, otherwise the message would have been inside a fortune cookie. Ah so, Trevor!

OCTOBER 24, 2000, WEIGH-IN

We have wrestled with a health maintenance problem for several years, and even though it is not major, it is annoying. The good news is that I believe we finally found a solution. I pass this on assuming that some of you may have faced a similar challenge. On second thought, however, the solution is so obvious that if you have, you probably also came upon the answer.

The problem centers around a weight monitoring system, sometimes referred to as a bathroom scale. You don't have to keep it in the bathroom, but that is where, by custom I suppose, we keep ours. Well, custom and the first one probably had the word bathroom on the box, but that is neither here nor there and I do wander. Three years ago, with some urging on my part, we decided to abandon the unhealthy looking yellow machine, the Counselor, that Theresa brought into our family. God only knows how long she had it. It was an ongoing cosmetic decision. She claimed it provided reliable measurements. I give her that, but she had to agree that the Counselor was developing a life of its own, and an odor in the process. The replacement machine was, again according to the printing on the box, a Digital Scale. That it was, which I think was intended by the manufacturer (a Chinese firm) to be somehow in our favor. Even though a step up regarding cosmetic appeal, some of the digits in the machine were apparently out of whack. To put it operationally, any four successive weightings of the same person within in a 90 second period would often vary by as much as two pounds. The dial on the thing read out in half pound intervals, so there is considerable math and imagination required to operate it.

This gave me no great concern, there being a number of other issues I prefer to address. Over a week or two, I tended to come out about right, weight-wise. I think there was a correlation with full moons because every month my readout returned to where it had been a month prior. Theresa was not as accepting of the machine's unreliability. And, as any fool knows, small things can be important in couple relationships, so I gave her concern my total problem solving attention. I even went so far as to suggest that she institute a fasting day each week as a solution, but that sunk like a two and a half pound variance.

Theresa, as is her manner, read up on the subject. She learned that what she now refers to a spring-loaded scale was the answer to the problem. We purchased what appears to be a spring loaded Health-o-Meter for under \$20 at the local PayLess. In addition to a normal scale meter, it has five little moveable markers that can be slid around the dial, indicating, as it were, one's previous or ideal or fantasy or whatever weight. It also has a little a tiny adjusting wheel on the front to correct any measurement errors. The instructions were to give it several test drives by getting on, reading, getting off, getting on, reading, etc. for a minute or so, and resetting the dial to zero, if need be, until reliability was achieved. To further test the Health-O-Meter, Theresa moved the digital scale (which I noticed by chance this morning is also a Health-O-Meter) to the powder room. I think she is doing a comparative reliability study, because I notice each morning immediately after arising, she makes several trips from one scale to another.

The solution to which I referred earlier is more straightforward, but involves a degree of trust. It amounts to climbing aboard the spring-loaded Health-O-Meter and then taking a reading. If the result is what one would like it to be, fine. If not, simply adjust the meter marker in the correct direction. For example, my target weight this week is 145. This morning the Health-O-Meter read 146, a pound over. I got off of the scale, did a quick if fuzzy calculation, and moved MY marker up from 145 to 146. It is the marker not the meter to which I attend. If the scale error continues, I can correct it with a smooth turn of the screw, moving the dial up or down to accommodate for the machine's meter error. A two-pronged tactic, one might say. I plan

on repeating the procedure each day, thus keeping the Health-0-Meter in perfect adjustment. I mentioned there was a degree of trust involved. Another scientific health maintenance breakthrough brought to by ThinkPint!

Co-ThinkPint thinker Ripley here. Ah, finally a thinking problem we can all sink our collective teeth into. I would imagine there are some Tuesday Letter readers out there that never weigh themselves, then, there will be those that, like me, weigh themselves every day.

But, I digress. Jack failed to mention a few specifics in the search for the perfect weighting machine. It's true that I brought the old Counselor weighing scale into the family. I'd used it for years and it always was trusty. But then a few years ago, I noted that whenever I went to my yearly nurse practitioner exam, she said I weighed about four pounds more than my scales said. So...last year we bought the first digital machine. Immediately I weighed four pounds more. That machine lasted about three months and then gave up. One morning no lighted numbers. Evidently it was not as trusty as the Counselor. Not thinking to keep a sales slip of the scales, (the former had been so trusty for so MANY years), we went back to our trusty BiMart store and they gave us a new digital machine. Ah, trusty customers get trusty new scales. Or so we thought.

Then the problems above began happening. I used the daily average technique for months, weighing as much as two pounds different within 30 seconds. Finally, I was inspired by a friend who was trying to lose 40 pounds. I told her I would try to lose 4 pounds while she tried to lose 40. It was about what I wanted to lose, and here was an opportunity to be supportive and reach a goal of mine as well. She is doing successfully in weigh reduction, but, until Saturday I had yet to lose one pound. Ah, better measurement, I thought, that would be the answer and the motivator.

So...the new, hopefully trusty, scale was purchased. First day on the new spring-loaded scale and I had lose 6 pounds from the previous day on the digital scale! What to do...well, for the last two mornings it has me pattering back and forth on cold mornings between bathroom and powder room and two readings in the latter and trying to come up with a number that is reasonable for recording.

It's enough to make you want to find an old Counselor scale at Goodwill. Or just go eat a chocolate chip cookie. I'm sure I'll lose weight just pattering back and forth between the two scales.

FEBRUARY 27, 2001, HIRED HELP

It is such a beautiful Monday here that I set aside some of my serious writing plans and opted for garden work. Even though it brought me a pleasant hour and quarter of weeding, raking and trimming, it also reminded me of the recurring thought that it would be nice to abandon this particular chore. I increasingly voice this concern to Theresa. The lawn is part of our homeowner's association ransom, but the garden is not. And the garden, as gardens will, has

grown to full maturity in five years. Maintaining it has its positives and negatives. I have enumerated these to Theresa each time I raise the topic for discussion. She now is to the point of saying, "For god's sake, why don't you hire some middle school kid to do the weeding and raking?" I always reply that its more than that. There is the trimming too. "Well, then hire the garden guy to do that! We can afford it. If it makes you feel better, you can give up a bottle of Scotch which will just about cover the fee." Sometimes she can get mean.

Besides, there is the physical conditioning benefit, I remind her. "The exercise is really beneficial." She smiles and says that I'm certainly on to something there, noting that such insight might be due to my training as a social scientist. But, in a more positive note, today she offered a suggestion. "Maybe you should join one of those spa exercise deals," she advanced firmly. "It couldn't hurt you, and it might provide just the right excuse for giving up gardening." Always the creative problem solver, her.

I noted that I had thought of that and just last week having actually stopped by the Youoojeane Beautiful Body Builder Builders establishment, just to see what they had to offer. I wasn't surprised; there were machines, ball courts, a swimming pool, sauna and whatever else one might need on the road to body building. Unfortunately, I added, that many of the bodies in building were in such serious trouble and as a matter of fact the main impact of viewing them was depression. I wondered if I were capable of coping, should I join?

She looked kindly at me again and said, "Well Smilin' Jack, if its your mental health you are concerned about, be careful to keep your eyes straight ahead as you pass by the full mirror in the bathroom."

I couldn't see much value in continuing the conversation, so I didn't. Nevertheless, I focused on the original presenting problem for the remainder of the afternoon. It has many dimensions. One for example, is the value of my time. Had I continued working in the academic vineyard, my wages would by now be impressive. Far too much to pay someone for doing weed pulling, trimming and raking. In other words, it was clear from that perspective that I can't afford to hire myself to look after the garden. Forget that perspective. So, let's be honest about the health benefits, I thought. My thought about that is that if you are capable of doing the sort of light physical work entailed in gardening, you probably aren't benefiting in that regard from doing it.

Eventually, I took a much more altruistic view, namely, what benefits might a middle school student derive from taking on such a part time job. Many, obviously, including a sense of self worth, learning the real value of work, skills building, and not least of all, the psychological payoff of working hand in hand on an equal basis with a sensitive mature adult father figure. The answer to my question was clear. Cease thinking about myself, and look to what I might do for a needy youth. The obvious answer to my concern was to provide a part time job opportunity to some deserving middle school student.

Now, the only question is how much will I have to pay the little bastard.

Ripley here...ah, we can see immediately that the "sensitive mature adult father figure" is coming right to the forefront.

It is true that Jack and I have had this conversation on more than one occasion. One has to pick their occasions cautiously, as I've found out over the years that it is not the opportune time to suggest giving up the garden duty when Jack is six weeks into serious back pain after a particular serious session of "weeding, raking, and trimming." Usually, he comes to that idea himself after two weeks of not being able to move. Then the pain passes, and also the notion of giving over this duty to someone else. But then I read material that says never to give up physical activity because of pain, and I relent on my own suggestions. It's his call.

But there is another, more germane, issue. Can the "sensitive mature adult father figure" merely look out the window and supervise work activities in HIS garden, or will the supervisor go from sneaking a glance out the window....to going outside for a suggestion or two....to manning the rake showing the right way to do it....to telling the so-called "little bastard" he'll pay him not to come around again?

MAY 22, 2001, BAA, WHISTLE, BAA

Tenured TuesLet Recipients (note, after the November Election we are careful to avoid the word subscribers) may recall our past adventure at Sheep Dog Trials. It is Spring again and the dogs are on trial at selected sites. One is a burg known as Scio, Oregon. It is about a 60 minute run North, North East of Yoooojeanne. We attended several years back, but since then the affair has put on some class, now referring to the weekend as The Northwest Sheep Dog (two words) Trials. The trials are a major component of the Linn County Lamb and Wool Fair. This year's theme is (hey, you were ahead of the curve): 2001: A Sheep Odyssey. We've missed a couple years and were pleased to see that the Lamb Fair Court Returns. Seven fair maids from Scio High School from the junior class make up the Royal Court (what happened to the senior class may be another story). The formal photo of the Royal Court Princesses (everyone was wearing a formal gown, wool or synthetic) consisting of seven Princesses. The special issue of the Scio Community News made no mention of one being queen, and while that may have been an oversight, it is nice to think that maybe they shared equally in the glory. Once in a life time experience: why not share it?

The dogs are all Border Collies and they seem to be bonded to their owners. The nice thing about these Border Collies is that they don't bark. The nice thing about their owners is that they are careful about where the dogs are permitted to poop. We ate lunch in a grove of Oaks, and except for there being more dogs than I care to be around, the luncheon interlude was pleasant. Theresa pointed out that it would be difficult if not unrealistic to have sheep dog trials without dogs and I agreed she had a point. I couldn't help recalling again the great one liner response a dog owner made to an inquiring reporter in New Zealand: "How do you keep them from barking," she asked? "Why would I have a barking dog?" he replied.

There is much to be learned from this relationship between sheep dogs and their owners. In this particular event, a herd of six sheep are located at one end of a mile long pasture. At the other end waits a dog and his or her owner. The owner has a staff and whistle; the dog is nude. The owner toots the whistle and the dog really speeds to the other end of the field where the sheep are waiting. Both the owner and the dog understand that the task is to herd the sheep to the dog owner where the two of them will endeavor to corral the sheep into a pen. The catch is, that three of the sheep have red neck ribbons and three don't. It is only the red necked sheep that are to be corralled. The owner knows this, and much to my surprise, so does the dog. During the mile long journey the dog must persuade the sheep (all six) to enter and leave a couple gates, cross and re-cross a creek and finally complete two figure eights in front of the judge's stand. (Just kidding about the figure eights there, you city folks.)

I don't know to what extent the sheep have been briefed on all of this, but from their herd like behavior, I suspect not much. The owner communicates his commands (wishes?) to his dog (actually, I am not sure who is really in charge of whom) by tooting the silver whistle. The truth is that the dog doesn't require a hell of a lot whistle blowing. As a matter of fact in the case of most of the dogs we observed, the less blowing of whistles the better the performance. That shouldn't come as a surprise to non-dogs, one would think.

It was really an amazing demonstration of the working relationship between a dog and his best friend. The climax is the "cutting out of the herd," as they say, of the red neck sheep. This is never easy because the red necks often lack intelligence and can be stubborn as all get out. (What seems even more odd is that the red neck designation seems to be random. A sheep never knows until it is given a symbol.) The owner is allowed to wave around his staff as long as it doesn't touch the sheep, so some owners do a lot of what might be called staff dancing. Clearly, from what we observed, the wiser owners leave it as much as possible to the dogs, except for opening and closing the pen gate, which seemed a fair and thoughtful division of labor.

It occurred to me that there is a lot to be learned from observing Border Collies and their owners regarding the raising of young children. I have made some notes on that subject, and except to say that their knowledge precedes today's experts on child development and management by centuries, I will save that for another time.

Another time Ripley here. Yes, it was a bucolic day in the Willamette Valley on Saturday. The setting was pastoral with the Cascade foothills in the background and the green fields and huge oak trees in the foreground. One either brought their own fold up chair (which we did not) or sat on the bales of hay (which we did). While the trials were occurring, which does not take full attention, four fiddlers were fiddling and entertaining the dogs, owners, and observers. One thing I particularly enjoyed observing were the dogs observing the current dog in the trial. Obviously there was one dog that was "up" so to speak, and MANY other dogs in the area. These dogs, ostensibly resting or waiting their turns, were at peak attention. They were sniffing through the wired fence, watching the sheep intently, and generally making one feel they were in the field with

the performing dog. I noted this to one owner whose dog was carrying on this way and he said, "oh, he loves to work."

Besides the dog trials and fiddling and barbecued chicken wafting through the air, there were a few tent booths selling things to people who come to these affairs. One woman was selling wool garments, another was selling miracle oil Lanolin lotion made from Merino sheep's wool in New Zealand and promoted to cure the driest skin (OK, I bought some), and the most interesting was a woman artist. She had a portfolio of pictures she had drawn of border collies and other animals. Her offer was, "you give me a picture of your animal, and I'll give you a drawing." And they were quite beautiful. I took her card, why I don't know because I don't have a pet and don't plan to have one.

Other than that, I loved the snatches of conversation I heard. One woman in dirty farm jeans and boots telling another, "I'm embarrassed. Just had another lamb and I didn't even know the ewe was bred." And when I bought the lotion the woman from Montana told me I could use it after I went out watering the animals "and your hands get so dry." Well, I use to water the animals, but it's been a fer piece ago, but it was nice to be reminded.

AUGUST 14, 2001, FINDING THE PATH

As is the case with most planned housing developments, ours has a committee whose function is to approve landscaping plans. The responsibility is usually not to impose a particular style or set of restrictions on the homeowners, but only to provide reasonable assurance that individual home landscapes are not offensive to others in the project, that is to say not lower market values. True, this may run the risk of inhibiting some really creative projects, but in general it seems to work out. So, soon after our house was completed, we dutifully submitted our landscaping plan and it was approved.

Landscaping, I have always maintained, should be flexible and open to continuous growth and development. It should be able to serve the individual homeowner's needs and interests and also contribute to the general attractiveness of the neighborhood. Ours was planned to meet these criteria, and the result has provided much pleasure. The back garden has been especially enjoyable and a few people have commented favorably on its appearance. Nevertheless, over the last couple years I have had a growing awareness of a couple less than stellar landscaping decisions. The original plan called for a short winding path of one foot round stepping pavers within the main planting and shrub areas. As I was laying the pavers, it occurred to me that a more random design might be more attractive and so that is what was done. I mean, the pavers were not just tossed about nilly willy, but neither did they quite amount to a meandering pathway. One could just meander this way and that, never getting to an end but enjoying the excursion. The mistake appeared in a few years after plants began reaching maturity, or at least adolescence, and in the process obscured many of the pavers, making it next to impossible to use them to

simulate any sort of pathway. Walking inside the garden, to put it directly, meant a stroll in the mud.

The second problematic decision, I must admit, stemmed from a personal behavior of mine that some have referred to as impatience. Most plants grow slowly, and instead of waiting them out, I succumbed to the temptation to aggressively supplement the planned plantings with more cooperative growing varieties. An obvious choice was ornamental grasses. A dozen and a half or more were planted and I can assure you that they are aggressive! The first couple summers they waved beautifully, giving the impression from the patio of a flowing sea of long slim leaves and tightly knit blossoms. One prunes grasses back to the ground in late fall, only to see them emerge in the spring twice the girth and eventually much taller than when they took their leave.

One obvious solution was to increase the frequency of pruning, which worked for a couple seasons. I tightened the pruning schedule for shrubs, which helped, and even took to trimming the ornamental grasses mid summer. Trimming is not really the accurate term; the procedure was more along the line of chopping. I chopped the grasses often, which of course put an end to their wave like behavior as well as creating a garden full of crew cut stubbles. This all comes together at clean-up time, when the randomly placed pavers make raking nigh impossible and thus forces one to a knees-on-the-ground-crawling approach. Cleaning up being the most unpleasant of gardening tasks, it became clear that the situation had become intolerable.

Initially, it seemed that rearranging the pavers in something resembling a path might be the trick. But it didn't, due to the fact that the plants had simply taken over with no concern for order. In order to rearrange the pavers it seemed that moving a plant or two might be an effective but simple solution. Well, in situations such as this, one thing leads to another and by the end of the second day I had produced a pile of 14 upended pavers, and clumps of 9 grasses and balls of several nearly full grown shrubs hovering under the trees in 90 degree heat waiting replanting. A plan had emerged and it began with resetting the pavers. Have you ever set pavers? They simply don't assume a level position. One side is always higher or lower than the other. I think it has to do with gravity, but I recall reading that sand is good solution. Our local Home Depot sells sand by the 50 pound sack which I purchased only to learn that sand is only a partial solution. After re-setting the 14 pavers I was reasonably pleased to find that 8 passed muster. That meant that six were hopelessly at such an angle as to raise our home liability coverage rate. I also learned that achieving level is not a goal conducive to good mental health. In the process of resetting these yet another time, some clumsy idiot managed to stumble over and break a six inch extender that I had so cleverly attached to a sprinkler head to extend its watering circumference.

The play was recessed yesterday evening, but as soon as the temperature returns to 90 degrees and I finish writing, it will resume. You would think that only good can come of a man, his wheel barrow and spade left alone in the back garden, but that is simply not true. Optimistic to the end, I'm thankful that the project is not motorized.

JANUARY 7, 2002, WHEELS TO GO

There are some personal items that from time to time need replacement. The suitcase is one such. It all depends upon frequency and destinations of travel, but generally speaking a suitcase should last the average amateur traveler a good five or six years. "Hold on!" I can hear a reader or two insisting. "One or two suitcases should get you through the life span, especially if you are careful." That is true if your ego strength is such that it doesn't bother you to sashay into the hotel lobby with a brown cardboard box affair with a broken clasp and a handle reinforced by grey duct tape. I learned early on that I could not do that comfortably and consequently in my early travel days developed what Theresa has described as a obsessional search for the perfect suitcase. After acquiring what can truthfully be described as a competition collection of suitcases, it became obvious that I was searching in vain.

I learned two important notions during those years. The first was that the term suitcase had become obsolete. Well, okay, the term is still used by copywriters over 63, but the case to which they refer seldom sees a suit of clothes. One carries those, if at all, in a hanging clothes bag. The second revelation is that the appropriate case to acquire is a function first of the purpose of one's travel, and some would consider more important, the image you want to project. In our early foreign travel years, for example, Theresa and I were quick to lock on to the earliest version of fold up wheels. You may recall these as having the look of a mini hand truck. A handle pulled out of a flat carrying surface which in turn has a little flat folding shelf. One jerked up the handle, which would jam at half way position a good deal of the time, piled one or more oversize bags on the tiny shelf, and then secured the whole mess with a couple of bungee cords. Halfway down the concourse the cord would slip loose, dumping your luggage among the multitude of fellow travelers.

Next came the built-in wheels phase. This was little more than changing the design of the carrier so that the wheels and handle were fabricated as part of the container. We jumped at this innovation immediately, only to discover that what had been a mini external hand truck, now occupied space in the container which historically had been reserved for clothes and other personal items. The solution, of course, was to carry a smaller second case. The manufactures rose to the challenge immediately by adding an external hook to the top of the wheel case which worked in theory, but in practice resulted in a dangerously clumsy and in the end inconvenient solution to the old suitcase problem.

This is ancient history of course, and we made do with iterations of wheeled bags. When the main zipper on Theresa's would no longer zip, I suggest that she get by with a sturdy leather pants belt that I could provide. That idea sank without a ripple, so we purchased a Samsonite model with a set of locks that would challenge any security guard, let alone your average traveler. That was an extremely short lived solution.

Thus yesterday we hit the coolest of luggage stores in Yooooojean and began the process of evaluating the latest in travel gear. It became obvious that preparing to make a selection required learning the current travel language. One manufacture thoughtfully provided a word list. Here are several examples:

“One-touch handle system with ergonomic rubberized grip retracts into the frame for compact storage” refers to a disappearing handle.

“Roomy main compartment offers zippered expansion for larger loads and offers U-shaped, dual zipper entry” appears at first to be a strange use of the word “loads” which one usually associates with trucks, trains and airplanes. The dual zipper thing has always amazed me because both zippers cling together at one end of the track. Why not just one zipper handle painted red so you always know where to start?

“Coal chute’ front pocket opens wide to allow easy access to essentials and features a zippered slash pocket” is another association with the trucking industry and escapes me. Why would one want to pack luggage as if it was a load of coal?

“Features a high-quality identification tag with snap closure” is something that must be seen to fully appreciate. No more tacky hand written luggage labels!

Once mastering the language, one is ready to inspect and evaluate. This, obviously requires cost considerations. The cost of what are essentially cloth zippered boxes that measure about 10x20x14 inches with wheels and disappearing handles can set you back from \$100 to \$500. If you plan on making more than one trip, forget the low end.

This was enough for me for one day, but Theresa was able to zero in on a nice red and black stylish number that was, however, smaller than she wanted. She noted, however, that would assure that she traveled light, which is one of her stylish, admirable values. From her subsequent comments, nevertheless, I infer she is still on the lookout for a small wheelless supplemental personal effects transport conveyance.

Small Wheelless Ripley here who is pleased to say that she has added to what we lovingly refer to as our "suitcase graveyard." Some of you have seen this, and others can visualize it. When we were building this house the framer motioned for Jack to come by one day and he said, "I can leave this area open underneath the stairway if you want." We wanted, and now this rather large area is the home to the above-named suitcases and others not named such as the two Route 66 bags which I just had to have, one being very big and the other being a wheeled variety (which always falls over) and both sporting the Rt. 66 tapestry material which uses the Rt. 66 logo.

But now I am the proud owner of a Victorinox bag, dimensions are 14" W X 20" H X 9" deep. Victorinox, if you do not know (and I didn't until yesterday) is the maker of the original Swiss Army Knife. I figure they think people can't be carrying knives on planes anymore and they have to broaden their market.

The key feature of this bag is not the dual-bar pull, but a single swivel handle that is curved, not straight, and moves in 360 degrees which is suppose to "automatically swings into a natural holding position in response to any change in direction for flawless handling." I maneuvered all

over the store to the chagrin of the salesperson, but it did work "flawlessly." And did I mention it is on the same kind of wheel used by in-line skates? No, I didn't think so.

Who knows if I'm the first in my block to have one, but I do remember that when I wrote about being the first in my block several years ago to have travel pants that zipped off from full pant to shorts that it started a mini-craze among the Tuesday Letter readers. Some followed. Others just wondered why.

FEBRUARY 26, 2002, HEY GIRLS

Sunday began to look like Spring and today is outdoing that. Bright full sun beating down at 52 degrees. We ignore the wind factor here in Yoooooujeanne. Took a nice family drive yesterday winding through the Cascade Mountain hill country to a burg known as Brownsville. Not much excuse for B'ville's continuing existence but there is home construction. I notice each year there are fewer and fewer of what actually qualify as open spaces on the valley floor and foothills.

The most (only) exciting event was nearly running out of fuel. I didn't look at it way. The little gauge read that at the current RPM we had 39 miles of momentum left. Theresa could see the gauge too, and she said enough was enough and began scanning the horizon for a gas station, any gas station. She spotted a live Chevron as we entered the junction at B'ville, open too. I noted that Chevron is not my fuel of choice and that we would certainly find an option if we drove on, seeing how close we were to the freeway. That option sunk without a ripple and we rolled into the Chevron. Actually turned out supreme was a cent less than in town so we saved about 14.5 cents which is nothing to sneeze at when its been a long dry spell since earned income.

I had estimated lunch by 12:30 and seeing how it was then 1:30, some of the crew were mumbling sounds of discontent. Fortunately for us all, if for different reasons since I had quaffed down some cheese, crackers and a gulp of Coke prior to leaving, the reliable Pioneer Inn Cafe was less than 3 miles away on the Freeway.

It was crowded due both to it being after church dinner out day in B'ville, Albany and surrounding rural areas and a Harley rally of about 15 riders who had congregated at the Pioneer to dine. The smart course of action seemed to be grabbing a couple stools at the counter, and we did. A waitress with a tarnished shinny pin in her right nostril and hair brownish in the center of her head turning to sort of Henna yellow at the edge approached us with pencil and pad in hand.

"What'll be girls?" she asked. I knew it was going be one of those kind of days, as did Theresa who dived under the counter emerging with her hand over her mouth saying in a high giggle that she would be in the women's should I need her. This is an experience that repeats itself each early spring and continues until late Fall. I'm the first to acknowledge that my looks leave something to desired, and I would not argue with anyone who described my face as on the

ugly side, but I can't figure why girl-ugly. Why not guy-ugly? Anyway, I placed an order for two bowls of beef barley soup with plenty of god damn crackers!

Theresa returned shortly with composure regained. Responding to the questioned look still on my face, she said as we slurped at the soup, "It is your hair, Jack. Most men your age (there she goes again) do not have such full, heavy heads of hair. Some people look no farther."

Perhaps so. Maybe in some parts any male with long hair whose finger nails aren't greasy has an up hill battle as far as gender recognition is concerned. I say some parts because this doesn't happen on campus or cities. The probabilities are high in greasy spoons and high class rurally located resorts where the help hasn't ventured much beyond the local high school. Some years ago when I first experienced this mistaken gender perception, I developed a couple of fantasy responses. One was to grow facial hair and have Theresa introduce me as her bearded lady friend. That would challenge them, I thought. Another was to get a very close crew cut and be introduced as her personal trainer. I suspected few would get that one and the only result would be confused embarrassment. I should, nevertheless, have some fun with this. Thus, I plan on letting the hair grow really thick and long until I achieve a kind of Mark Twainish appearance. Then I will try to find a hair piece (for my chest, silly) and have it curled, wear shirts open to just above the navel, and work on lowering the tone of my voice. I can do that!

This is more than a single dimension issues, I want to add. This morning I was on the phone negotiating a deal for several days stay at Sun City Somewhere venue. After chatting up the lady on the phone, and she me, it seemed, she finally asked my name. I gave it to her.

And is there a Mrs. Whiffenpoof?

I replied after a pause, "Well there is in a way of speaking, but why do you ask?"

"Company Policy."

"What if I said there is but there really isn't?"

Dead silence. This was very unfair to her and so I said, trying to capture the rapport we had initially achieved, "Just kidding, we are married with different last names. Be assured." She seemed to be. "I assume at least one of you is over 55," she continued.

"Policy, I know," I replied pleasantly.

"Yes..."

"Well I'm considerably older than 55," I continued, reassuringly, "and we have no children. My wife will be fourteen in April, so we should be home clear. Right?"

Before she could continue, I said that she probably wanted my Visa Card number? She appeared relieved to turn her attention to a different subject.

So, as some of you may be surprised to learn, some things in the Pacific Northwest haven't changed a lot.

Changed a lot Ripley here...who actually came up with the Tuesday Letter topics over our luncheon menu which consisted of a reheated grilled tuna fish sandwich, left over from last night. We ate lunch much after 1:30 p.m. and thus I was not too hungry at din-din time. I told Jack, "you're missing a bet not to tell the Hey, Girls story." And tell he did.

I really was giggling yesterday as waitress about #10 in our life times has made this mistake. And sales personnel. And a few others. The thing you really need to appreciate is how the various service people have tried to get out of the mistake they have just made. I've seen everything from nervous laughter to outright trying to pass us off on some other person to serve us. They know they've blown the tip or the sale in their minds, so why go on with it. Yesterday's waitress chose to have someone else deliver us the bill.

Good thing Jack is high on the hardiness scale and knows who he is, otherwise we'd be having a tad bit of a problem here. Personally I think wearing a black leather Harley outfit with a leather cap and a whip might do the trick as well.

Then again, we've always taken it as a sign that we need our monthly hair cut.

APRIL 16, 2002, GRATITUDE

Spring just took a couple steps backward in Yoojeannequ, producing stinging breezes, high grey clouds, and intermittent precipitation. The latter however is relatively warm and nourishes the many flowers and blossoms waiting to pop open, and so there are no signs of depression yet. We patiently await the return of Oregon's typically more temperate weather by exploring indoor amusements that promise to be entertaining as well as occasionally instructive. Even though this is an annual challenge I am always pleasantly surprised to discover the abundance of options available with little or no cost.

Just this weekend I accompanied Theresa to our neighborhood Barnes and Noble book store (Neighborhood maul, precisely, because municipal ordinances ban commercial emporiums of that sort from neighborhoods per se, segregating them to shopping mauls which in this case is just over the freeway) where we soon seated ourselves on high stools adjacent to an even higher table, which we discovered was most convenient. She was picking up six paper back copies of "Attitudes of Gratitude," hard back copies of which we could have purchased at half price six months ago when I bought one on sale for her but was discouraged from more foolish spending. The sale is long past and "AG" is now full price in hard cover only, but meanwhile turning out to be a keeper that has become a necessary stock item for the Dr.'s personal gift shelf. The experience has been good for my attitude.

She settled me down with a cup of black, regular, no room for cream Starbucks' coffee in a China cup and a low cal maple flavored scone on a paper plate before leaving for the pick-up counter. So, there I sat perched above the crowd, relishing the opportunity for people watching entertainment. The wait was brief. Just a few feet below the coffee and snacks dispersing area, on

the main floor appeared a couple in search of a table. He seated her at one, and then proceeded to fondle the upper part of her torso fondly and with more force than one, at least I, might think appropriate. It was not the public display of affection that caught my eye, but rather the lady's shoes and sox. The former were black leather with heels and silver rivets and the latter ankle length white decorated with a scroll that I could not decipher, at least from that distance. Her skirt was no prize winner either, something that my daughters during their secondary school career would have picked up at a Goodwill close-out or a garage sale down off old highway 99E.

Once he had her seated in satisfactory position, he moved into the chair across their table. Abandoning her torso, he turned his attention to her long hair and exposed arms. He appeared to be smelling the former (why else would he bury his nose in her long locks?) and massaging her limbs from just beyond the elbows to just inside the short sleeves of her blouse, which I assume would be the pits of her arms, as the French would put it. No matter what motions he activated, she continued to mask her feelings, assuming there were some to conceal, showing no emotion of any sort. She remained passive, allowing him to wander at will. Perhaps, she was just being cool, I thought. Cool, of course is a tough one to deal with. One person's Kool is another's snuff, so to speak. Or is it, One person's cool is another's crumby?

They both looked a couple years one side of thirty, your guess which, being as good as mine. He was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, so indistinguishable from 75 percent of the customers. He seemed about as fidgety as she did socially catatonic. I wouldn't say they were out of place in a B&N book store, but all in all if you had to guess you would place them from West Yoojeanne.

Suddenly, he was on his feet, moving up the steps to the coffee and food area, sizing up the various display racks of goods. About 12 feet from where I sat was a shelf of what appeared to be small bottles of ground tea. Whatever, it got this dude's curiosity and without giving his hand away he had retrieved one of the bottles, unscrewed the cap and buried his nose in the bottle, taking a good size whiff. While holding the aroma in his nostrils, he replaced the bottle cap and returned the goods to the display. If the look on his face meant anything it was neither pleasure or distaste. Must not have been repugnant at least.

He then moved left until he was aside the main counter which also is used for merchandise display. Suddenly, it was clear to me that he was in his stride. Facing a stack of ground one pound bags of Starbucks' coffee, he picked up one and began kneading it as to rearrange the grounds more to his liking. He replaced that sack just as quickly, gently taking another and rearranging its contents. It might be that he has certain standards, I thought. If he did, his work was cut out for him. I had got the impression that this guy had his own view on how things should smell and be stacked, including hair, women, tea and ground coffee.

I felt a release of apprehension when I noted, out of the side of my eye, his companion arise from the table and glide toward him. He seemed to relax, too. After a few words, she moved off in the direction of the lady's and he towards the refrigerated pastry display. My involvement ceased with Theresa's arrival from the orders pick-up desk. Before you can say "Like another cup?" we were in the parking lot, she with six copies of "Attitudes of Gratitude" (paper, at an

inflated price) and me learning once again that people are interesting, or can be some of the time.

Coincidentally, later that afternoon while shopping with very limited enthusiasm for a pair of on-sale summer weight pants among the stores in the mall proper, I spotted them again. Not the AG books, but my seat mates of the morning. There they traipsed with seeming purpose down one of the main corridors between Made for Big Guys and Styles for Tall Women just around the corner from Original Antiquye Furnishings. He leading, she following, hand in hand. Tempted to follow up the morning's adventure, I allowed myself instead to stop in front of a glass fronted children's photography studio where the parents of two of the least photogenic, uncooperative, out of control child subjects I have ever seen could be observed macro managing the photographer as he admirably attempted to make something from less than nothing.

None of this costs a thing!

MAY 21, 2002, TRIAL PACKING

There was time when I could pack a bag for an overseas trip of several weeks duration in about an hour, including time for a beer and boiled egg break. I recall landing at Heathrow once and discovering that my cash supply amounted to \$12 dollars. Neglected to go to the bank prior to leaving, but not to worry, VISA and AMEX cards were as good, or in fact better than cash. As I recall, I had something like a \$200 cash limit on each card and so wandering around London for 3 days could net \$1200 cash incidentally.

The basics of packing consisted of 3 pairs of shorts (1 being nylon in summer), 3 pairs of socks (2 being below the ankle in summer) an extra pair of suntans, 3 t-shirts, my toilet kit including a tiny bottle of soap/shampoo liquid in case I got stuck in something less than a 2 star hotel, which I did, often, sunglasses, pencil and pen and a couple sheets of stationary. If the weather turned cold in the spring or summer, Marks and Spencer could be counted on for a good buy on a plain sweat shirt. Or, I could wait until visiting the British Museum or the Greenwich Center gift shop to purchase one with a small, classy but subtle logo.

Gone are those days, I'm reluctant to admit. Actually, it is not the admission that I begrudge but the fact that they are gone. At the urging of my companion in travel, I devoted a good part of Sunday last to "packing" for our anticipated trip abroad. The related series of tasks effectively began several weeks prior when the decision was made for me to acquire travel togs made of sun protective material and that would dry over night, should some terrible set of circumstances develop requiring clothes washing. The search and seize effort required several trips to our local outdoor travel specialty vendor. During our last trip abroad I found myself in Scotland slogging along in soaking wet Rockport walkers due to the absence of a pair of back-up shoes. Because it rains in the UK regardless of the season, I decided this time to select and purchase a proper pair of same.

Then there was a trip to the bank (see above), negotiating with the pharmacist for more than a 30 day supply of drugs, pleading with VISA for a week's billing date extension, and a number of additional issues needing attention. Being the first to acknowledge that said companion deals with many of these requirements, still when it comes to preparing the satchel itself, I prefer to be on my own. Not that I could not benefit from assistance (more and more I discover the utility of such a relationship component) but when push comes to shove or the grass hits the blade, to coin a phrase, I have learned it better to have no one but myself to blame. Simpler and cleaner all the way round.

So, the check list is nearly checked, leaving a clear view of last minute tasks. There remains, however, one last component of the travel preparation exercise which is "getting the lap top ready." I formed the nasty habit of dragging along a computer back in the 1980s and have never been able to kick it. I realize clearly the inconveniences and also that it violates my basic rule of traveling light. But having the portable with me has provided such pleasure and enhances the joy of travel so marvelously that I would reduce the number of socks and shorts changes before forgoing it. Irrational, some may think, but please do not try to persuade me otherwise. Since the last trip we have added a digital camera and its sundry cables to our accumulation of technical gadgets but once one starts down the road of applied science there is no turning back, is there? There is positive note to all of this, and that is the invention of in-satchel wheels. Our folding wheelies were abandoned years ago!

There was an instant or two Sunday when I had a vision of the old days; tossing the odd bits of clothing into a bag, slipping on a pair of jeans, boots and an old leather jacket, and scurrying for the airport. No regrets, certainly. We learn from each new experience, don't we.

Learning from experience Ripley here. Well, little did I know that the trial packing episode would be reported in the Tuesday Tales. After a first reading, I decided to add data to this discussion and scurried off downstairs to gather essential specifics to tell. I always like to do a trial packing for a trip, but do not always accomplish it. This time I knew I wanted to do so because we had new suitcases and one never knows how things will fit until one tries. Mine, as you might recall, from many Tuesday Letters before is a very small suitcase. It is only 20" high and 14" width and 9" deep, but can be expanded to 11.5" deep. My goal was not to expand the bag.

I can report this has been accomplished. Yesterday I packed everything in the bag and had plenty of room to spare and no need to expand the expandable bag. Now for the more specific data just acquired. I went downstairs and zipped up the trial-packed suitcase and went to the scales. Stepped on first myself, and then stepped on again with the packed bag and subtracted the two numbers. I repeated the same experiment like any good scientist and got the same results. The fully packed bag weighs 17 pounds. Since the bag by itself weighs 5 lb. 12 oz., that means I really only have 11 1/4 lbs. of "stuff." Not bad for a 3-week trip.

Now add to this scientific experiment that I did my twice-weekly strength training today. I've been doing this program for two years and it includes lifting bar bells above your head for 8

repetitions and then resting and then 8 additional repetitions. My current bar bells are 12 lbs. each for a total lift of 24 lbs. above ones head. After I discovered the weight of the suitcase fully loaded and knew what I could lift above my head, I started doing repetitions with the filled suitcase. I think this is the first time I've ever been able to lift my fully packed suitcase above my head...as into a overhead carry on.

Now I have one final decision. I purchased a little clock/sound machine last week. Cheap as sin, and runs on batteries. It weights 10.5 oz. I am taking no other gadgets with me. The reason this little item struck me was remembering other times in London when the noises of the city were anything but soothing. I think I'll wait a couple of days before I decide on that.

JULY 23, 2002, SUMMER OVERRATED

Some readers have been “enjoying” the warm days of summer for a few weeks. The season changed finally in Yoooojeanne and we are watching the thermometer hit eighty five to ninety and above every day. That may be perceived as mild by some, and so it is all relative. The nights cool to the mid to high fifties here and so sleeping is pretty good, especially if you add a book chapter or 30 minutes television before hitting the shucks. If your pad is air conditioned all day then the widows can be opened to fresh (if warm at first) air by around 10:30 p.m.

All of this is to say that several years ago, some time around 1990 PT (Post Tucson) I gathered up the courage to admit that summer is not all that writers and poets crack it up to be, for me at least, and others too I learned as I whispered my confession at filling stations and social gatherings around pools. Summer as a term standing alone of course is so abstract as to defy meaningful discussion. That requires noting its components. Those I think that are superior include more daylight, scantily clothed women, wearing shorts all day week after week, din din on the patio, neighbors leaving on vacation, television functionally turning itself off, more salad choices at the deli and scantily clothed women. Those are some of the sweet characteristics of summer.

Thus, suggesting that summer is overrated can be interpreted as meaning that extremely hot weather is a real pain in the butt primarily because it requires dealing with heat while doing otherwise pleasant behaviors. Especially when and where it (summer heat) begins in what god meant to me spring and doesn't end until far after she intended winter to begin. There is, operationally among those who would control what we wear and do (the consumer industry people), an attempt to eliminate spring and autumn, at least virtually. They desire to create a cold/hot world. That choice already exists of course and some people make it. Blistering sun 6 months a year; freezing cold the other half. I tell you I have witnessed such people and would stand immediately to defend their preference (certainly not to death, I should clarify) ill made as it is, but let them be. I've consulted in Duluth in December and Jamaica in July would not do it again. I hold no malice; it's just not for me.

God and the Libertarians would have us leave things as they were meant to be, nature taking its natural course, to coin a phrase. The extremist can go to extremes whether it means sweltering and shriveling their epidermis twelve months a year or living year round in igloos. The rest of us as well as the those on the fringes are free to accept climate and weather as we find them or to wander around like nomads until we find something more suitable. According to my early graduate school demographics, about one in four do so each year.

We should remember that one of the really universal and true freedoms is to let people be regarding this summer myth. There is no purpose in those who worship the sun praising its glorious benefits like a bunch of wild eyed evangelist dunking sinners in the river. Let us be! Smile if you must at our preferring nights under blankets, a healthy annual rain fall (say 35 to 40 inches), fog settling over the Friday night high school football games, drinking mugs of coffee whilst wearing gloves and pull-over sweaters or even parkas, turning on the fire place by late September, even romping about in quarter inch snow drifts, but remember life is a personal consideration and we each have a right to live it hot, cold, or at varying degrees in between.

As noted, it requires a certain courageousness to take this likely unpopular position regarding the over-ratedness of summer, or more precisely hot weather, but as I age and search for even minuscule means of making meaningful contributions to my fellow creatures (including graciously, I might add, hot weather freaks, women in burkas and suffering long haired dogs) I decided the risk was justified if going public contributes to greater tolerance among those on all sides of the fence.

SEPTEMBER 10, 2002, FLAG WAVING

A sure sign of Fall in Yoojeanne is the raising of college football flags. I assume it is the same in other college towns, but maybe not. The flags are about 12 x 14 inches and are attached to a 15 inch metal rod which in turn is somehow jammed between the top of the front side window of the motor vehicle and the door frame, the vehicle being as likely a pick-up truck as a passenger car these days. The number of vehicle operators who participate in this fad/custom is growing by leaps and bounds. Flying the flag, I assume, is a means of displaying one's loyalty to a particular college team. In our rural area, there are two. One is the University of Oregon located in Yoooojeanne the mascot of which is a duck that looks to be the spitting image of Donald. The other is Oregon State University located up the road about 40 miles to the Northwest in Corvallis. Its mascot is a generic Beaver sporting a couple of huge buck teeth. The Ducks flag is done in Lemon and Green, the school's official colors, and the OSU banner in Orange and Black.

In the beginning, participating fans would sport a single flag. Male drivers, more often than not, would drive with the left front widow open with their left elbow hanging over the window edge. Women drivers were usually more discreet keeping the window shut. It was not long, as you would expect in this day of political sensitivity, that the issue of couples with split college loyalties

emerged. What is a family to do when dad supports UO and mom supports OSU? The obvious solution is to wave a flag for each; one on the driver's side, the other on the passenger's. This is, however, not as cool a solution as one might assume. In this culture the driver's side is generally thought to dominate the passenger side. This is a bit of sexism, but manifested for example in that it is not uncommon when the male and female travel in what is the female's car, he does the driving, bowing to the belief that males are better drivers than females regardless of the respective driving records. I suppose each dual institution couple works this out as best they can, and in private we hope.

Then, just when the air was full of flying Duck and Beaver flags, along came 9/11 and the predictable use of the American flag as a sign of one's patriotism. Manufacturers were quick to introduce US vehicle flags. A goodly number of patriotic fans were faced with deciding whether to fly the Duck or Beaver banner, or the US flag. Single institution families had an easy answer, i.e., fly both, and they did, the national flag gracing the driver's window with the school being supported from the passenger side. Dual institutions families didn't have it so easy, but this being America where affluence, at least at this level is readily enjoyed by nearly all vehicle owners, the issue was easily resolved by adding more flags. The epitome of solutions is to fly an American flag from each of the two front seat windows and a Beaver flag from one rear window and a Duck flag from the other. The favoring of driver's vs passenger side didn't raise its ugly head because, as you know, there are only passengers in the rear seat, in spite of the rumor that many Americans drive from the back seat. Again, nothing is as simple as it may seem at first, taking the case of two door coupes with fixed rear windows, for example.

Difficult to say where this will eventually lead. Already, on the Saturday morning of game day one sees a parade of flag laden vehicles heading frantically to the supermarkets to lay in celebratory weekend vitals with sound systems blasting, multi-colored banners flapping furiously and drivers relaying instructions frantically into cell phones. An irony is that with stadium parking spaces scarce, more Ducks are left with no option but to ride the bus to the game, leaving their car flags drooping in the hot September afternoon sun.

Tuesday Letters 2003-2005

Tuesday Letters were now in their 10th year as 2003 started.

JANUARY 7, 2003, TO RESOLVE OR NOT TO RESOLVE

Well, I suppose you've probably made your new year's resolutions if that is your habit. Even though it is no longer mine, I have nothing against people who make them. It just that resolutions never worked for me. Matter of fact, they usually did just the opposite, but more about that in a minute.

Every December 31st or thereabouts I recall one the most serious resolution makers I have ever encountered. She was an editor type by trade, and systematically devoted the last day of every year to developing and refining her list, which always came in 8 parts. After having observed her perform this ritual for several years, I asked her if she would tell me a little about it. She was to leave for another job very soon, so I didn't feel as if I were transgressing on her privacy. I had noticed that she always began by tearing off 8 sheets of paper from a yellow pad.

I began by asking her why 8? She answered that a single list didn't meet her needs. Experience had taught her that she could usually get the job done within 8 topics, hence the 8 sheets. Saved a lot of erasing, staring over, and squeezing latent ideas in between the lines, she said.

But why precisely eight, I pursued? She said that it wasn't a chance number. First of all, she felt better with even numbers and eight was even both arithmetically and visually. That made sense, I responded. And, she went on, she believed it would be presumptuous of her to go beyond 9 lists. It would border on arrogance to act as though there were that many dimensions to her life. Even if I could, I probably am not capable of attending to more divisions, she said. In addition, she was adverse to working with two-digit numbers. Thus, as you can see from my specs, 8 is the maximum and I have always enjoyed working within maximum conditions.

Having satisfied my numerical curiosity I asked her to share the topics of the 8 lists. Oh my, she replied I'm not a rigid person. They are never the same. I see, I said, the topics change each year? No, not necessarily, she said but some do repeat themselves but the precise title words change. For example, she said, one year I may have a People List and the next it would not appear but a Relationship List would. Depends on how I feel about life at the moment. There is a more or less unwritten rule, though she continued. I would never have both People and Relationships in the same year, nor any title resembling either of those.

Moving right along, I asked if there were a certain ideal number of resolutions per list. No, there were not; it simply was a matter of how many words it took to express each resolution. The

more abstract a resolution, generally the shorter is was. Resolutions which were clearer in her thinking and thus less abstract required more words. She recalled one year when one resolution consumed a complete page on her Spending Behavior list. She never continued a list on the reverse side of the foolscap, regardless of the number of resolutions it contained. If I can't express it in a page, there is no point in blabbering on, she said, but that is not sufficient reason for abandoning the idea. It will probably be clearer or if not disappeared by the end of the year.

Finally, I wondered to what extent she found the Resolutions Lists helpful in guiding her behavior. Or did she follow through. Yes she did; she reviewed her resolutions at the end of each quarter, in fact. She had discovered over the years that her lists became shorter over four quarters. Two reasons accounted for the shrinkage, she believed. One, was imprecision. Some resolutions didn't last out a year; some not even 3 months. She believed that was because she hadn't put her thoughts to words adequately. Nonsense is a poor guide for behavior, she summarized.

The second reason of removing resolutions is that some of her interests were more stable than others. That is not to say some were better, just that they were not as subject to change as time passed and events occurred. What was very important one month was less so three months later.

I've always thought that making annual resolutions worked well for her. She was industrious, a high achiever and more than reasonably happy. I noted earlier that annual resolutions haven't work for me. I abandoned them for the same reason given by my former colleague. In addition, I find that I am less certain about the degree of importance I can ascribe to many issues and without such clarity or at least certainty, I am not comfortable making commitments (to myself as well as others) or even stating a position about them. This becomes clearer to me when in a discussion someone may ask why I am being so quiet? Don't I have any thoughts on the issue? An honest answer would be I'm not sufficiently informed to voice my tentative, if even that, perspective, let alone opinion. More perceptive members of the discussion may take offense to that because they are comfortable offering their opinions as more than personal impressions. Rather than be confronting, I tend to remain silent, randomly switching from expressions of interest to pondering.

Which, all in all, frees up December 31 every year. And over the longer haul, you can get a lot of mileage out of carefully honed expressions of interest and ponder. Hmmmmm, I see what you mean. Very interesting.

JANUARY 28, 2003, MULTI-TASKING WEEK

Another Super Bowl has come and gone which must lessen the level of tension and suspense that I read has been growing across the nation. You have guessed, if you gave it the quickest of thoughts, that I am not an athletic fan. But, neither am I rigid in my likes and dislikes, which accounts for religiously watching the final three innings (or is it quarters) of the World Series

every year. That is not actually a true statement. It has been three years since my last viewing, but when I was younger my viewing was religiously compulsive.

The Super Bowl is something else altogether. I attempted to multitask Sunday (is that the catch word for which I'm searching?) but because we have only one TV set, this mode keeps me jumping. Thus last Sunday I lined up three tasks to multi. One was watching bits and pieces of the Bowl, the second was washing the car and the third was reading the Sunday paper. As you probably concluded, the tri-modal approach was less than effective. Circling from the TV set in the house to the car in the drive way resulted in my missing most of the exciting plays as well as the commercials which are touted by some as being more entertaining than the football contest itself. In addition with attention diverted to the paper I managed to miss some dirt spots on the car and in the end spilled the bucket of water all over the Sunday paper prior to Theresa having read it.

I probably missed something, but the impression of the game with which I was left is of a red faced white fellow in a white uniform throwing passes that were intercepted (5 times, I think) by slim black fellows in red uniforms who ran down the side lines to score touchdowns, or is it goals? On the positive end of things, I was motivated to arrange to be out of town and far away from a TV set when the 2004 bowl is played, and I learned to accept my aversion to both athletic events and multi-tasking. Life has too much more to offer.

A busy week, this. Bush performs magic for the nation Tuesday evening with his State of the Union address. There is some talk that the handlers may substitute Colin Powell at the last moment, but that is really just a rumor. Wednesday morning Oregon should learn the outcome of a special tax election. The legislature guessed horribly wrong on the discrepancy between state income and expenditures (like many other states) and basic services will be cut if the tax increase is not passed. And, of course, Friday Tony Blair arrives in Washington, D.C. for a huddle with King George. All of this, of course, diminishes the impact of the much awaited Inspectors' Report of the Iraqi stuff. Some say that the report is irrelevant by now anyway. Even on a larger scale this multi-tasking approach has its pitfalls, if quality means anything. Perhaps, one thing at time still may be a strategy worth considering in both love and war.

APRIL 8, 2003, UGLY RELATIONSHIPS

Looks are all in the beholders' eyes, as Sydney Greenstreet noted to Peter Lorre when they sat waiting for Mary Astor to join them for a drink in the Maltese Falcon. And such it is in many of life's seemingly controlled circumstances. Take my garden for example. It has been four years since I planted, well more like shoved in the ground, a couple handfuls of hosta bulbs. Problem, that I should have seen coming, was the shoving was done near the roots of some evergreen arborvitae shrubs. They, the bulbs were tenderly young, and the shrubs not long out of the nursery so it seemed to me that there was keen potential for a tranquil and peaceful relationship. And thus it was within the context of such wishful thinking that an ugly competition began to

develop. Last year I tolerated it, this year it was really ugly and something had to be done. One or the other would certainly put an end to....well, the other.

There were few acceptable choices, and you must agree, given that the arbie were now six feet nearly, it was the hosta bulbs that would need to be transplanted. Because I had not marked their exact location and because there were by now at least a dozen clumps, it seemed prudent to wait for their shoots to appear rather than digging away at random. As shoots do, these popped up about 2 weeks ago, but I was in no condition to take shovel to earth and remove them. So, I waited. The weather cooperated (rained) and reinforced limiting my landscaping maintenance to pulling moss flowers and dancing around the garden with the Round-Up sprayer this weekend.

But, today, the weather became absolutely balmy and led me to survey the situation. I did, vowing not to jump into any rash transplanting, but several close inspections revealed the seriousness of the ugly situation developing between the arbie and the hostas. However, the family history writing was not going swimmingly to say the least, so temptation defeated good sense and I was soon digging out roots in the early spring muck.

The hostas cooperated in that it would have been a simple matter to extricate them, but the arbie were more possessive than I predicted, and hung on for dear life. What developed seemed life threatening for the arbie it seemed to me, because the hostas were not about to let go of the arbie roots.

Normally, by this far into the surgery I would have abandoned shovel and spade and been on my knees gently separating the two beings, each I thought totally justified in desiring its own mortality. The problem here as it turned out, was staging, or to be precise lack of same. I noted that my intention was not to become involved today, and so I entered the garden wearing what some at the Pint refer to as my writing duds, which is to say khaki pants and shirt and light brown Clarke leather clogs. The moment of awareness came when I happened to take a good look at the clogs and realized that they were already unacceptably muddy. Not just spotted, mind you, but unacceptably (I do enjoy that word...precisely definitive but not too harsh sounding) filthy for house reentry.

So I retreated, perhaps until this evening, one of the first of the Spring with an hour's more daylight. With proper attire the task may be more readily completed. That is when the Greenstreet-Lorre thought initially occurred to me, that it is a shame that in the midst of general tranquility specific ugly relationships develop.

APRIL 22, 2003, HA, HA!!

You will be glad to know that it is a bright if cloudy day in Yooooojeanne and the many species of birds are tweeting away at full volume. Some may wonder about the bright and cloudy combination, but if you are to survive here it is important that you learn to think that way. As we finished the last lap of our walk this morning, we agreed what perfect weather for walking it was.

Mind you, we were both layered with sweaters and wearing our medium rain gear. Our joy could be accounted for in terms of a temperate 50 degrees, no wind, and no rain (well, nearly no). Final proof was that we both took off our gloves for the final block up the incline.

You may have seen the TV special on Sunday evening featuring the 100th birthday of Bob Hope. We caught the part featuring his constant visits abroad to U.S. troops. In one section, Phyllis Diller recalls a trip with Hope and his show group that included a visit to quadriplegic ward (tent) in Vietnam. She, a very tough comedian by most counts, found herself unable to keep the comedy routines going in the face of such devastating injuries and broke into uncontrollable tears. Hope took her aside for a moment and firmly if quietly reminded her that they were not there to pity the wounded soldiers. Their only purpose was to entertain and bring a few moments of comedy. Another member of the show, long time singer Jack Jones, noted that Hope was the only person he could think of who could walk into a ward of seriously wounded soldiers and get a laugh with the line, "Its okay guys, no need to stand up!"

This led to our wondering if the longevity of people such as Hope, Milton Berle, George Burns and others was related to the important role that comedy played in their lives. We not talking about cracking jokes and one liners, but rather the phenomenon of being constantly perceptually alert to moments when humor could be positively applied. Self deprecation is an obvious example. A more subtle example is perceiving the potential humor in an otherwise non-funny situation and timing the observation in such a way that others are able to share the humor. This doesn't mean that humor supplants the initial perception of the situation, but instead supplements it with a contrasting view.

That, in turn led to the issue of discussing situations such as the Mid-East seemingly ongoing conflicts and the associated behavior of non-Middle Eastern nations. Is there a way to have such discussion without leading to heated arguments and exploding tempers, or simply uncomfortable avoidance? One would hope that reason and objectivity would prevail, but humor may also assist in developing more accurate understandings of the facts and of conflicting perceptions. Humor will probably not solve such issues, but it may assist in broadening the perspective and thus contribute to meaningful discussions of them.

We thought it was worth trying.

For example, imagine you are being drawn into an increasingly heated discussion regarding Christianity and Islam. Finally, hoping to terminate the argument on a neutral tone, you say to your Christian correspondent, "You probably think I believe in Henotheism, don't you?"

"That being?" he replies hesitantly.

"Well, I'll give you a choice; a.) Belief that God is a hen; b.) belief that Henny Youngman is God; c.) belief in one God without necessarily accepting that he or she is the only God.

Or, when someone is taking the position that civilization would be better off if we could return to the past and you believe that is simplistic, you might say; "That sounds like a case of Hesternopothia," Frank, " you know, like the good old days when World War II was in full swing, children got diphtheria, and dentists used slow drills and no anesthetic."

To use is humor in serious discussions is not necessarily to make light. In fact, it can often shed some.

It also helps to smile when you use such tactics.

Smiling Ripley here who is ever so pleased that the suggestion that I made on the bright, but cloudy, but slightly misty walk has surfaced in the Tuesday Letter. You can imagine on some Monday morning walks Jack quips, "It's Monday and I don't have any ideas for the Tuesday Letter." If and when that happens, I risk surfacing some idea that has been mulling around in my head. This morning, longevity, attitude, and positive psychology were running around and colliding in my Monday morning brain.

The Hope show last night was in juxtaposition to my reading two books on Positive Psychology which is much more fun than reading books on Abnormal Psychology. Basically, the books state that one is more likely to have a "better" life if you lead with your strengths and always go toward the positive. And then I thought of Hope. Whatever Hope thought of the troops being wherever they were, he knew he could lead with his strengths in those situations, make a contribution, and feel good about it. Many of us have been looking for ways to feel good about a lot of things in the last few months. Hope's survived 100 years doing whatever he does, which says a lot about his attitude toward life as well as the behaviors and thoughts he chooses every day. I said to Jack I thought it was no accident that some comedians live long, although we can all think of the drug-overdosing exceptions to this statement.

There is no way I can make light about the world and particularly the Middle East situation, but I can certainly "lighten up" myself. Just shedding that baggage should make me a better thinker and doer and smiler.

My other "light" reading, by the way, is The Idiot's Guide to Islam. I figure if the Idiot's Guide to World War I made that more understandable, I'd give this reader another chance at another topic. Who knows, I just might be able to use my idiot knowledge to make fun of myself in an appropriate way at the appropriate time. It's all in the timing. I learned that from Jack Benny, Bob Hope, Bob Newhart, George Gobel, Phyllis Diller, George Burns, Bill Cosby, Tim Conway, Dick Van Dyke, John Cleese, Mary Tyler Moore, and many others.

Have a good Tuesday. We'll try to have a few chuckles amid the world events we find ourselves in. Oh...and...thanks for the memories.

AUGUST 19, 2003, BIRDMAN OF SAND AVENUE

Sunday was a sort of laid back day on the plantation. We had invited friends for lunch on the patio and were leaving the rest of the day to catch-up, computer and elsewhere. About mid morning I wandered from the kitchen into the garage in search of a screwdriver and pair of pliers only to be greeted by a frantic hummingbird. It seemed familiar and reminded me of the

warm blooded egg-laying animal which has feathers, wings, and a beak, and typically is able to fly and frequently visits our garden in search of liquid refreshment, I assume. The logical course of action was to open the door to the garden pathway and raise the garage double door.

Makes sense. Well perhaps in the speculative mode, but empirically speaking the damn bird just kept flying from one end of the garage to others, humming all the way. It would not perch for more than a few seconds. Its favorite spots were the top of several kitchen chairs stored high up, rolled up pieces of carpet on top of a cabinet and the chain drive mount of the door opener. When I would shut the garage door, the bird would retreat to the space between the door and the garage ceiling. Never would it descend lower than six feet above the floor.

Leaving both doors open, I checked periodically, hoping it would have made its long overdue departure time. Nope. About 3:00 p.m. following lunch, I checked again and the bird was still humming all over the place, but I observed, with less energy, speed and determination (the latter is an inference with little to back it up, i.e., is “determination” a mind set that can be correctly attributed to birds or “mind” for that matter)? The damned thing hovered just inside both doors, but in a few seconds would head directly towards the ceiling, never venturing outside.

Five o'clock and still no behavior change. It was hotter than blazes so it occurred to me that change in strategy might be in order. I had chased the thing all around the garage with a long handled spider web wand, whistled and shouted at it and even considered rigging up a net with a large Payless paper bag and a bamboo stick.

Not being yet ready to surrender nor wanting the bird to expire, I even placed a couple pans of water just outside the open the doors, thinking perhaps that the winged creature might be desperately thirsty. Nothing worked.

So my dependent nature took over, and I placed a called for consultancy assistance. In this case the computer consultant happens to be a good friend and that helped overcome guilt regarding raising the flag on Sunday. It wasn't, of course the computer expertise that drew me. My friend is also a gentleman rancher of some talent and wisdom, and he often speaks about controlling birds in his barn. Garage, barn: you see the connection.

He either was not in or more likely choose to ignore my insensitive intrusion on his day of worship and rest. I left a message, hung up the phone, checked the garage again, waved at the humming humming bird and shut the doors.

Later that evening, making a final check, we discovered the bird was gone.

The next morning, the following message from you know who was in the in-box.

“If the bird won't fly out on its own, about all one can do is wait for darkness, assuming the bird is not in immediate danger, such as banging its head against a window, in which case, it will eventually... pass out, is wait until dark. Most species of birds can't see ***anything*** in the dark, so they become limp and helpless, at which time one can simply pick it up, carry it outdoors, and drop it on a bush, and go to bed. Be sure to pray no cat walks by.”

Nor can I see in the dark, I thought. Catch 22.

Catch 22 Ripley here who was privy to watch this whole scene and even suggested to Jack that he call our friend who we dubbed, for the occasion, Super Birdman.

It was humbling to see this little hummingbird so ill equipped to deal with what seemed like a straight forward situation. We had HUGE openings in the garage to fly out, but the hummingbird could not see his (or her) way out of it. Sorta reminds me of current world situations, where one has to get on the ground to really see what is happening and how to get the heck out of a situation. Flying high above hardly gives the story. But then again, I don't know the end of this story of how the humming bird finally found his/her way out. I think I'll go check my car to see if the anxiety over the situation developed into a noticeable trail out of the garage.

NOVEMBER 25, 2003, PRETURKEY ANXIETY

The big bird ballyhoo has started and to tell you the truth, I'm a bit nervous, being the one responsible this year for getting it in edible condition. I know it is no big deal, no rocket science or stuff like that, but having made the decision to have a few people in, I was hit square in the face with some pretty challenging decisions. Any suggestion will be appreciated since it has been some time since we have done a major bird job in our kitchen.

We made the first decision without help: To be Frozen or Not Frozen, that was the question. We went for not frozen, fresh as they say in the butcher trade. Seemed the safest way to go because I have vague memories of not leaving enough thawing time. We ate very late in the day that Thanksgiving. Actually, it was a stylish late evening candle light meal. The next year we knew enough not to repeat the same mistake, so we began the thawing process on the previous weekend. I remember needing to make last minute arrangements with a local restaurant. I hope the non-frozen decision will be a good one.

There is the question of tenting or going nude. I've read Rombauer on the subject and she seems pretty wishy washy to me. Big compromise suggested after a lot of loose talk: i.e, go with the aluminum sheet cover but yank it off towards the end. I'm not really comfortable with that and further research recommends going nude all the way with lots of basting during the roast. (A family story involves one Thanksgiving when we were all gathering at my Aunt's house. Mid-morning the phone rang and it my aunt calling my mom to say that the bird was beginning to get brown on top and what should she do? Baste it, Mom suggested and hung up. About 10 minutes later, my aunt called again to find out how large a needle should she use. True story.) I plan to use a portable sewing machine.

Then there is the timing issue. I have yet to meet let alone examine the bird, but I assume it will come sans thermometer and is supposed to weight 16 pounds. The books (Rombauer again) says 15 minutes per pound at 350 degrees for which the in-oven time is 4 hours, but I will feel safer with a thermometer. I can get one of those little plastic kind that you stick in the bird's butt

and pops out when the bird is supposed to be done, or would it be wiser to invest in a battery operated device? See what I mean about the anxiety building!

One large concern was put to rest when I discovered it is possible to purchase off-the-shelf boxes of turkey gravy. No more mixing around here! (I kept adding water and then flour and then more water for several rounds one Thanksgiving until we had to throw it out and start all over.) Embarrassing that, taking so long to get it right!

I noticed that pumpkin pies go on sale at Safeway late Wednesday afternoon and that sounds like a good solution, although I think pumpkin pies are largely overrated, especially with whipped cream. A little ala mode, however is another story. Guests are bringing some casserole stuff and what vegies remain can be cooked stove top. So the final issue is how long to cool the cooked bird, leaving time for warming up the imported items.

So no one worries, a good selection of wines has been assembled and there are plenty of Maraschino cherries cooling for the Manhattans. Don't hesitate to mention whatever I may have omitted. Anything to allay the anxiety!

DECEMBER 2, 2003, THE HOLIDAYS START WITH...

Over the river and through the woods....

11/26/03 (the night before Thanksgiving)

10:00 p.m. Part I of Lord Peter Wimsey finished

10:10 "Nite, Jack." "Night, Theresa"

11:00 Turkey washed, ready for oven, and placed in fridge. Tuned in BBC.

11/27/03 (Thanksgiving)

7:30 a.m. "Jack, the thermometer in the fridge appears to above the safe zone. And I think the fridge door was ajar."

7:35 Fridge temperature lever moved to coldest position

9:00 Fridge temperature registers 55

Bird in Oven

1:00 Bird out of Oven

1:20 Four guests arrive

1:30 Fifth guest arrives

2:00 Sitting down to feast

3:15 Getting up from feast

4:00 Fridge temp near 60

4:30 Five guests leave

4:30 Two more guests arrive for dessert

5:00 Dessert served

6:30 Two guests depart, noting the toilet probably needs attention

7:00 Toilet plunged and cleared, floor mopped and dried, shoes and socks wet

7:30 Freezer still freezing, fridge lukewarm

7:45 Empty ice maker into mini ice chest, transfer milk and cheese to ice chest

10:30 Part II of Lord Peter Wimsey finished

10:45 "Night Jack, " "Night Theresa"

11/28/03 (Day After Thanksgiving)

8:00 Phoned Jim at Appliance Repair. Left message.

9:00 Jim returned call, noted not available until Monday a.m., gave advice for interim

9:45 Followed advice. Fridge still steady at 60

10:00 Phoned alternative appliance repair services. None workie this weekend.

2:00 Phoned Jim left message regarding Monday service call request.

4:00 Jim phoned and confirmed appointment. Gave more advice.

Quiet evening, no guests.

11/29/03

All quiet and holding

11/30/03

Still quiet and holding

12/01/03

10:15 Good old Jim from Appliance Repair arrives

10:30 Cabinet Liner removed, revealing large amount of ice on coils and elsewhere as well as burned holes in liner. Jim reports the possible open door coincidental.

11:00 Freezer defrost commences, a 24 hour process but Jim notes it can be reduced to 12 hours with assistance of fan.

11:00 Fan in place, running at high setting. Conferred with Jim regarding Warranty Message. Clearly covers Cabinet Liner and repairing or replacing Freezer/Fridge. Jim serviced Maytag appliances for 20 years, but no longer certified by company. However, his buddy is Maytag certified. Jim phoned Larry. Larry said he would make the call to Maytag.

12:00 Larry phones to say that Maytag will neither replace the unit nor repair the damage.

12:30 Phone Maytag in Iowa City and read the Warranty statement to the nice lady in Customer Service. She takes notes and transfers me to Rita, who is apparently certified to approve adhering to warranty policy statements. Rita notes model has been changed and new one is slightly larger, cubic foot wise. She reads farther and reports that the outside dimensions are the same as the model we have. Near as I can tell she approves replacing the machine. Chatted up Rita a bit when I learned she was in Iowa, noting I lived in Iowa City for 3 years while in grad school. Rita lives not far from Iowa City. Connections are what it is all about: right?

However the company from which we purchased the Maytag no longer sells Maytags (which I happened to know) but she located the name of one that does. I verified that yes, such an appliance company exists in Yoooojeanne.

1:00 Larry phones to say that Rita from Maytag Customer service phoned him and the replacement deal is set. Maytag will order a replacement machine, and Larry will deliver to our house and "install" the machine. No cost to us. Apparently the new retailer is not in the loop.

2:00 Phoned Rita at Maytag to confirm Larry's report. Rita not available, states the answering machine, but will return the call.

4:00 Rita must have gone home because it is now 6:00 p.m. in Newton, Iowa and no phone call. Saved Rita's direct phone number.

Part Three of Lord Peter Wimsey on tap for an 8:00 p.m. showing.

Part III Ripley here.

I won't add much to the above other than to note, once again, we are not in Baghdad, the same observation we made when we had the 10-night affair with the Swedish bed that was not from Sweden not long ago.

There is one other interesting observation at this point of the story which, no doubt, will turn over into the following week and that is that the Maytag which is only 4 years old drools water all over the floor when it defrosts. Why oh why in this day and age can't we find a system to defrost refrigerators without having it a total mop up process? Nice Jim, who is the kindest appliance man I've known and reminds both of us of a favorite relative from the Midwest, from the Appliance place said they built a water pan underneath the frig, but you can't get to it during defrosting. Thus the defrosting system is to fill the pan which can't be reached by human hands and the spillage comes out onto the floor. So far we've gone through four big towels.

Thus, the procedure for the next several hours might be:

- * Check frig

- * Mop up

- * Rotate frequently with the above two items

* Watch Lord Peter

* Go to bed

* See what tomorrow brings

Oh...one good thing is that we took all the food to the Eugene Mission. They told us they don't waste a thing. And it also means we might have a place to go eat today and the next few nights until Maytag of Iowa comes through.

JANUARY 20, 2004, WORMS AND SUCH

I thought for a moment this morning that I had a couple really interesting little themes for the Tueslet but one crawled away. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning just in case a reader, or perhaps even both, are in the market for a business venture. A little backgrounder stuff, first. As you must know, Yoooojeanne is known for its dampness. It doesn't rain all that much, but it is overcast, yucky damp, and slippery at least six months a year. There is an interesting and reliable yuckyness index every morning that is immediately preceded by a night of precipitation. Simply put it, the index, is worms. As the song goes, the worms crawl out and the worms crawl in. Out being defined as the cement pavement and in as wet grass and earth bordering such pavement.

I cannot explain what the frigging worms are in search of, or even if they find it. But, they come in all shapes and sizes. The norm tends to be long and skinny, but there is the odd short and fat one and, especially if there is significant foot and wheel traffic, there is a goodly sample of worm parts. Now as everyone knows who knows anything, worms don't actually have parts. A worm is just a worm. So, when we speak of worm parts we are more precisely referring to a part of a worm or a piece of a worm. There is a front and a back to a whole worm, the front being closest to the direction in which the worm is traveling. When it comes to a part of a worm, it is more difficult to distinguish the front from the back, or head from the tail as some might prefer to put it, but it doesn't really matter much because...and here is the good part about worms, legend has it that the first thing a newly created, to use the term metaphorically, worm part does is to begin growing into a complete worm. Incidentally, there are no night crawler worms to be seen in the morning, that is a.m., because...well after all it is no longer night and they have crawled back into their dirty little holes in the earth. Never mind, and this is important, because they are easily found.

Enough of the backgrounder and on to the main body, so to speak, of the piece. Worms, in addition to providing an agricultural function are in many parts of the country, world actually, play a key role in the growing leisure industry. What, in spite of tremendous advances in the science of polymers, is still the most popular fishing lure? Worms, of course. And what is the least expensive lure. Certainly not those made from polymers, but worms! Whether grown on a worm farm or hunted in nature, worms are cheap compared to lures made of polymers. And besides,

worms have a built in wiggler which lasts until they die, and sometimes even longer if you recall your fishing days.

You no doubt are way ahead of me, but the brilliant business idea I had this morning is to develop a worm collecting scheme and market the catch via sporting goods stores and perhaps even as specialty items in Dairy Marts and 7-11 Stores. A display rack in Walmarts would probably work well. There is dandy profit to be made because except for the worm farm approach, worms are free. Packaging is a concern, but I prefer to view it as a challenge.

And this is only the beginning. From what observations I have made in my worldly travels, I wouldn't be surprised that with a little work R&D work, worm delicacies for human consumption has potential. However, I doubt that I will take the worm venture much farther. I predict it requires more patience than I could muster, and to be honest about it, I don't especially like messing with crawly things of any size. I found a tiny centipede on the bathroom window last week and was ill for several days. Fortunately, I was able to construct a trap out of toothpicks and Elmer's glue and either another member of the family removed it or it simply expired and disintegrated. But the experience, once recalled, kicked the worm idea in the head. So, take it if you are interested. I don't even want credit.

Oh, yes, the second theme. It has to do with Windows not loading until one performs a "Go Back" procedure which is both inconvenient and potentially dangerous if you value your memory. So far, I have only to Go Back about 2 days to kill the virus or whatever it may be. Hopefully, that unpleasant topic will also disintegrate like the centipede and allow me to return to peaceful if uneventful computing.

JULY 13, 2004, TELL IT ALL

Have you ever struggled, seriously I mean, with the urge to tell, i.e. write your life story or some part of it in some form or another? I observed several former colleagues engage in that self-battle during my career as an academic. None of them won, as far as I could ascertain; no hard copy evidence suggesting that they had produced a chronicle of their achievements, adventures and times ever surfaced. Perhaps they had, but decided not to go public. I suspect not, however, because for performers, and most professors aspire to be performers, public recognition is a prime motivator. The only exception I know of is a friend who, while recuperating for several weeks in hospital during his fifth decade of life, told me that he compiled a narrative of his active and varied sex life, going so far as to identify if not actually name his partners or conquests or both depending upon one's perspective. The day prior to his discharge, he said, he tore the draft into shreds and destroyed the remains.

I admit to thinking late in my university career about doing something along an autobiographical line but the urge rarely sustained itself. There were several reasons. One was the implied arrogance of an out and out autobiography. I thought the nomination more correctly should come from without not within. A sneaky alternative was to use one's experience as the

basis for fiction. I tried that once in the form of a satire. I conned a textbook editor friend into having a fiction editor look at the manuscript and was soon forwarded a very brief note suggesting that I should turn elsewhere for material. So much for that. The most valuable outcome of that project, in addition of course to being slapped in the face with humble pie, was becoming aware of the challenges of using experience selectively as a partial source of story ideas and material. It looked so easy, but was not, for me at least.

This past spring, my sister Marilyn and I produced a series of 12 short accounts or stories on the theme of “Growing Up in YouuuuJeanne”, our home town. The manuscript consisted of twelve (six each) independently written stories with comments and reactions from the other writer. We sent email copies to several friends and relatives. The stories are about the period in which we grew up and the nature of the small university town environment and our personal observations regarding the stories. Personally, I didn’t count my bits as autobiographic but more reflective and so it didn’t seem arrogant to share them, but others might have thought so.

Thus you can see that I have actually struggled with the concept of telling personal stories. Lately several themes have become apparent, and my memory and imagination are able to cooperate and produce drafts that I enjoy creating and reading. An audience of one may suffice. Might even be the most satisfying and functional size in the long run.

Underscoring this considerable internal uncertainty as I am into my seventh decade, is a powerful desire to avoid the trap of unconsciously perceived self-importance that can easily affect one’s persona, which leads, of course to being boring. I prefer being perceived as thoughtfully quiet rather than intensely boring, given the choice.

One point of these reflections is that some people regardless of age can gain significant satisfaction and even self awareness by describing what were to them interesting experiences. (If push comes to shove, the younger may gain more of self-wisdom than the older.) So, write on if you have the urge to tell your stories. If you need an audience, try thinking small at first; perhaps a friend or pen pal with whom you can exchange pieces. Or, if your ego requires more, con an acquaintance into sending you a letter noting how much the world or some segment of it would appreciate a first person description your life and times.

I am extraordinarily fortunate in having an editor who can be kindly supportive, firmly confronting and when required simulate the voice of a small audience.

AUGUST 17, 2004, START YOUR ENGINES

August 17 is an anniversary of sorts on Sand Avenue. Four years ago we purchased our handsome European sports sedan and today its 4 years or 50 K miles whichever comes first, warranty expired. The warranty has not had much use, but on the few occasions it was needed it performed as promised. On one occasion, we had a flat tire on a Sunday in a tiny burg near here (they are all tiny burgs near here) and so rather than mess with changing the tire we phoned the

number on the little sticker in the inside of the trunk lid that noted all we had to do to receive road side assistance was to call a number. We did, and after a brief conversation were assured that help was on the way. It was and about 30 minutes and two soft ice cream cones later while sitting in a gazebo under a huge oak tree in Coburg, help arrived in the form of Tom's Tilt-Bed Transport. The truck had one of those beds that tips down to the ground so that a vehicle can be pulled on to the bed which is then returned to its horizontal position. This is much much more classy than your typical hook and chain tow truck approach. Alex, the driver, was proud of the rig, you could tell. It would have been an overkill, however, and instead, he pulled out a large rolling hand jack, removed the flat tire and installed the spare. And, equally important, the automobile warranty covered it all. A small burg is one thing, but 35 miles up the Siskiyou Pass into California would be another.

I had predicted that the demise of the warranty on the 328i would be a matter of time, not miles and I was correct. With about 7000 miles remaining, the death knoll was a function of time. I had been keeping a thoughtful eye on both the calendar and the odometer for several months and making notes of the process taking place. Which would come first: miles or time? When it became clear that time was the issue, I had a talk with The sales manager at Yooogeanne BMW; the fellow who sold us the little beauty in the first place. We talked vital statistics, and he quoted me an approximate trade in value that was just about one half of what we paid for the little, overpriced, nearly mini foreigner. He could tell from the expression on my face that I was not a happy camper. "Of course," he covered himself, "you can always try to sell it yourself," an obvious strategy that I had considered. I said that I was not interested in going into the used car business.

The sales manager smiled as much as he ever does and said, "But hold your horses. Consider this. BMW is about to announce their Certified Pre-Owned Warranty Extension Program, which means that if a pre-owned car could 'pass the test' BMW would attach a two year/60K mile, whichever comes first, warranty extension to the car. And, here is where you come in, as the original owner you can purchase a two year warranty extension." In our case this meant two years for certain by the clock or, if past history is reliable, approximately 20K additional miles. No way could we pile up that many miles in two years. The cost of the extension was \$1500 plus an inspection fee to determine whether or not the vehicle could pass the inspection, plus the cost of new tires if they were seriously worn.

A strategy was emerging. Have the inspection (which came to \$173.84). We passed the inspection with flying colors but the tire deal was flat because over 50 percent of the wear was gone, according to the BMW service manger. I was into the chase by then, and made a quick stop at the tire store where I purchased said tires. The tire man took out is little gauge, silently made the measurements, and said, "Hey, they are crazy! Your tires are in great shape. At least 20K more mile without question," he assured me.

"Not so," said the BMW Service Manager, who otherwise is a very nice young man, and noted that the Certified Pre-Owned Warranty and a new set of tires would come to \$2175. What he and I both knew was that the car has 4 high tech "something-or-other controllers" which cost

\$800 each to replace. He said he didn't want to go into the costs of major engine repairs, ..."because he couldn't stand to see an old man cry."

Somewhat depressed, I began searching for more information. I looked at a VW Passant which is attractive, but certainly "is no Jack Kennedy." Heeding the Click and Clack Tappet Brothers' recommendation, I went Asian and test drove a Lexius. I've had several foreign car affairs, but they have all involved European models and I had the feeling that as soft and quiet as the Lexius is, it would not be anywhere as satisfying a match as the 328i.

So, with the assistance of an obvious rationalization, a rational decision was made. I would keep the 328i, enjoy the risk and thrill of being warrant-less, and rejoin the ranks of classic automobile buffs. Actually, it will be a few years until that the 328i reaches the age of consummation, but nevertheless it already feels good. And, I'll put a little aside each month as my own insurance fund just in case. And who knows, with the savings there may be room for a little used MG midget for tooling the hills and dales in future summers.

Little MG midget Ripley here who always watches with a sustained interested, but wary eye, when "car" time comes. My nervousness this last round was when I overheard Jack talking with his youngest son about wanting to keep the BMW, but really wanting a MG midget or even one of the classic 1800S Volvos his son had located. The only solution for Jack having a second car was to move my car out of the garage...that is sell it, and make way for another car.

Fiddle with your BMW or whatever else, but leave the pretty little Plymouth Laser alone. My only car tale of the summer is this. We had our air conditioning unit checked a few weeks ago, it passed with flying colors, which is good as Oregon has dished up one heck of a hot summer. As the AC man was in and out of the garage, he noted the perky little Lazer and sat down on the back patio to talk with us as we paid him. As the story turns out, he use to work at the local Plymouth garage and thought my model car was the Bees Knees, so to speak.

With its low mileage and pristine condition, he said the guys at the Plymouth place would call it a "cream puff." He told us not to let my car go to seed, so to speak and take good care of it. He said he'd even be willing to look at it if we want. Not wanting to look a gift horse in the mouth and after checking with the Plymouth garage supervisor who said the AC man was "born to work on cars" I called him and left a message that I wanted the "cream puff" in his careful hands.

I left that message over a week ago. I can only hope he's on vacation and that we'll get car and man together.

SEPTEMBER 14, 2004, KETCHUM

We don't live in the country per se, but there still are open spaces, highways and ponds near (in?) the neighborhood. That accounts for the occasional sighting of varmints including raccoons. We can live with that as long they stay on their side of the street. Last year we did a re-do of our

back garden including planting a ground cover with the popular name of Baby Tears. It wintered well, but in mid-summer when it was developing a nice green soft lawn like effect we awoke one morning to discover that patches of Baby Tears had been vigorously uprooted. We don't want to live with that.

“Raccoons,” opined Tony the landscaper who looks after the common area. “After the worms. Happens all the time.” The problem, probably, is in our compulsion to create privacy in our gardens, people over plant trees, hedges, bushes and install water features. All of which are attractive to raccoons as well as humans, if for different reasons.

The critter(s) continue to tear up the ground cover. A woman at Bloomers Nursery who seems knowledgeable about such things suggested we experiment with other plants. So I planted a couple of plugs of Corsican mint to see if the raccoons would find the odor offensive. They didn't touch the mint, but continued to tear away at the Baby Tears. Not very conclusive, and certainly not sufficient evidence to replant with the smelly stuff. I also planted a couple plants of Ajuga. This is not at all the look we want, but the raccoons seem not attracted to it.

Next, I considered an electric fence from Coastal Supply. The concept is promising, but who wants an electric fence in their garden? There is also the issue of needing two gates for humans.

Finally, I phoned Ketchum. John, from Ketchum, was accommodating on the phone and next day delivers four large wire mesh raccoon traps, baits them, and sets them in the garden. John is an interesting sort of fellow who earns a living controlling animal pests. Ketchum contracts with several timber companies, resorts and even the Oregon State University experimental farms to control (read eliminate) pests that destroy seedlings and such.

So there we were with four large traps, ready to rock and roll or trap as is the case here. John sez phone him in the a.m. and report. Comes the a.m. and no raccoons. One trap had been sprung but no critter. John says this may take some time. He comes out and resets the tripped trap and gives me a pep talk and says call him in the morning. Next morning things are quiet; no raccoons and no tripped traps. Labor day is now approaching and John wants a day off. So, he sez, he'll come out and wire the trap doors open. His thinking is that if the raccoons take us up (see, we are a team by now) on the free meal we may begin to condition them. Two more nights of free meals, still no raccoons. So again John comes out and resets the traps that appear to be in virgin condition. The bate is getting a little raunchy but John sez that's they way the raccoons prefer it.

Next morning the traps appear untouched. I patted down some of the uprooted Baby Tears plants and there was no new evidence of digging. So, have the raccoons moved on? John says give it a few more days.

As noted, John is quite a talker, so if nothing else I made an interesting social contact.....well, not all that interesting. His fee, by the way, is \$80 to deliver and set the traps and \$45 for each raccoon caught and taken bye bye. John says he has about a 80 percent hit rate. Looks as if he may strike out on this one. Well, I feel for him; no bounty fees and such a nice guy.

Next day, John has lugged two traps back to his trapping pick up and reset the two remaining traps in the garden. I checked them and the trap on the gravel path was turned over on its side. "Someone" had placed the trap over a pop up sprinkler head. It appears that when the water came on the sprinkler head popped up and upset the trap, which caused the trap to trip the door closed and tossed the bait to the wind. This is going nowhere! Must talk with John.

A window of learning opportunity, perhaps, and after screwing around for 15 minutes I self-taught myself how to set a frigging raccoon trap. I am not a happy trapper at this point. This is a skill in which I have no interest. It is, you will understand, why I hired John the skilled trapper in the first place. Still, settle for what achievements you can get in life, I say to myself. They are, after all, few and far in coming. Live for reality.

John arrived yesterday with a new strategy. His neighbor's plum trees have come ripe, and so he decided to switch bait from rotten cat food to sweet plums. In addition, he replaced one of the wire mesh traps with one made of white sheets of non-transparent plastic. John reasons that it actually looks more like a trap should look and may be more likely to fool a raccoon.

Me? I think the raccoons may have split. Nevertheless, John's interest level in the project remains high and besides the traps aren't hurting anyone and because we have sort of a performance contract so its no skin off my nose. I can be supportive for another week.

Supportive for another week Ripley here, who has actually been supportive of this little venture all summer. I was even eager the first morning after Ketchum put up the traps and was ready to greet our little visitors first upon arising. No luck.

Jack did forget to mention the trip to Gray's Garden Center where we purchased a thingamagig that was to be set up in the garden and then would spray anyone who came near it with water, and in the process scare them. I was not for that device from the beginning, but we left Gray's \$80 poorer and with said device in tow. Three days later, and after Jack reading all the instructions of how to set the water device and realizing that it, too, did not bring the look he wanted in the garden, it was back to Gray's Garden Center and a reverse Visa charge slip was put on my desk. I skipped the part of the venture to return said device.

But I like John and am enjoying his almost daily trips to our place. As Jack said we can be supportive of this for another week.

NOVEMBER 2, 2004, HALLOWEEN

The weekend was pleasant, and Halloween provided a surprise in our social standing. We rarely get beyond the teens with trick or treaters, but the count last Monday evening when we cranked down the iron gate on this side of the moat was 35. Considering that many of these were

dropoffs riding around town in their parents' RV's, we readily admit that it is the neighborhood, not the reputation of our abode in particular that brings 'em in. Location, location, location.

A quick and dirty analysis uncovered both the expected and a few surprises. Most parents of tots stood carefully on the curbside sidewalk, allowing their tiny goblins and witches to venture to the front door on their own. Because there is only one under 12 kid on our street, this age group is easy to track. But because Oregon law requires one to be 16 or older to poses a valid drive's license, the early teenagers need some sort vehicular transportation. Needs, said advisably, because there are neighborhoods with greater proportions of kids about a mile or so distant, but my hunch is that most of them wouldn't walk a block for a free candy bar. That was, incidentally, smart thinking on their part because this year we featured plastic toy wrist watch toys that invited recipients to work three beads into the eyes and nose on the watch face. This was a long term strategy to negatively reinforce middle schoolers.

Just as we began the shut-down drill, one little guy in a lion suit came bouncing up the drive way wagging his tail and shouting Leak, Leak, Leak. "Isn't he the cutest?," proclaimed his mom standing in the shadows. You had to admit he was, even if he was our three year old grandson. His last visit was a couple weeks ago when he accompanied his father on the final phase of a house painting and sealing contract to redo a window seal. I suppose the kid will tag us as the Leak House until we can enhance his vocabulary via another experience.

Then came members of the older teenage and twenty something crowd. I was not prepared for this. One trio appeared in four legged animal suits of one kind or another, smiling like idiots (in this regard, one has to admit they were appropriately dressed) saying "Trick or Treat," with little enthusiasm. Embarrassment, was nearly the operable term.

I noted to the guy with a heavy beard that shaving would have put him at a distinct advantage on this particular adventure and Theresa wondered aloud to all three if they were collectively concerned about a possible draft? All three giggled, globed on to a plastic toy watch, and skipped back to the street. I considered giving them directions to the national guard armory, but they were too quick.

I still believe that Halloween is one of more enjoyable holidays, and readily acknowledge that such irritants are worth the price of admission.

Ripley here, Halloween was fun. We had an all-time high number of 35, which is low for some neighborhoods, but high for us. I was a bit, more than a bit taken back, by the advancing age of some of the trick and treaters as Jack said. Ye gads, give them body armor and they'd be ready for Baghdad, that is, if we had enough body armor for Baghdad.

I felt like a fool giving them a plastic toy, but then again, they should have felt like a fool coming and asking for treats. We noted on our morning walk that one of our plastic toys had been stepped on and crushed. So...instead of picking up coins today, we picked up discarded plastic toys.

DECEMBER 14, 2004, MYSTERY NIGHTS

I for one welcome the dawning of a new week with open arms. It is likely that I am one of the last of my generation to do a first overnigher in the hospital, but because it was my turn it seemed the appropriate thing to do. As it turned out, the adventure grew to three nights, and I will remember it more for the contextual change rather than particular bits of content. That is to say, there were no painful events specifically related to the surgical procedure I experienced (actually, I was knocked out colder than a frozen mackerel for several hours and thus can't remember if there were things to be remembered or forgot, if you get my drift. Can there be a memory without consciousness?)

At this point the most significant aspect of the context of the hospital visit was the loss of personal control. Some of this is inherent in the recovery situation, I suppose, but there are also contextual variables which could have been given greater consideration. They seemed demeaning during the experience, but not really aimed at me personally. With perspective, comes humor, or at least one is a hell of lot better focusing there than trying to make something out of unreasonable resentment. Two examples seem worth describing, to me at least.

From what I gather, one aim of submitting patients to a stay in the intensive care unit (ICU) is to raise the odds of catching something gone amiss. In my case it was, a heart beat that kept missing beats. To achieve this, one is hooked to a machine that records the heart behavior. If you have had an EKG procedure, you will recall the routine of running wires from little electronic receptors pasted to several body surfaces to a monitoring machine. The results are displayed on a computer panel. There is an underlying assumption I assume that if the measurement is to be useful, it must be constant, i.e., last for 24 plus hours.

In this case the patient to machine wires were about 6 feet long, so the initial challenge to the still drugged patient is to sleep in the midst of the wires without pulling lose the connections. The less drugged, the greater the challenge. So morning comes eventually, and said patient discovers that there is a toilet compartment in the room. The next discovery is that toilet per se is approximately 7 feet from the bed recording machine. Think about that. The urge is strong, the open door of the toilet compartment is a welcoming beacon, but the 6-foot tether takes over. The tether also prevents one to wander towards the hall way door and peak out to the larger world. The tether does, however, permit one to move towards the window sill. In this case, the sill provided a view of my former faculty office building and a resting place for my plastic urinal, which I could rearrange from time to time to provide a illuminated pattern on the opposite wall. Even a short fellow such as I could make the stretch and empty the urinal into the toilet, but alas, getting butt to toilet seat was impossible without doing a wire disconnect. You can predict one of my immediate joys 3 days later upon arriving home.

My first night found me in the charge of a short stocky male ward nurse who was subordinate to the short, stocky female head ward nurse. The first sign of friction was when he wondered just

how much trouble “she” might be, the “she” referring to Theresa. After seemingly purposeless trips in and out of the room, he brought up subject of pain medication.

“You may be asking for pain medication and I’ll need to know how much pain you have. From 0 to 10, ten being the most pain, describe your pain level.”

Trying to be cooperative and honest, I replied, “.5”

He tossed me a dirty look, stormed out of the room to soon return and state in an aggressive tone that, “You not cooperating! Just answer my question if you want me to get the pills.”

I noted that I had answered as best I could according to the scale he provided.

Stormed out of the room he did again. Soon he returned and said, “You are trying to be analytical and all I want is a straight answer.”

“What if I had answered 10?”, I said.

“You couldn’t have because at 10 you would be dead! What you need to understand is that “they” will not let me give you pain pills if you are lower than a 2!

I refrained from pointing out that my chart probably noted that I had consumed a pain pill that afternoon.

“So,” I replied,” assume that my pain score is .5, and that will not qualify me for a pain pill. Do you understand that is okay with me, because my pain really is minimal and I do not want a pain pill?”

Stomping out the door again not to return for a half hour, for no ascertainable purpose he reappeared. Later during the night, I became entangled in the tether cords and began detaching them so that I could get to the toilet. That set off alarms and I eventually settled for the urinal. I awoke in the morning feeling very groggy and half suspected the little Napoleon had slipped me a mickey.

On the plus side was the day nurse who was many times more wonderful than one could hope for: competent, engaging, literate, thoughtful and proactive in helping patients making the best of it. She came around in the afternoon with a hand held monitor, wondering if I felt like taking walk, and so she switched wires and we toured the ward discussing the pros and cons of a hospital nursing career. She worked in legal research prior to her R.N. training, but had a desire to be more helpful. There were several stripes of nursing assistants who also added cheer and good if brief moments of interaction.

The cardiologist suggested one more night of monitoring just to be safe. I agreed, but pleaded to be switched from ICU to a surgical recovery ward. The nurse facilitated the request and soon a room was free and it was like moving into the Ritz.

MAY 10, 2005, THE INFORMATION MANUAL

It was a dark and stormy morning with the wind blowing hard, changing from one direction to another, fiercely whipping the tall rhododendron branches to the near breakpoint. The plump, red azalea bushes were giving up their blossoms rapidly, leaving a ground cover of damp, spent petals not to be seen until the next spring. The light early morning drizzle showed signs of developing into the predicted storm about half way into our morning walk and fortunately we decided on an about face between the large red brick building shared by the Oregon Medical Group and the Oregon Bridge Engineering Company (interesting joint tenants), respectively, and the McKenzie Surgical Center, or “the pay and cut place” as it is known in the neighborhood, and thus were home and dry before the big stuff arrived.

As hungry as people are for sunny spring days, few will complain about dark overcast sky as long as the clouds bring rain. Some nasty newspaper photos testified to the credulity of the predictions for summer drought. Streams normally full and flowing rapidly now were shown as a mere trickle with the boat moorings several yards high and dry several yards up shore. Enough will soon be enough, but the Willamette Valley has seen many a rainy May and June, for that matter. We are still in the smiley semi self-deluding phase, noting redundantly that this is just perfect weather for reading, writing, sorting and chucking and planning summer excursions. If the overcast sky continues too long, all of that will give way to early signs of depression. So far, we remain optimistic with only a hint of vigilance.

Speaking of nasty, we detected an odor that could be so described that accompanied a recently purchased leather sofa. The animal didn't smell that way in the store, but perhaps the large display rooms with very high ceilings account for that. Nevertheless, once in the comfy confines of our not so great, in the sense of size, great room, the beast emits a strong odor, or as my mother would have phrased it, “stinks to high heaven”. I've never understand the etiology of the phrase, by the way, nor did I ever raise the question with her, but there was an extensional or operational meaning clear to both of us. And so it was between Theresa and me and the sofa; you get five or six feet from the red sofa and the smell damn near knocks your socks off. I say red, because I suspect the red (more precisely, tomato) dye could be the nasty culprit.

The little “Information Manual” provided a hint of what might be happening. “In fact, the sofa is subjected to a long journey (Italy to Oregon, actually) before reaching your home, which could temporarily affect the initial aesthetic quality.” It also notes that, “During the first 3 months of life polyurethane foam padding tends to become softer and then finally stabilizes itself.” Another case of better living through chemistry, as a late Prez would say. This information may be a long jump from “stinks to high heaven” for 3 months, but sometimes hope is all there is.

Reading the manual provided an unexpected bonus lesson, suggesting that sofa's proper care and maintenance includes “modeling”, which roughly translated from the Italian means puff up the cushions following each seating if you want the thing to retain its original shape. I doubt that we will remember to do that, and so the instructions did little more than enhance feelings of guilt.

The rain has been reduced to a light piddle, and an optimistic person would report that the skyline of the Coast Range appears to be growing brighter. That would be wishful thinking of

course because the weather page calls for 60 percent chance of continued rain. Seems like good time for more reading, writing, sorting and chucking.

MAY 17, 2005, PRODUCE SOMETHING

All my life I have been fascinated and bit envious of people who can actually produce something. I think it began with making “race carts” out of a couple two by fours, an orange crate, four wheels and a hunk of rope that served as a steering device. I could never get the wheels to stay on which to say the least was frustrating, especially because a kid who lived in the next block somehow built wheels that stayed put. My axles were long nails driven into the four ends of the two by fours. About twenty feet out of the driveway the nails would start giving way and the cart collapsed. My friend took pity and helped me attach a bolt and nut affair to the two by fours that actually worked.

In those days there were model airplane kits made of balsa wood. The individual pieces were printed on flat sheets of balsa wood. For example, a wing would consist of 4 or 5 ribs that needed to be cut out of the sheet, and then glued together with strips of wood. The idea was to construct the various frames involved in a plane, cover them with thin paper, apply a couple coats of lacquer to the surfaces and then glue the separate components together. To tell you the truth, out of the seven or eight models I attempted to construct, not a single wing was properly finished. Usually I would do such a lousy job of cutting out the ribs that I would wind up short a rib or two. Once I recall “redesigning” or “modifying” the plan by eliminating a couple ribs. While conceptually interesting and okay I thought, the implementation of the modified plan just didn’t work out, to be kind.

Later, while in high school, I decided that it would be really cool to have a desk, so I purchased some lumber and nails and set to work. A real disaster of a project was then created in my room. The concept was of a really big desk, too big to go fit through the door and so it was to be constructed on site, or in room, to be precise. Within two days it was clear even to me that this was yet another construction project that didn’t have even a slim chance or reaching fruition. However, two days of work had resulted in a gawd awful combination of nailed together pieces of wood. The only tangible sign of success was disassembling the monstrosity and lugging the pieces out to the “used lumber” shelves in our garage before my dad inquired about it. I think he knew the mess I was making but was too kind to comment, hoping that I would have enough sense to know when I was seriously in over my head.

I recall the one wood shop course I was required to take in junior high school involved constructing a slatted lawn chair as means of demonstrating that one could measure, cut, nail, screw and even glue according to a simple plan. Somehow or other I managed to get the foot angle wrong on the two long pieces upon which the slats for the seat were to be affixed. The result was something that looked like a lawn chair, but was seriously cramped and terribly uncomfortable. My mother had a couple spare throw pillows, however, and by arranging them

appropriately I was able to produce a passably comfortable chair, as long as one did not sit in it for more than a short period of time. It disappeared mysteriously at the end of the summer. Somewhere in late junior high or early high school I had the good sense to steer clear of construction of any kind that require more than entry level skills.

So you can understand why I am so respectful of those who can actually 'do something' along the constructing or fixing line.

AUGUST 2, 2005, SEEING OTHERS DO

Last Sunday began pretty much as usual, except we were out on the pavement just after 7:00 hoping to beat the morning heat. Uuuuujeanne has been having a hot spell, well it is for us at least, often hitting the mid 90s by mid afternoon. The streets were empty, much to our surprise, so it was just us, the birds and the rising sun. At breakfast and the morning papers we agreed that it seemed like a good day to get out of Dodge City. Going south was an option, but guaranteed higher temps, the coast was a bit too much driving, the north more of the same, so guess what remained? It was either the McKenzie river or the north fork of the Willamette, and the cool trip up the Cascades along the McKenzie was a natural choice.

Thus, by 11:30 we were on our way east on highway 126 towards the tiny town of Vida and our destination, Finn Rock. You may recall Finn Rock from other TuesLets; it is not the site of a Scandahoovian settlement, but actually a huge rock that, with some imagination, resembles the fin of a huge fish; much, much too large for the rushing to tranquil McKenzie River. Still, the river from early days of the Oregon Territory known for its exciting trout fishing, deserved some recognition to fish. One can suppose that one evening in the 1800s sitting around a campfire on the bank of the river one camper says to the other, "Hey Maude, ever think that big rock looks like a huge fish fin?". Maude, not one for unnecessary conversation, nodded in the affirmative and the name stuck and has spread.

I had devoted 4 hours Saturday to giving the 328i a much need detailing and the full Zymol cleaning and waxing treatment, and the result added to the pleasure of driving the winding McKenzie River highway. Again with a little imagination it was easy to envision ourselves tucked into a 1936 open top touring model, wind blowing in our hair and so forth. Actually the BMW does have a hole in the roof but I can never get the damn thing re-shut tight so we seldom if ever use it. The journey was pleasant, I'm trying to say, and the conversation (which would have been impossible in an convertible) covered several minor personal and family concerns. We weren't complaining, understand, but realized we were next to it, so changed the subject to a more positive vein.

To our pleasant surprise, the Finn Rock Café had changed hands since our visit last fall. It appears to be a family affair now, with respectable cooking and serving talents underscoring a pleasant and tasty lunch experience. I mean, sitting at a shady table on the deck just feet from the rushing river with sun beams streaming through the large trees, making the most of a really first

class hamburger (minor grease factor) and one of the tastiest fish and chips Theresa recalls in ages, was about as good as it gets.

Several river boats drifted by and then one came along our side of the bank and put in to a small protected curve just below the café deck showing every intention of beaching, even though there is no beach to speak of; the water simply become more shallow. Three boaters wearing shorts, t-shirts, and life jackets were aboard. One aft, if there is such a direction on a rubber raft, and two mid ship. The mid oars people, one male and one female, held the craft steady with their oars while the person aft jumped into the river with a firm grip on a mooring rope. The river bottom consists entirely of river rocks thus making it very difficult to maneuver on foot. The person with the mooring rope appeared to lose his footing several times, but soon was on shore and tying the rope around a large tree. He was ankle deep in water but as he emerged from the river a right foot and ankle prosthesis was evident. The foot resembled the wood block around which your grandfather may have stored his best Oxfords and was attached to his leg just above where his ankle had been. His jumping about the rock beach and thick bank brush while pulling the boat to a safe moorage was a sight to admire, as we both did. As soon as he accomplished his task he continued up the bank towards the café. Apparently, this was essentially a toilet stop because he soon returned to join the other crew members who had busied themselves bailing water and pumping more air into the rubber craft.

The Café deck was full, not a table vacant, and the patrons ranging in age from children to the retired set, watched with admiration, if not fascination at the display of successful physical rehabilitation. I wondered how many would have been capable of taking over his watch. As the crew got the boat back in acceptable shape, all re-boarded except the former oar woman rotated positions with the moorage person, he of the prosthesis. She now untied the rope, pushed on and jumped aboard with a single effort, and the boat drifted off down the McKenzie, over the rapids toward the confluence with the Willamette and who knows what next adventure.

The trip back down the McKenzie Highway was mostly reflective.

Reflective Ripley here who realizes that the Sunday jaunt was one of those times you want to put in a capsule and keep. Just reading about it above, reminds me of that. Jack mentioned children, and two of them were next to us. One, a 5 month old and his older brother who is 5. The couple was from Sacramento, where they tell us it is really hot, not what we were complaining about here, and they were on their way to Black Butte Ranch to join family for the week. The 5-year-old had found a "good passage" from his parents' table to the deck rail to look out at the river by passing by our table. He did that several times. He likes his brother and is mild mannered. That showed.

The young family engaged in our conversation about admiring the man with the prosthesis in the rubber boat, moored below. The mother said, "oh yes, there are days when things are bad at home and I see some mother who really has a challenge, and I say to my husband, 'we can do this.'"

Well, we drove home, the complaints/comments of the conversation up the river seemed miles away. Perspective had been added and the afternoon was topped off with a Blizzard at the Dairy Queen. Now this is summer.

AUGUST 9, 2005, WAITING

We were sitting around the patio table having lunch Monday and got to discussing the space shuttle. What triggered that probably was the postponing of the return flight from Monday to Tuesday. The NASA website noted the after getting news regarding excessive cloud cover in Florida, the crew had returned to orbital mode while waiting for a “hole in the clouds,” as Smilin’ Jack, Tailspin Tommy, Tom Swift and the other aviators of yesteryear would put it. Apparently there were 4 possible holes predicted for Tuesday.

What do you do, if you are not flying the machine, while awaiting the hole in the sky to develop? I would not have the slightest idea, although one would assume that such circumstances have been analyzed and that in the sake of good mental health each crew member had a set of tasks for which he or she is responsible.

The nearest I can identify with the situation in which the crew now finds itself, is the old piston engine days of flying into Midway and O’Hare at Chicago and other Midwestern airports. In those days we frequent flyers were used to entering into holding patterns. The Midwestern thunder storms were brutal, or so it seemed from window seat A12, and could go on seemingly forever. In the worst case scenarios according to the pilots, a flight would be diverted to a field hundreds of miles to the north or east as a means of reaching more landing friendly weather. I say pilots, because most of the passengers were considerably relieved when the announcement came from the captain or first officer that “You may have noticed that our flight path has been altered due to weather conditions and we now have an expected arrival time of 3:30 pm in St. Louis.”

The worst case situation from the passengers' perspective was being in the ongoing holding position usually flying a continuous four corner pattern in the vicinity of Chicago. We frequent flyers thought we could track the turn maneuvers at each corner of the pattern, but were really never sure. Because the aircraft was in constant cloud condition there was no eye to ground perspective and thus it was impossible to estimate altitude changes. Some pilots would relay such information on the P.A. system, and the decreases were reassuring and appreciated.

Turbulence, however, was the most dreaded white knuckle condition for me at least. The plane would seem to bounce from cloud to cloud, then smooth until you thought you were through the rough patch of sky and without any warning begin bouncing again. As the plane descended through each prescribed altitude of pattern, bumps became so gut wrenching that you thought the wings were about to tear loose. DC3s with their barn door like wings were the worst. Strapped there in your seat with no visual reference point and thus not even a hint of control of your destiny was a horrible experience. It was even worse when your tray of food and drink

suddenly ascended to the cabin ceiling. I was once in a Lockheed Constellation when as we cleared the San Francisco Bay Bridge the captain announced, "Those of you sitting on the right side of the plane may have noticed that we have small fire on number 4 engine and so we are beginning our return and descent to the San Francisco airport." That, I've always thought, was relatively a piece of cake compared to heavy turbulence over Chicago.

So what is it like to be in a 24 hour holding pattern miles above the earth? Some would ask, "Why be in a holding pattern miles above the earth?" Some scientists claim that from the point of furthering knowledge human astronauts are not necessary at least at this phase of exploration and may even hinder scientific research. A smart chimp with good camera skills might be worth considering, but the issue is far beyond my grasp. It should be another issue reserved for the expertise of Congress to decide.

Congress to decide Ripley here. Hey, Congress is in recess, so it's just us civilians left to decide what's to happen.

Jack's story reminds me of times in airplanes when I wondered "what's next." That happened once in Peru when I was with a fellow Tuesday Letter reader on Aero Peru. The pilot started speaking very excitedly in Spanish and it was clear something was wrong. What was wrong was not clear. The weather was not clear that's all I knew and I knew we were flying in the Andes. My modus operandi was silence, but I noted others seemed to do the opposite. And then there was the time in China in 1983 on CAAC (don't know what that stood for, but we were told later that it meant China Airlines Always Cancels) when it was less than certain about what was happening next.

That reminds me of reading of a wife of a Marine this week near Columbus, Ohio, who waited all day to see if uniformed soldiers were coming to her door. They did not come to her door, but we know they came to 21 other doors that day. She said it was the longest day she ever had, and when it was over and she knew it was "not her" she immediately made sure she found a way to help others that had been impacted.

So, waiting and worrying is hard work. Waiting is hard enough, but add the worrying and it goes on twice as long. Hope the shuttle crew are doing lots of deep breathing and that we all can remember to do that in similar circumstances.

NOVEMBER 8, 2005, THREE QUARTERS AND STILL ATTENDING

As I begin the seventy sixth year of life, you may excuse a few TuesLet thoughts about the journey so far. Theresa and I celebrated quietly on November 6 (that is the most comfortable way at this age) over lunch at an engaging campus restaurant where we have eaten many times in the past during our faculty days. Actually, she once owned a share of the joint as an investment. My first experience in the building was when it was a fraternity house where I was pledged as a

freshman and whacked in the butt at lunch to provide amusement to the upper-classmen. I was blackballed by the end of the term. I knew early on that it was a poor fit, and was actually relieved. As time progressed, relief turned to thankfulness as I realized how miserable I would have been for the rest of my life hiding the scar of being a Greek, i.e. member of the establishment.

The positive outcomes of this experience included being more thoughtful about the implications of following the crowd in general and more specifically being motivated to seek other friendships. These came in significant part in the form of campus musicians and graduate students. Most of these people were veterans and thus older as were their female companions. Not that much older, but a few years experience made a lot of difference to a kid just out of high school. As I look back, they were accepting and supportive and provided a transition from adolescence and high school to a community of young adults that was much to my liking.

As we lingered over lunch, Theresa, working to keep the conversation lively by paying homage to my wisdom, wondered what adults I recall most from my “growing up” years. They were mostly teachers if my memory is correct, and it occurs that they provided the acceptance and support similar to the group I just noted. The person who is paramount among these is my mother, who in addition to that honor, was also an excellent elementary and junior high school teacher. I could talk with her about anything under the sun and often did, which sometimes involved being discrete and using a secret code to insure both our rights to privacy. I think we were successful.

I don't mean to demean the importance of fathers in the child nurturing process, but in my humble (and I think informed) opinion fathers are generally less crucial than mothers to a child's development because of a number of reasons, but among those primary is that stupidity and arrogance appear less frequently among women than men, and if that is true along with the fact one must be a woman to be a biological mother (what other kind, some might ask), you are statistically less likely to observe stupid and arrogant behavior among mothers than fathers. I am not arguing that men and women cannot perform effectively as adoptive parents, but only that the socialization of women lends itself more effectively to doing mother behavior. Not such a difficult jump, when you think about it.

This is a belief that was reinforced as I wandered through my early to mid life as a psychologist, educator and (and father) and which was a frame of reference for attempting to better understand human social behavior. Being curious about the age status of my e-mail friends, I did a quick scan of my Eudora email directory which revealed that I have several such friends who have at least four or five more years at this game than have I, which was an immediate caution not to wax wise with wisdom before embarrassing them and me. The median age appears close to mine, and so I may be safe because they have no more idea about what is in store than do I. The younger set encompasses a wider age range which can be truly frightening if you think about it. Geez, just 10 years ago at 65 I was really about as smart and wise as one could be. The herd is growing and approaching fast.

That, probably is the most significant observation to me. Aging is in part a numbers game, and as one ages you are simply overwhelmed by the numbers from the perspective of social norms and the shrinking size of your own section of the curve. If the challenge is keeping up with whatever is current, that in turn is contingent upon selecting the appropriate social markers. There are many to choose from, including, for example those manifested by museum supporters, neighborhood activists, and volunteers to name just a few. Then, there can be comfort in knowing those who care less about being part of the current scene.

With apologies to my friends who have read this far, and especially to Theresa who puts up with all this palaver.

Palaver Ripley here who enjoyed the minimalist celebration which seemed to be the appropriate thing to do given the person being celebrated. I can remember his turning 55 and celebrating by signing papers to retire early from the University. Then 60 came along and he didn't want to have anything to do with it, his sister saved the day by making approximately 60 gifts for him to open. It filled the time nicely. Sixty-five, plans were made and then scrapped at the last minute. On the 70th birthday we attended a funeral of a good friend. So, 75 was around the corner and what to do. I think we did it well.

And on another adjoining note, we noted this week that as Jack was turning 75 the World Wide Web was turning 15. How it has changed our lives. And thanks to that, we are able to keep up with all of you, and many other things as well, truly a revolution.

Tuesday Letters 2006-2008

The Tuesday Letters were now in their 13th year as 2006 starts, and Jack was 75. The holiday themes were in place with the readers and as the economy and politics changed in 2008 and 2009, the Tuesday Letters commented on these events. Those letters are not a part of this collection even though they were right on as far as the times and what people were experiencing.

APRIL 11, 2006, IPODS 'R US

A dose of humiliation is said to be a good thing, but as a wise person also said, having too much of a good thing is not especially wise. This all began several weeks ago when Theresa purchased an iPod. You probably know what an iPod is; I barely did. A friend said it is essentially a portable hard drive without a computer. The friend boasted that he had over 5000 songs on his iPod. I thought that was strange; what in the world would anyone do with 5000 tunes? Well, an obvious answer is listen to them, but it seemed to me that wouldn't leave much time for other activities.

One of my daughters who is a executive in the nation's capitol suggested we could "multi-task" listening to music while doing several other tasks. Like walking, I wondered. Well, the idea wasn't too far fetched, I thought, or particularly new either. Several personal examples occurred to me. I have been simultaneously reading the newspaper and going to the bathroom for years; cleaning my fingernails while watching the Lehrer nightly news (although that can be a bit tricky when they slip in a few pictures), shifting gears while turning the steering wheel, are other multi-tasking behaviors in my repertoire. Still, if I really want to enjoy listening to music, single-tasking would be my best bet. And, I was still overwhelmed by the idea of 5000 tunes; when I had a dance band we probably peaked out at around 500, and we were faking a good number of those.

Given the considerable amount of daily interaction, it shouldn't have been a surprise that I was about to become more familiar with Theresa's iPod than I particularly cared to be, but on the other hand the vicarious experience would do me good. As I've said before, when you realize that you are not getting around much anymore, it is time you should. After considerable looking into iPod behavior on her part and discussions with me, off we went to the university bookstore to confer with the people in the computer section. We've dealt with these guys each time we upgrade out computers. Nice fellows and all that, but they often slip into computerize leaving us in limbo until they toggle back to English.

When we returned home and TR attempted to load music from CDs into the iPod a small problem occurred, namely it wouldn't load. Electronic technical failure of this sort is no stranger to us, so we searched for the iPod manual. That document became especially important when it dawned on us that was no keyboard to help search for help. The manual (labeled "iPod and

Tunes Quick Start”) was contained on 11 toilet paper sized square pages, each about half full of text.

After several depressing days of trial and error, chatting it up with the Barnes and Noble café staff (mostly college students) and reading “Dummies Guide to iPod,” Theresa’s depression began to lift. It also helped when she contacted a SFO friend who considers iPod expertise as a basic survival skill. And then there is the Quiet Counter Guy and his techie friends down at B&N. Within several weeks she was iPod literate having downloaded several cds of music, exploring the iTunes site on the internet and creating short “iPod programs” from the photo files she had made with the digital camera she received last Christmas. I was proud of her, but could not imagine that I might ever want an iPod.

She tweaked my imagination and appetite for an iPod when describing the times she had been able to whip out her iPod when in the midst of friends or across the isle from total strangers on a train, bringing information and comfort to all. I was beginning to weaken. The educational value of learning the technology of such a machine was becoming more apparent, but the conversational crutch cum ice breaker seemed a burden I could forgo. Like, you know man, I’m not all that into talking with strangers stuff. Dig?

Still, I was intrigued with the challenge but somewhat fearful. Who wants to clean up another tech accident! But, what the hell, out of 6 adult kids, a pack of kid and teenage and young adult relations the trickle down potential was there. So, I took the plunge and purchased my own iPod 30. Piece of cake.

After a studying the toilet paper manual, I was on my way. On my way to where is another question. Theresa soon became very tired of , “Hey, Theresa, tell me again how to set up a show.” “Okay, T. R. once more, what comes first....?” “So why can’t I do that?”

We did assemble one show, “My Love Affair with Cars” and rip (new word, means steal a copy of a piece or “rip off”) a couple of her Shows, and so I may actually be on the way. Next step, construct a cheat sheet.

I’m going to learn this iPod thing, even without a major life style change I’m not at all sure what I will do with it. However, I recall having a similar thought regarding the office xerox copying machine until I spent a little time messing with 20 dollar bills.

Twenty dollar bills Ripley here, actually it takes about 13 of those \$20 dollar bills to get you into the type of iPod we have which is the new gee whiz iPod that supports video downloads. I did not even understand that until after I had mine. Will I ever watch a video on my 2" inch screen, who knows, I never thought I'd buy an iPod either.

How did it start? I was two jumps behind in any audio listening. In fact I was still using tapes when a couple of months ago I realized my tape recorder was getting fussy in its daily use as an assist in my meditation practice. I thought a CD player was in my future, although I'd never had

one, but then I thought as long as I'm going CD, why not go all the way to an iPod. So I jumped two generations in one. Glad I did.

My newfound friend at B&N (actually many staff have taken pity on me) wonders why I want an iPod if I only have 45 "tunes" on it (his inventory is 5000). I countered with I listen to those "tunes" which happen to be meditation "tunes" and yoga and "appropriate music" everyday. So why not have it digital. Thus I rationalized the purchase.

Then I began to realize a whole new world was open if I wanted it. Worlds like Podcasts, audio or video, came into my being. I'm still checking those out and perhaps I'll get into that, perhaps not. I noted photos could be downloaded into the iPod. So, 300 photos later, I've set up little "shows" that can describe something I'm interested in to others. That was done almost seamlessly. I've wanted to organize these photos forever, now I'm getting there. I set up clocks, calendars, and contacts almost as easy and still want to learn about downloading from Google and attaching a microphone for audio notes. And, trust me, I see uses for all this.

I knew I was on to something when Jack began getting itchy fingers. We have noted in the past we don't share well on some things. So it was better to get his own, than try to use mine. His learning curve was much enhanced by my learning curve being about two steps ahead of his.

And you know what, this one little iPod has as much storage space as our laptop and the two iPods together have as much storage space as our desktops. Amazing. All this in 4 ounces and 2 1/4" x 4" and 3/8" deep. This weekend I was reading the iPod User's Guide and learned that London shirt manufacturers are now making shirts for London professionals to specifically hold iPods. I also learned street crime is up in London, particularly for those who have little white earbuds hanging from their ears. I wonder if that's true if the earbud wearer also has grey hair.

And bottom line, it's a good way to have something to talk about with people who are two generations younger than I. Good deal.

NOVEMBER 14, 2006, GOOSING IT

The weather people have been predicting a really big storm coming offshore into the Willamette valley and that is exactly what has happened up and down the state. UUUUUgene was hardly in the running. True, a 35 mph wind is nothing to sneeze at, but it is hardly in the competition. Our local area must have been unique. It was so quiet last that I couldn't sleep. The silence woke me about 3:00 a.m.; the sky was bright. I got out of bed and wandered around, peering (that's peering) out the windows looking for a full moon. Alas, there was none, but the city lights reflecting off the low cloud cover was simply weird (both city lights were on which may have accounted for that).

After fortifying myself with a half pint of Chocolate Chip Nut Swirl ice cream, I decided to give up and returned to the arms of Morpheus who by the way hadn't moved an inch. My thought just before nodding off was about the pair of Canadian geese that have taken up

residence on our lake shore. Well, it is more of a pond than a lake...oh what the hell, slough as the Brits would say. I had to wait until morning to see they were still about and they are.

The couple, and they are, appeared over a month ago. Our pond or whatever is on a flight path and from time to time herds of over 60 geese will descend to take on water and consume sickening quantities of turf, leaving it in another form on the street and walkways. The herds leave as quickly as they arrive, but in this instance two stayed behind and have not taken to wing since. One reason, the gardener and I speculate, is the wing of the white bird is seriously damaged. He, Tony (the gardener not the goose) knows a lot more about zoological matters than do I, decided that the white one is the gander while the grey one the goose or female, if you get the subtlety of the distinction. Perhaps we should designate the species as Goose, and the female gender as goose. If this speculation is accurate, a sort of bonding has happened and whether by choice or nature, the two remain locked in blissful couplehood or some form of indentured servitude.

Whatever you decide is okay with me (unless there is a consensus and then I would appreciate knowing that), but the point is that the couple in residence has clearly established itself as having property rights, or however Geese make the distinction. As the larger herds come and go, the royal couple seem little disturbed and go their (or is it it's) merry way wandering about the garden, pooping willfully at random.

Last week while the weather was still Indian summer like, I ventured closer to them than usual, hoping to learn more about their relationship. More precisely, I wanted to know who was calling the shots, as it were. If I could determine which was the more aggressive of the two I could use that as a sort of baseline and track future behavior. Foolishly, I assume, I thought that the more aggressive would be the possessive thus making it the male. I vaguely recall reading something regarding animal possessive behavior in a book many years ago, but it is possible that I got that wrong. Nevertheless, I thought that if I could catch the collective attention of the pair I could generate aggressive behavior on the part of the male. We can designate that as Male Goosing for purposes of discussion as distinguished from female Goosing, or if it seems more natural to you gander Goosing vs goose Goosing. As I said, it doesn't make a lot of difference to me, except as a means of testing my hunch that a male goose is firmer, that is to say more assertive, than a female goose.

All of this was to no avail because I was unable to generate a bite from either animal. By evening another herd had come and gone and the pair remained, still chomping and pooping away, their gender identities remaining unknown to human inhabitants of the swamp land. In the end, they serve a small purpose, that being to reinforce my satisfaction with my non-Goose identity. The Goose life is not appealing to me. I wonder, however, who has the best of it; the goose or the gander? At this point there is no evidence of either hunting or planting behavior. Is it possible, of course, that this color matter is entirely what one might call a wild goose chase?

Wild Goose Chase Ripley here who has become attached to seeing the odd couple. The pair move little from their spot, but you can tell the white goose has an uplifted right wing that looks like it's been broken, then not set, and pulls out at an angle.

I find I make all kinds of stories in my head each day as I pass them by on our walks and put human emotions and actions into their behavior. One remembers the stories of Native Americans where the older ones stay behind in a long walk and die so the younger ones no longer have to care for them. Coming back to this pair...are these geese caring for each other? If one dies, will the other find another partner to stay with them? Why don't they walk to a different location as it seems ambulation is no problem with either of them as they go up and down our quite large pond area? They could walk to another pond of which there are many in this immediate vicinity. Do they have children?

Some other observations might help. There are often other geese at the pond, and they sometimes co-mingle with our pair of geese. Then it's onward and upward for the rest of the geese and they take off like a B-17 bomber group and drop their load on other areas of our common property. The addition of other geese does not seem to make the uninjured goose want to go with them.

Who knows, as Jack says whether it's blissful couplehood or servitude, but it's certainly commitment. In many ways it's a refreshing thing to see each day.

NOVEMBER 28, 2006, COME RAIN OR COME SNOW

We in Yujeanne have been awaiting a major weather event, according to the flashing icon on the computer screen. Snow is mentioned, but not with much conviction; rain is more likely. Rain is always more likely in Yoojeanne. It is the default for 5 months. But rain is better than snow. Rain here falls and then has a tendency to run farther down hill, assuming you live on mostly higher ground. If you live on lower ground you just get more water...yours and what comes down from up the hill. Level ground, and eventually it evaporates. How long depends on temperature and a few other variables, but eventually it "goes away".

I sense that many locals are hoping for snow which if it comes will turn into rain and I just explained how that works out. In Yoojeanne and most of Oregon, except in the mountains, snow tends to turn into water almost directly. (What about the height of the mountains? Well if the snow freezes and remains on the ground you are on a mountain. If it doesn't, you aren't.) That is, it skips the ice phase. Every once in a while we get fooled and the rain freezes on the bare tree limbs before it freezes, breaks the limbs, melts to water and runs downhill. The old timers around here call the phenomenon a silver thaw. The silver part is not difficult to fathom...you know ice, silver color, etc., but I think the forefathers got the silver part wrong. By silver they were referring to ice, but once the thaw comes there is no ice, silver looking or otherwise and whatever was there simply changes to cold water. If they had called it the Silver Ice or Silver Freeze no one would

have been confused. Nearly any fool could follow that. You could, I suppose, call it the cold water thaw but come think of it that is almost as dumb.

A number of names are like that because some things are true by definition so there is no need to refer to the obvious. Thaw can't be thaw without there first being ice, so why not just call it thaw and leave it at that. "Blistering 110 degree heat" is another such term. If it is blistering there is no need to point out that it is 110 degrees. What else could it be? Warmish? No, it is blistering by definition.

We have a friend in South Africa who suggests that the numbers be dropped when referring to degrees of heat or lack of same. He proposes starting in the middle with comfortable. Then on one side of the middle you could refer to uncomfortably warm, hot, and miserably hot. On the other side of comfortable you would have cool, cold, miserably cold and freezing. This is a very personalized means of describing temperature, but it is also operational and relative. It requires knowing a bit about the person who is describing the weather condition and remembering to add a silent "to me" to her description.

About 45 minutes have passed since I reported that the waiting period had started. There were a few snow flakes that turned to rain drops and they also disappeared. To where, I don't know, but they are gone and the clearing sky and rays of sun light suggest that another major weather event has passed us by for the moment on the West Coast.

In the Midwest it would be an issue not so easily resolved. The people would all be staring into the heaven speculating about whether or not it is a snow sky.

Not here. Whether or not it will eventually rain is simply not up for discussion.

APRIL 24, 2007, THE WRITING LIFE

As noted earlier, we have nearly given up on commercial TV for entertainment and instead purchase DVDs that we predict will be sufficiently interesting for repeat viewing. One that meets that criterion is Simon Schama's "A History of Britain" produced by BBC and The History Channel. We began our own "rerun" of this 15 episode work recently and were pleased to see that it was an excellent choice. If you are searching for outstanding video, this is worth a look. We have been doing re-runs long enough now to recommend the idea, if not specific productions. Still, it doesn't hurt to mention a few now and then.

Along a similar line, we both have returned to P.D. James' "A Time To Be Earnest, A Fragment of Autobiography". She writes that she has never kept a diary and that what she offers is descriptions and observations on life as she lives it during from her seventy seventh to her seventy eighth birthday. Interesting exercise in part because of the interesting people she encounters from day to day. Theresa has kept a diary for 20 years. She hardly misses a beat. Even on out of country trips she records facts, observations, and thoughts in small hand books and

then transcribes them into her leather bound diaries. One of her daily tasks is to review her past entries.

I gave that a shot several times, both using a computer and then the leather bound route. Most of what I read was excruciatingly boring on each reading, and so the motivation to continue was killed. I think I gave it up during the seventh year.

Still, call it a diary or simply writing short bits is something I enjoy and recommend selectively to people, or should that be recommend to selected people. Clearly I enjoy writing, the behavior primarily, but also the reaction of readers. It is even better when you are paid to write. The down side of that is being beholden to editors. In the end, they can be extraordinarily helpful. A writer may disagree and argue with editors, but at least 90 percent of the time the results befit editorial assistance, assuming of course the editor knows her stuff and does not confuse your ms with the book she would like to write. An editor at Harpers was the first professional editor I worked with, she taught me more than I imagined there was to know about writing. "Turning a phrase" was one of her favorite phrases.

I recall becoming really disappointed (pissed was the operative term) with one publisher who might as well not have employed editors. That is to say, if they existed they had taken priestly vows of silence. I couldn't get a critical word and it was not because the writing was that good.

If you advice doctoral students you do time on the other side of the editorial table. The composition of a doctoral dissertation is not a task that many graduate students (at least those social science majors assigned to me) were well prepared to tackle, at least from the start. Most, with help, get the hang of the basic skills, but some never have a clue to what the endeavor is about. There is an ego factor in editing academic dissertations in that in the end and to the extent colleagues read the dissertations of your students, you have more to lose than the students. So, in my case at least, I leaned towards heavy editing rather than approve really miserable dissertations. I'm not sure that was always the wisest decision. The reward, however, was learning more about fixing a messy piece which carried with it a sense of creative accomplishment.

The Tueslet, a sort of Vic and Sade half way up the next block weekly bulletin, which has gone on for nearly 15 years, presents an interesting editorial challenge. After we each have composed what we consider draft material, we read the copy and discuss possible changes. Spontaneity, or at least the appearance of it, has been a guideline from the beginning so vigorous editing is avoided for the most part in order that each person may assume responsibility for their own writing. Sometimes it works and sometimes not but we try not to take ourselves too seriously thus is a rare evening that we sit down for dinner upset with an unresolved Tueslet disagreement. The most upset we become is when we continue to believe that the copy could have benefited from further editing. And that is resolved with another reminder not to take ourselves too seriously. After all, it is not the World Bank we are dealing with here.

MAY 15, 2007, TIME, STAMPS, & NG MARCH ON

Talk about getting caught with your pants down, yesterday the price of the U.S. first class postage rate took a 2 cent increase from 39 to 41 cents. Staying current with expenses such as stamp and envelope supplies falls into my bailiwick at the Thinkpint, along with setting out the garbage cans and taking my turn winding the Grandfather clock so I was surprised when I missed this deadline. The actual problem began several years ago when I joined a USA postal service collection program that allows pre-ordering commemorate stamps. These usually come in sheets of 20 new imprints and are released several times a year. It was my custom to order 4 or 5 sheets of each imprint. We normally use 3 of these (60 stamps) for normal mailings plus 3 or 4 extra sheets for my collection albums and gifts to offspring. As new denominations are released we also purchase odd numbers of "make up denominations" in order to upgrade the odd number unused sheets of old stamps by whatever the increase may be, usually 2 cent stamps.

So, it was with some embarrassment when I took stock yesterday and discovered that we would need upgrades for 220 thirty two centers, 135 thirty three centers, 180 thirty four centers, 60 thirty seven centers and 240 thirty nine centers, or a total of 835 upgrade stamps amounting to a cost of \$49.20, including the cost of mailing the lot to us. Actually, it became more complicated when the friendly lady at the Service Center informed me that 9, 8 and 7 centers are not available, but a little basic arithmetic would allow me to find the combinations to meet these specs. Better yet, she agreed to do the necessary calculations and having great trust in the reliability and skills of postal service employees, I gratefully delegated the task to her. I am not looking forward to assembling the stamps letter by letter. However, because lick-on stamps are things of the past, the task should be made easier with the self-adhesive feature. However, have you ever noticed that self-adhesives often are not easy to remove from their mother sheet, if that is the political appropriate term? Well, I have, but I never scored high on the finger dexterity scale.

As long as we are into the matter of our ever changing culture, how long has it been since you have read a recent copy of the National Geographic magazine? I was a regular subscriber for 15 years or so, then some 30 odd years ago I let my subscription lapse. Then, several months ago, an offer for a free year's subscription came upon, which I bit, and couldn't turn off once it began. Now, I'm enjoying the NG again, both the print and web versions. But, I do not intend to continue past the free year. Too many things I already do not read.

I suppose it was more like 67 years ago when I first "read" a copy of National Geographic, probably in a doctor's waiting room. I would have been about 10, and what I most recall were the pictures of naked "native" (meaning south sea island) women. They weren't raving beauties, but it was undisputedly clear about one or two ways in which they differed from their men folk, who by the way weren't pretty either. I had suspected as much, but here in the NG was photographic proof of what most of us young folk suspected. Glamorous, depending upon one's perspective, it was not. Educational and photographically it surpassed any textbook of the day.

My how the magazine has changed since its first edition in 1888. Vol. 211 for May 2007 features stories on Creating America (Jamestown 400 years ago), India's hottest real estate, a remote Zambian valley, the Bush Mexican Fence, and Bulldog Ants, yup, the really big ones.

The color photos are clearer, the writing more engaging, and stories shorter than then when I picked up my first copy in a 1940 doctor's office. There are also lots of ads. The photos from 1940 would likely bore kids of this generation. Ah, Time, National Geographic and the sexual awareness of the middle school crowd march on!

JULY 17, 2007, SHREDDING IN A NICE PLACE

People differ regarding the length of time documents such as cancelled checks, receipts and legal docs should be retained. Both of us more less agree that the "rule" is 7 years. Theresa actually agrees more than do I (five sticks in my head) but we agree that "retained" is the operative term and 5 and 7 are close enough. In any event, each year we go through records and perform the shredding chore.

Well, to stick to the truth, we don't actually own a shredder but we do have an inexpensive pair of old scissors in the computer room which will get the shredding job done as long as you are careful about the number of pieces of paper included in each pass. With a little practice one can wing the number of sheets, but it is still a little tricky. For example envelopes count as two sheets and large business envelopes count as 1.5. After a bit of practice it all comes back to you. The general rule is 6 sheets per shred.

In our family Theresa is the document scanner/evaluator and I run the shredder. Few documents these days contain social security numbers, so the scanner is usually monitoring the docs for account numbers. As you might recall if you think about it a minute, there is no standard place to print account numbers. Some organizations print them on the upper left, others on the upper right corner of document face sheets. We even have one bank that records them not on the face sheet, but on the first data sheet (upper left) which keeps the scanner on her or his toes.

The shredder function is essentially one of physical labor. You've heard of carpal tunnel syndrome, well our worn out scissors are prone to cause irritable thumb/index finger cramping which eventually leads to severe index finger cramping. When this occurs, the operation is put on hold while the shredder takes time out to massage his right index finger. In especially severe cases, this requires a 5-minute coffee break. The shredder, incidentally takes these in stride, but the scanner who is not a coffee consumer gets a bit fidgety. We've conquered the problem by always having light reading material at arm's length (Theresa's).

Summer time, by the way, is good shredding weather. We lunch on our covered patio but before eating, the scanner brings a stack of file folders down from the upstairs offices and computer room and places them neatly on the circular patio table (the table, not the patio) while

the shredder opens a used paper bag from Safeway or Market of Choice (the sort with fold out handles) next to the table and away we go!

Food consumption generally runs in tandem with scanning and shredding, except when soup is on the menu, but this being summer that is seldom a problem. The shredder has been known to occasionally refresh his wine goblet while the scanner draws a glass of ice water from the frig door but after years of practice the rhythm rarely varies and performance remains up to standard.

You probably wonder just how much time this project requires? A fair question: on the average 12 to 15 working days (or lunches, to be precise). One year we invited friends to join us for lunch, but the potential confidentiality issue reared its head and inhibited lively conversation. We considered inviting guests to bring their own shredding material for a shredding lunch; we would furnish the paper bag, but it would be BYOS (Bring your own scissors) but after due consideration saw the folly in that plan.

At the end of several Spring seasons, we examined the option of purchasing an automated shredding machine. The price range at Office Depot is considerable, but the low end machines are slow and one could envisage unreliability, e.g., easily jammed. During morning walks we have observed mobile shredding trucks in the local medical office building parking lot and we discussed the option of using that service, but frankly it really would be an overkill.

The compromise, so kindly suggested by Theresa, would be to purchase a new pair of scissors, especially if signs of index finger cramping continue. We will see.

JULY 31, 2007, SOCIAL SKILLS

Two means of measuring the extent to which one remains in touch with the mainstream of society is to monitor the functionality of your social skills and assess your applied learning skills. I have observed both personally and normatively that both social skills and learning skills can slip, i.e., deteriorate as age advances.

Whether or not one cares personally about social correctness (I'm moving towards the don't give much of a hoot end of the scale) it is only considerate of one's spouse to remain aware. In my case, I try not to embarrass Theresa socially so when there is an opportunity to collect data, I try to avail myself of it. Such an opportunity did present itself last Saturday in the form of an invitation to join a group of 20 somethings for drinks and conversation at a local watering hole around 8:00 p.m. and we accepted enthusiastically.

The invitation, incidentally, came via Facebook, the social interaction internet system. In this particular application, the party giver sends internet based invitations to a list of Facebook members who are considered "invitees". The important feature here is that all invitees are sent copies of the correspondence between the invitor and all invitees, thus providing all concerned with a running account of the guest list. An interesting twist, for several reasons. For example, in

this case there were no surprises unless Facebookers neglected their email and showed up anyway, or the invitor invited some none Facebookers, who might arrive not knowing that those assembled were mostly part of a closed group.

As for the party itself, it went well. No fist fights, over indulgences or nasty encounters. That is, we had a pleasant time, I don't think I embarrassed anyone and in the process was able to meet Facebookers and their partners or guests. I should add that I am a Facebooker myself, if not a particularly active one. Theresa and I split about 9:00 and she learned later that they moseyed on to a couple of other venues. Very reinforcing to me and I'm looking forward to the next opportunity to test my social skills level, probably sometime mid-December. I also realize that skill deterioration can happen suddenly and without warning, and plan to keep my self-awareness antenna scanning in grocery stores and other public gathering places.

NOVEMBER 6, 2007, WATERING THE ROCK

After several decades of a relationship one assumes that there are few surprises remaining, so as I began writing this TuesLet I was in fact surprised when a voice from the living room drifted up to the computer room. "Jack," it said, "the rock is nearly dry."

That did get my attention, but the confusion soon disappeared. As some of you know, we have a "water feature" in our garden which consists of a huge rock, a very small stream and pond and an automatic electric reciprocating pump. During the warm months the automatic sprinkling system feeds sufficient water into the pond (read reservoir) to make the system work. Come November or there about, the rains begin and nature takes care of the water source component of the system. Also come November, the gardener guy disconnects the external water supply so we are on our own with the rock for a few months.

The back up system suggested by the gardener guy is, in times of low rainfall, manually add water to the system; in other words, water the rock. I check the water flow regularly, i.e, glance at the hole in the top of the rock, and seldom is it not flowing, especially this early in the winter season. However, because of global warming or some other condition declared as invalid by the Current Occupant, the flow was in fact low.

"Damn," I muttered to Theresa, "I'll take care of this after lunch," and returned to the TuesLet. Then I came to my senses and filled in the blanks. When there is insufficient water supply the electric pump keeps on trying to pump anyway, the reservoir goes dry and eventually heats up and burns itself dead, which probably has implications for the house electrical system and that is not a place one wants to go.

So I slipped on my outdoor slippers, grabbed the watering can, filled it twice and deposited the water into the pond and immediately the rock began running right along as intended. I am not known for being quick on my feet regarding this sort of thing, so again here is another vote for long term memory.

This, of course, could be serious but simple to control. I now have a note on day one of each week in my Week At a Glance Diary to, "Check to see if rock needs watering." The weak point of this back up monitoring system is that a survey of my diary shows that it would not be unusual for several days in a row to pass without there being entries, which in turn reinforces my not checking in with the diary daily. This is an accurate measure of my unimportance, but never-the-less not a good sign regarding my relationship with the rock in the garden. Praying for rain this winter is neither an acceptable solution. If there is a god she must know what she is about and certainly will not be looking to me for tips on how to run nature.

No, I'm afraid this is another job for "Post-A-Note."

MAY 6, 2008, BE UP--CLEAN UP

Beautiful few days here in Ujeanne, Oregon. Lets hope it lasts. We actually had our first patio picnic lunch on Sunday. Except for the bother of putting on our overcoats and mittens, it was nearly comfortable. Actually there is a spot on our recent flagstone addition where you can drag a couple plastic lawn chairs, place them strategically towards the sunny side of the house and pretend it is almost like summer, heavy on the like.

This does remind one (me at least) to enjoy the small things and appreciate the lack of big problems. The other day, for example, I found myself fussing about the cracks that are beginning to appear in the tile grout on the kitchen counter. I've redone the grout a couple times, and because I'm not handy at handyman work I try my best to avoid painting myself into such corners. However with the encouragement of the sunlight shining through kitchen window, I was able to view the grout issue in a different perspective. After carefully measuring the lengths of said cracks I discovered that we were not looking at a major trauma here; just no more than 2 or 3 feet of skinny, narrow openings. If I just slow down, take my time and clean up as I go, re-grouting is a task I can easily, well with a little care, handle myself.

I was reinforced by recalling a project I completed last week without any physical accidents and only a minimal amount of cursing. The problem was deciding what to do with the newly acquired garden hose that is meant to accompany the newly installed flagstone. (Actually, the flagstone was installed last year and I have procrastinated solving the hose issue.) The first step was to toss the cheap brand of hose purchased last year and start over. Have you ever purchased 50 feet of garden hose at the bargain counter of your local Home Depot? Well, don't. It is impossible to coil, wrap or fold.

I replaced it with a quality product and was immediately pleased to find that I was actually in charge. Still, there was the storage issue. The guy who laid the flagstone said it would do fine to coil it in front of the faucet, but that just seemed too untidy to me. So, for under \$3.50 I purchased one of those half circle hose hangers that you screw or nail into the wall beside a faucet. The problem there, I came to realize after I got the hose and holder home, is that we have a stucco house that doesn't take well to screws or nails, in that they are prone to leaks.

So back to the drawing board. I designed a holder for the holder. It consisted of a 5 foot length of outdoor treated Doug Fir 2 X 4 which I had custom milled from a standard 8 footer at the aforementioned Home Depot Store. When I got that home I was able to stick it in my garage vice at an angle and then using a cross cut saw I inherited from my father and create a point on one end.

Now all that was left to do was, for lack of a better term, assemble the holder. This required screwing two screws (what else) into the non-pointed end of the 2 X 4, affixing the metal hose holder, and then digging the start of a hole in the ground next to the faucet and then pounding the pointed end of the 2X4 into the starter hole. Pretty clever, even if I say so myself. The hose holder has withstood a mild rain, and looks as if the project is a success.

Having said that, I returned to the grout repair challenge with renewed confidence. If I was able to successfully install a pointed 2 X 4 stick in the ground I could surely fill a few cracks with grout.

This optimism is largely due to the sun continuing to shine and my spirits responding accordingly. We shall see, of course, and this may all disintegrate into false optimism depending upon if the weather report is valid and the sun cooperative. Tomorrow morning will tell the tale. At least I'm off this afternoon to Home Depot to purchase a fresh can of grout. I cleaned my grout float carefully after the last adventure and I think that tool will serve me well.

This combination of a positive attitude and sunshine cannot be over stated, at least in my case. The trick, I believe, is to take a step at a time and take time to reflect and evaluate after each step. For example, step 1 will be open the can of grout, place it in a open space and brush off the area to be repaired, limiting it to a 2 foot square space. Step two will be to spread a 9 inch bead of grout on a crack and then work it in.

Now emerges my newly found insight. Normally, I would move on to the next 2 foot square area. But no longer. Now, after working in the bead of grout I will sit calmly for a minute or two, scrap off any excess and then contemplate my effort before moving on. This will be frustrating and eventually time consuming, and before long I will be tempted to phone a grout guy and get a quotation for the work. But, as long as the sun shines, I will resist the temptation to take the easy way out, and persist methodically and calmly, gradually driving myself crazy.

JULY 29, 2008, THE DEATH INDUSTRY & US

This has been an enlightening week at the ThinkPint, one in which we learned a great deal about the Death Industry, as it is called in the trade. Some readers may not be interested in the topic and that is understandable. If thinking about options to funerals is offensive or distasteful, then this is good place to hit the delete key and skip this week's Tueslet, and we will hope to see you again next week.

We once wrote a book titled “Working It Out Together”. It was a self help workbook based on the concept that most couples face issues that are difficult to resolve because they are difficult to discuss and the first step in resolving them is, in fact, discussion. Not only do such topics vary in complexity but so do couples’ willingness and ability to communicate about them.

Discussing death and dying is for many people difficult, distasteful and even a taboo by some, which in part accounts for the existence of the Death Industry. Personally, while not a joyous topic, neither of the Think Pint thinkers are squeamish about discussing our death concerns. The topic came up last week as we completed our annual review of family concerns and updated records. This led to an exploration of funeral arrangement options.

We had agreed in prior reviews that simplicity was the main criterion for deciding upon termination services. To be specific, we agreed upon cremation, no memorial or other ceremony at the time of deaths, and no preservation of ashes. We had prepared obituary copy and placed it a folder describing our preferences including our choice of a mortuary. We had read about prepaid funeral services and agreed that now was the time to investigate.

Our next “Working It Out Together” step was to meet with a representative of a local mortuary who visited us in our home. She noted that 50 percent of her service was grief counseling. She said that she would be available for two years of grief counseling. Her consultation lasted about 90 minutes and included printed information regarding death certificates and addresses of agencies which would need to be contacted. These were helpful.

If 50 percent of her work would be grief counseling, the other 50 percent was sales. This did not go well for her because we choose not to purchase any non-essential “products or services”. The cost of the minimal service was \$2000 each or a total of \$4000, including an inflation protection insurance policy. She requested we complete certain information and consent forms and noted that she would contact us in 5 days to collect these.

By coincidence the next day’s local paper included an advertisement for a bare bones cremation that included the basic service noted by the representative of the mortuary. Fee was about \$600 per person. Now in an information search mode, we phoned the representative who was not in but learned from the phone person of another funeral service also owned by our preferred mortuary and whose package was about \$600 per person, and that the representative would call us the next day.

We had an appointment the following morning with the trust department of a local bank that we had named as the executor of our wills several years before. The purpose of the meeting was to update our file information and discuss any fee changes that might have occurred since our initial contact with the bank.

The meeting with the trust officer went well. Our prior attorney had died since preparing the will and we obtained several recommendations for a replacement. As the conversation developed, the trust officer noted that she had learned of an organization that made final arrangement for delivering bodies to selected research and educational organizations.

With that in mind we were prepared on Sunday for an ad which described such a service and we looked at their website and phoned them and had a 3-way conversation on Sunday. All very satisfactory from our point of view, and as we speak materials are coming in the mail to us. Total cost to the deceased and family is \$0. Yes, the surviving spouse is left with some things to do, but if known ahead of time, that should be manageable.

Instead of having two writers today, we have written this together. What have we learned in the last week? Here are some points:

- * Be willing to discuss this issue.

- * Be willing to be a good consumer. It will take time, notice what we did above, and there were many other phone calls not mentioned. And after each phone call was more discussion.

- * Let your family know what you are doing (we are starting that with this email and will follow up with the website link and notes to each of them as we did with the advanced directive.)

- * Be willing to sign your own cremation orders.

And on that note, have a good Tuesday. Trust us, we will.

Tuesday Letters 2009-2010

We did not know that we were ending the time of Tuesday Letters in 2009. As always words were important and sharing same.

APRIL 7, 2009, WORKING IT OUT TOGETHER

Several years ago we wrote a manuscript titled “Working It Out Together”. It was a combination of self help text with lots of work sheets and references. The book was aimed at what was then trendily being referred to as “Dual Career Couples, a manufactured construct which had a brief life. The ms. had three main sections; Understanding (basic concepts, of course), Planning (goals and career decisions—what else) and Managing (the practical stuff and work sheets).

All in all, a total of 167 pages of really brilliant ideas. We designed a snappy red and yellow cover and had a local printer do a test run of 100 copies (black plastic spiral bound, no less). Several local book stores agreed to take handfuls of copies and displayed them properly. We leaned back and waited for the action...and waited some more, and even more. As I recall not one copy moved!

We pondered our predicament for some time in an effort to determine what went wrong. Several ideas occurred to us. First the snappy cover was too snappy for its own good. Second, when compared with the computer-generated black white print (I think it was something exciting such as Times Roman, 10 point) it probably had a disastrous narcotic impact almost guaranteeing readers would not get past page 1.

I suppose, looking back, in spite of the brilliant ideas and exciting writing style, the ms. was, well...dull is as good a word as any. We reconsidered the project from several angles and finally concluded it was still a good idea, but terribly lacking in effective implementation. Incidentally, one of the several ideas that held up well in the ensuing 23 years is that of “Staff Meeting.” We urged dual career couples to conduct weekly staff meetings, both contributing topics. One purpose of staff meetings is to keep the dual career couple somewhat on the same page, another is providing a convenient, private and safe arena where any topic is fair game--there is of course an underling agreement regarding sensitivity and good taste. We continue to begin each Monday with a staff meeting, whether it be on a walk or breakfast. There is no copyright involved here, so feel free if it is attractive.

Where is this going, you may be yawning? A good question and the answer is that it may take time for an idea to have its due. This one did in Monday's Financial Times column by Lucy Kellaway titled “When chore-chore means war-war.” She notes the difficulty in equating tasks among two working parents and the mistakes in trying to equate them quantitatively.

It is very subjective, she concludes. "I've just been reading a new book called Getting to 50/50, written by two American career women, which claims that an equal sharing of the chores solves all problems."

"The book asserts that the way to get to 50/50 is with a spreadsheet. One of the authors felt she was carrying too much of the domestic load, so she and her husband documented every second each spent on chores. When they saw the result they laughed and said "Wow!" And everything was easier after that."

I'm not sure we were sufficiently aware of that idea when we wrote "Working It Out Together". We were aware of it, certainly, but were probably taking ourselves too seriously. As a relative of Theresa has noted, "Now don't make that mistake, no one else does."

Another notion that Kellaway's piece brought to mind is the potential importance of humor in a partnering relationship. I emphasize "potential" because if humor has not been established as a underlying value in the relationship and it is nevertheless working well, then don't screw it up by attempting to get funny all of a sudden. Humor is a tricky business when it is not a basic personality skill, whether natural or developed. Which is probably a good place for me to quit while still ahead, or at least even.

Almost even Ripley. Well, planning and doing "Working It Out Together" did turn out to be the most fun part of the adventure. Having said that, we did do Dual Career Couple Workshops for years and were paid pretty well for same. We used the material contained in the book, or some it, because as time passed, even we saw it as tedious. We liked the cover colors and as I recall, it was a 500-copy run, not 100 as Jack said. We moved those books from Eugene in 1987 to Tucson, back to Portland, and finally, in the move back to Eugene in 1996, we had a little celebration and tossed them out, of course having made a mutual decision to do so.

Have a good Tuesday, and we'll try to communicate effectively here and do most chores 50/50 or something like that.

JUNE 9, 2009, BABY PAPER

LOCAL NEWSPAPER SHRINKS: PREDICTED TO DISAPPEAR! That prediction has low probability according to the publisher, but it could happen. You must have seen the stories about papers across the US decreasing the size of their newsprint format as a means of cutting costs, some even ceasing publication. Never in our hometown we thought. Then a story about the new press being installed at the cost of \$1.5m, preparing readers for the shock. And a few days ago it finally happened.

What we immediately nicknamed the "baby paper" arrived on the door step at the crack on dawn one day. Laying on the doormat next to the Financial Times was not a pleasant sight. The

length remained the same, but missing 1.5 inches in width made the poor dear appear anemic. The baby paper has been around now for almost a week, but it still just doesn't seem right.

The evolution has been gradual. Over the past several years there have been 3 or 4 dissolutions, this final one taking it down to 11 inches wide. Column widths vary from 4 to 6 inches, so far, but I suspect the experiment will continue until for a time. But let me tell you, when you shove a 6 column format onto a 11 inch sheet the first impression is that of a mess of side bars.

Readers are told that a 4 section organization will now be standard, but it appears on slow news days don't expect more than 4 pages in some sections. The only advantage I suspect is the miscellaneous stuff is organized into short articles, several to a column which makes scanning much easier.

Will people give up newspaper subscriptions? The answer will be qualified by age of readers, likely. College students will (are) likely to be the first to abandon ship. Next will be the younger family adult set that will continue to depend up TV and internet sources. And the phenomenon is spreading. Today is our monthly Ant Control Day and we got into a discussion with the Owner/Operator about newspaper reading. He, a small business person "walking up to 40" as he puts it, noted that he and his wife canceled their local newspaper subscription recently. The family now use their computer to monitor current events, supplemented occasionally by internet news broadcasts. He went on to opine the range of news programs and computer based option was sufficiently broad to cover anything that might be of interest to the family.

The hankering for hot coffee on the kitchen table and the morning paper got support from several TuesLet readers awhile back, and I can understand that. But I'm not strapped for time these days. Should I be and desired to be informed of the news, there are attractive optional sources to local daily newspapers.

Local newspapers Ripley here. I was discussing the new paper with women who frequent CURVES at the same time I do. I told one, "Now I can read the local paper, and it doesn't even take one cup of coffee," and she responded, "you will be healthier for that." Well, that's one way to look at it.

What's a news junkie to do. What I've done is spent more time with Twitter. Having signed up for local, national, and international news sources, I can personalize my own newsfeed. The problem is I don't like to drink coffee in front of my computer screen. Oh well, this too shall pass.

Have a good Tuesday, and we hope your paper is full size and full of news.

JULY 14, 2009, COLLECTING WHAT?

Probably the most exciting event this past weekend was a genuine mid-west Thunder and Lightning Storm in Yoojeane, Oregon! I swear it was centered right over our house. Reminded me of life in Iowa City and Tucson. Theresa is a veteran of midwestern electrical storms so I was really surprised when she began yelling “Help!” She was hiding under our bed, thus easy to find because I was huddled up next to her. The noise and lightning lasted two hours before it climaxed with a short power outage. Later, I carefully crept around the perimeter of our property looking for signs of damage, but found none. Except for a burned shovel handle, but decided that was from some prior event. Denial, always works when you are unsure of the facts.

Much of the weekend was spent in clean-up, aimed at my stamp and die cast car collections, respectively. The stamps hardly qualify as a serious collection because the behavior began in mid-life, far later than most collectors. Kids, I always assumed began collecting earlier. My father would have considered it a waste of money (his) but I always had a yearn to collect. Early on it was rocks and soda pop bottle caps. In my early forties I finally caught on to stamps, and after an overseas trip, focused on foreign stamps. As a university department head I received the occasional inquiry from applicants to our graduate program, and asked the secretaries to save the envelopes for me.

I needed a less random focus, and my life long fascination with aviation worked. For several years I collected aircraft stamps by make, model, and country. I became serious with DC 3's and filled a couple albums with used stamps and then new issues. My character never really fit me for the minutia and detail of stamp collecting, so the behavior waned until I discovered commemoratives which for the uninitiated are stamps recognizing some person, event, or other identifiable “thing” and printed by the government according to a regular schedule and listed in catalogs. One can purchase such commemorative stamps as single, or in multiple sheets. Such blocks or pages are usually done by low cost denominations, so collecting commemoratives can be done for a song, or at least a tune. Some may contain a display of 20 stamps with extra art work. The stamps are real and can be separated and used for mail, but if that is your intent why not simply buy a sheet or block?

The first set I purchased was a 5 page affair, one page each for 1941, 1942, 1943, 1944 and 1945. The illustrated commemorative pages are labeled “1941: a World at War, 1942: Into the Battle, 1943: Turning the Tide, 1944: Road to Victory, and 1945: Victory at Last.” The set began publication in 1990. My latest purchase was in 2008.

The original intent was to buy multiple sheets of commemoratives and save them for my grandchildren. I made regular purchases for 10-15 years, and about 10 years ago shared viewing my albums with 3 grandchildren visiting from their home in Australia. They appeared mildly interested and the eventlet provided an activity for the day.

However collecting stamps for over a decade satisfied my collecting “need” and proved interesting. I wonder what effect the growing electronic communications will have on the market for postage stamps. For now, I suspect it will be negative. Only another generation can answer the question.

My only other “collection” is of model cars which is neatly boxed away with manifest in the garage. The chief component of these is Die Cast Models, mostly LLEDO company English cars and trucks. There are about 250 cars most in their original boxes. They need a final sorting and labeling before much can be done with the collections. I suppose the collective mess has a retail value of about \$3000, but that is just a guess. It was suggested that I try to sell them on eBay (along with my 1950 model King Silver Bell Trombone) but that seems a poor use of my time. There are other disposal options which would probably be more interesting and fun.

A story for the future.

AUGUST 4, 2009, POLICE OFFICERS & CHICKEN INSPECTORS

We continue summer office cleaning also known as “sorting and throwing” and in the process came across a large file labeled “Police—London” that contained our presentation manuscript and related program materials from 1987. It was one of our more challenging projects and stands out as one of the most interesting United Learning Corporation adventures.

As we recall, it began with an early morning phone call from Superintendent of Scotland Yard and the the Association Of Chief Police Officers of England,Wales, and Northern Ireland (A.C.P.O.) inquiring about my interest in being a presenter on the Occupational Health Panel at the ACPO September, 1987 conference, more specifically the “psychological approach to fitness, trauma and welfare.”

Never being one to turn down an offer of an expense paid trip to London, there was of course no question of interest in the invitation. It seemed strange to me that the Supt. had no information about why I was being chosen. He didn't seem to have a clue, and simply indicated that a higher-up on the conference planning committee had given him the assignment to deliver the invitation to me. Theresa and I had in 1979 published a book, “Helping Others Help Themselves”, and subsequently developed several workshops on the general topic so tailoring a program for a police audience would be a reasonable task. We had created several co-teaching dog and pony shows and this seemed like a natural.

Thus, I made a counter proposal that Theresa and I do a team presentation if his organization would cover both of our per diem expenses and my air fare with Theresa's air being “self- funding”, as he put it. By early July we received a confirmation of the deal and soon produced the title and a paper upon which our presentation would be based.

Thus, “POLICE OFFICERS & CHICKEN INSPECTORS: Understanding and Managing Stress,” was born. The title reflected a US National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health study of 22,000 workers in 130 occupations that found 12 occupations generated more stress-related illness than police officers. This included chicken inspector and house painter.

The presentation appeared to sit well with the audience of police officials. In his summary of the session, the Chairman compared our presentation to watching a tennis match at Wimbledon, looking from one side to the other as the game progressed. I think he meant it positive.

Our program content was not rocket science, but we had two things going for us that helped. One was "team teaching", as we defined it was not common at the time. At least it held audience attention, which was not always the case in education in those days. Two, there were no notes or cue cards. It had the impression of being well thought out, which it was, and at the same time spontaneous. We also had a collection of almost homemade transparencies that, given the status of AV support in education at the time, gave the impression that we respected the students/participants.

At least we were invited by the Chief Constable to consult with his organization the next year in Lancashire. That, too, was an interesting experience, including touring the "Campus" in his official Silver Jaguar sedan driven by his captain in charge of staff training and development and later discussing with his staff the role of simulation in training. Pleasant time had by all.

As we reviewed the official final program yesterday, we were reminded that it was held at the Barbican Conference Center, City of London. There were 48 seminars (sessions). Out of historical curiosity we reviewed the lists of presenters and discovered there were 186 male and 14 female presenters. Some presenter names defied gender identification so several names counted as males may in fact have been females.

In any case, Prime Suspect Chief Jane Tennison (Helen Mirren) apparently had not yet come of age, which worked to our advantage.

To our advantage Ripley here who remembers all of these English police experiences with great fondness. Who knows, perhaps it's why we both enjoy British mysteries so much now. It was a hoot looking through the conference program and proceedings, and we noted the Ladies Program was in full swing in tandem with the main program. Yup, there it was in black and white and many £ what the "ladies" of the police officers could do in London while their husbands idled away their time on the 3-day program. Listed in the Ladies Programme was, for example: Visit to the London Diamond Center, Visit Windsor Castle with the Queen's Apartments and the Dolls House, shopping in Knightsbridge, and lunch at Harrods. It all ended with a black tie banquet.

Reminded me of when I started at the University in the early 70's and was asked to join the Faculty Wives Club. I was not a wife, and I didn't want to join a Club, but I went the first time to see what it was all about, and we can guess what it was all about and I think it was on its last legs as an organization.

As Jack stated, Prime Suspect, the superb British crime series, started in 1991. The star, Helen Mirren, was modeled after a real police officer whom we saw interviewed just this week. Let's just say it must have been a very tough row to hoe during those days. Thanks to the show of Prime Suspect in helping to bring about a change in attitude of who can do what.

AUGUST 11, 2009, BE PREPARED

I try not to mention this much, but August is not my favorite month. At one point I considered skipping it, but it didn't take much thought to realize that was a selfish and stupid idea. After some serious thought I did come up with a more feasible and fair proposal. My basic objection to August is its weather: too hot and dry. But, I do feel for those born in August; after all it wasn't your fault. Thus, we are prepared to contact our Congressional delegation and propose the following.

Transfer the first seven days of August to July, thus netting July 38 days. Next, transfer the final seven days of August to the beginning of September, netting August 17 days and September 38 days. Birthdays could be a problem but solvable: people effected could simply select a date in the new July, August or September, respectively, that suits their fancy. Obviously there would be some inconveniences here and there, but in the larger scope of things a small price to delete half of August. Should you be personally effected by this proposition, don't be alarmed, We'll "put in on the train to Seattle to see if anyone gets off" prior to contacting the delegation.

On the lighter side, we spent part of the morning interviewing a representative of a home health care company, which was interesting and informative, if depressing, but well worth the time. It occurred to us that we had been thorough about making after-death arrangements, but had in some ways neglected taking care of business for the between now and then. So when we had the name of a reputable rep, we took a deep breath and made the appointment. We have made periodic increases in our long-term care insurance coverage and learned that had been a wise move. We also were advised to get any promises about "health care" in writing, noting our understanding and listing the name of the company representative, dating the document and having the rep initial it. We have heard several sad stories of insurance companies attempting to renege on verbal agreements.

We believe this is well worth taking care of, even though it can be depressing. That is, considering that most of us take no pleasure in considering an in-the-face confrontation with the reality, it is worth the brief depression. It is one more task completed while competent to discuss preferences, read the fine print, and make informed mutual decisions.

And you know, there is no point in putting such things off, is there? After all, Theresa is close to 60 and I am in the neighborhood of 70 (anyone believe this?). Denial is one thing, careless thinking is another.

Careless thinking Ripley here who just received a notice in the mail today of what Social Security will take out of my check starting September 1 when I become medicare eligible. Jack on the other hand is edging back to 60 and soon will be 50 and younger.

But back to the in home health care appointment for those interested. We got rate sheets, which are about \$20-26 per hour if you "buy" in four-hour blocks for nonmedical care. If it is medical care (meaning any meds and such) then it goes to \$22-35 an hour in four-hour blocks. Care Management is \$60 an hour, and you pay "up front" for the first two weeks of care as they have been burned (my term, not their term) more than once. We happen to know the office manager of this operation and she could compare their services and rates with similar places in town, and says they are within \$1 of one another in hourly rates.

Of course there are other charges and we are now the proud owners of a big, fat file of their services and conditions of service, including the weapons policy and agreement. Let's just say the packet is complete. At this point we're just tucking it away. Enough research done at the moment. She assessed our long-term care policy from her point of view, and that alone was worth the already free visit. It was very much a heads up visit and worth doing when you have absolutely no need of the service.

And as far as August--long, delightful lunches outside are the major benefit and today's lunch had us in Australia/New Zealand in 1984 for a consulting trip, a good time was had by all.

AUGUST 18, 2009, WHY DID WE KEEP THIS?

How many 35mm slides are hiding in your closet waiting to be processed? And for how long? The number here was pushing 2000 as of last Friday, now reduced to 300 plus or minus. The time lag dates back to our first digital camera. After that it was so simple to view and delete, and then view and then delete some more. In the meantime the slides simply waited patiently.

This evacuation required a bunch of courage, and of course a 35 mm slide projector. Ours (both courage and projector) disappeared when I retired from the University. Some years later we attempted to rent one (the projector) from the one or two photo stores still operating. No luck. Such a beast was was not to be found. After that we gave up.

Recently with renewed interest in adding to our digital travel photo data bank project we decided that we could make JPEG copies of selected slides. The problems was to decide which slides to copy and so we were back to square one and the missing projector. None were available commercially, even for rent. Friends were of no help. Then Theresa wondered if the University still had an AV equipment rental service.

I had no notion, but raced to the electric telephone on the kitchen wall, phoned the university library and found that yes, while the name of said office had been changed 10 years ago, such a service did still exist. So before you could say Ansel Adams we arrived at the library and sure enough in a darkly lit corner of the building the photo service under whatever name still existed as it had seemingly forever. I was prepared to give a long, drawn out story of slides to JPEGs put was cut short by a modern version of a work study hippie and informed politely that all he needed to see was my faculty ID card. Fortunately I carry it always just in case of such an

emergency. (I somewhat surprisingly realized that the cards in my wallet have been reduced to said UO ID card, Oregon Driver License, Visa credit card, Bank Card, 3 or 4 business cards, Medicare card, plus a short list of personal numbers and a neatly folded 100 bill. I find that I can navigate life's journey without travail with this slim wallet of documents and am amazed when I observe males with bulging stuffed wallets-portable photo galleries jammed into a rear pants pocket.)

The projector we borrowed looked the same as those I had checked out some decades ago, and I would give odds that it probably was one of those.

Whatever, Theresa and I worked out an effective scheme organizing the many boxes of slides and by the end of Sunday had accomplished a good portion of the work, having reduced the number of "keeper" slides to 4 or 5 carousels. Some of these will probably be moved on to slide heaven before we add the final cut to our digital data banks. One enjoyable exercise was to sort photos into 26 alphabetical lists of cities and places. We were amazed at number of places we had photographed.

The fun comes this winter as we put words to pictures, or pictures to words; have it as you will. And of course create more digital images.

More digital images here Ripley...but I'd have to say after said experience this weekend, and WAY INTO this week, I don't think I'll take another picture in my life. No, I don't mean that, but let's just say we have LOTS of slides, color negatives, and now digital pictures.

I was also amazed that all the professional slides which went with the scintillating lectures we gave, are now history. Somehow I thought that I'd find our slides from Helping Skills, Self Empowerment, and MANY other lectures good enough to transfer to JPEG. Wrong! I think there is one set I'll do, but that's it.

Our joint picture history goes something like this: first slides (until about 1988); then prints and color negatives (until 2000); and now digital. Perhaps your history is similar.

As far as the list Jack mentioned, we came up with at least two places we'd been for everyplace in the alphabet, no places listed from the U.S. The only letter which is lonely is X. But even with Z we have Zululand and Zermatt (and have pictures from both).

Back to filling carousel trays with slides, Ann Frank's home is up next, which reminds me that I did not put Amsterdam under the A's. Have a good Tuesday, and you know what we will be doing. I must say it is most enjoyable.

OCTOBER 27, 2009, E-WHAT?

Electronic books are coming a step closer to being an important option in education and trade books. One step in that direction regarding college text material is "A pilot scheme to

evaluate e-book technology in the classroom is underway at six colleges and business schools” reports the Financial Times in the October 26 edition. “Seattle based Amazon, best known as an online book seller, is providing several hundred discounted Kindle DX's e-book readers to Arizona State University, Case Western Reserve University, Princeton University, Reed College and Darden School of Business at University of Virginia as part of a pilot scheme. The colleges in turn are making them available to students free of charge.”

On a much more comprehensive perspective, Barnes and Noble last week announced the marketing of its own e-book reader, the Nook.

"We can now confirm, for example, that the Nook will retail for \$259 and that it will feature two screens: a small LCD touchscreen at the bottom of the device and a standard 6-inch eInk display above the smaller screen. The Nook will be available for pre-order today and will ship on November 30. One of the most interesting aspects about the device, besides the two screens, is the 2 gigabytes of on-board memory and the microSD card slot, is that B&N will allow users to lend books to their friends.”

I suppose the significant news is that a potentially major player has made its claim on the e-book territory. Interesting to observe where it goes from here. TuesLet readers have a variety of reactions. Probably the one with the greatest frequency, all from readers who probably have yet to try an e-reader, reference their preference for reading with one hand on the book-paper-magazine and the other on their cup of morning java. Apologies to single or non-handed readers and those who prefer tea, cocoa or Ovaltine. (With all due respect, the horse and buggy didn't last long after scheduled air traffic arrived, thus initiating a new era of clean streets, and not long after the introduction of flying machines were transporting passengers from from destination to destination, inhibited mostly by the lack of airports. Come to think of it, those probably were the good old days.)

Having made part of our living via adopted books and assigned readings and enjoying royalties for a number of years and not discounting joy of reading the morning rag over breakfast, the Pint can only praise the potential flexibility and freedom e-books have in the name of individualized (and soon probably) interactive learning. Writers will be challenged, students can have a vote regarding what sells and what dribbles away, and “publishers” or whatever name they will go by will be encouraged to stomp out ignorance without forcing every student to the same lockstep parade to knowledge. I recall early in my first university position being approached by a publisher's representative inquiring if I would be interested in doing a “major” undergraduate text in “my” field. Of course, I felt honored to be even considered, but shortly into our conversation it was clear that there were constraints entailed. The most critical and instructional to me were that the book they had in mind had to be financially competitive with the two major texts in the field regarding content (obviously, one could understand), but very similar in organization, format and nothing that might smack of being non-traditional. What they wanted, it appeared to me, was a standard text noting that the author was on the faculty of a prestigious university (UC-Berkeley).

In other words, I could kiss goodbye any foolish notions I might have regarding innovation. Well I was young.

Given the current status of electronic communication, I'll bet the farm that e-books will rapidly surface first in education and move right along on into trade publications. My only fear, is what will become of the comics?

MARCH 30, 2010, KEYBOARDS

This Tuesday Letter is included because it was written the day before Jack's world began to change. Humor was still a part of how he viewed the world.

This is a new keyboard so anything can happen. One more hurdle to overcome. Apple opened a new Mac store in Yoojoenane this week, and so we traipsed over the overpass bridge to see what we could see. The place has a nice clean look to it, shines a like a recently picked Fiji. Two kinds of staff members were swarming around like worms looking for a juicy leaf, but settling for a ripe customer. One type goes by the name "sales staff" and they are unquestionably up to snuff on Apple products. At the back of the store is a counter with a sign hanging from the top which reads "HELP DESK" or something close to it. This is where more people also dressed in green t-shirts are stationed, but they are called Help Staff. They don't dirty their hands with commerce. "Just help, Mam, just help."

Their Help System offers a new wrinkle; you, the customer, are asked to phone ahead and make an appointment for a 15 minute "Help Session." The time is confirmed, and when a customer arrives it is assigned a helper. You and the Helper have 15 minutes to discuss your problem and hopefully solve it. As I understand the system, if, when the session is finished and if your assigned helper is not booked with another helpee, he or she is free to slide you into another 15 minute slot. We'll see.

Gateway opened a store in Yoojeane several years ago that did both sales and help. There were no appointments or limits officially, but I noticed that when staff were impatient or frustrated with a bungling or slow-witted customers they had ways of passing you and turning to an unattached costumer. I fit both categories so made several lasting friends. The Gateway store lasted about 2 or 3 years. Must be a difficult business; in the same class as used cars.

I did make one purchase, namely a keyboard. My hands are clumsy by nature and stiff by arthritis so over the years I have accumulated a collection of keyboards. The newest is a Visikey that has huge keys that make a clunky sound. The Apple keyboard in my opinion is a beauty regarding design, but lends itself to typing errors for me, or at least that is my experience. The Viskey is slow, but If I train myself to slow down, we may have an effective compromise. At any rate by Christmas I'll have an impressive inventory of keyboards for gifts or a garage sale.

There is also a wireless model, which I may hold as an an incentive. There has to be magic somewhere.

The Last Words

The last words spoken by Jack Loughary were Das ist gut! They were said on April 15, 2010, in Jack's 80th year, just three days before he died on April 18. Strange choice, considering the only words he knew well in German were how to ask whether a German innkeeper had rooms for the night. The words were a good sentiment for a man who loved words in both oral and written form and always chose them with great care. In this case they were entirely appropriate for the situation. Just two hours before they were spoken Jack had a stroke in a grocery store near our home. I was with him and he was taken to the hospital in an emergency vehicle, and I drove myself to join him. In the emergency room several choices had to be made quickly given the circumstances. Jack was having difficulty saying any words, and I knew as the person who had power of attorney over his health care decisions, I would be called upon to make a decision. The option before us was whether or not to do surgery. The attending neurosurgeon was German, but let's backtrack the story a bit.

Two weeks prior on March 31, 2010, Jack had a health event, which appeared stroke like, while at a swimming exercise class and this led to an emergency trip to the hospital. The consensus was it was not a stroke, but by the end of the next day he had been diagnosed with lung cancer which metastasized to the brain. Total surprise. Jack decided no toxic cancer treatments were the best option for him and whatever time remained, and I could concur with his decision.

The next 10 days held a number of challenges which included another emergency trip to the hospital with a 3-night stay and some instability which led to the use of a walker. We met home health care personnel and were called dream patients because of our planning and attitude, and family members helped to make our home more useable with devices installed in the bathroom. Reflecting now, it is clear many things were going on in addition to the cancer diagnosis. Not uncommon at end of life. But at the time, we were getting into the swing of what was happening daily; and, as always, Jack could use humor and words to get through the best of times and worse of times.

Jack loved cars as the reader can ascertain from *One Man's Wheels*, the first story in this ebook. Because of new medication after the March 31 event, Jack found out on April 12 after a medical appointment, he could no longer drive. This appeared, from my perspective at the time, to be more challenging news to Jack than the cancer diagnosis. We walked out to the car, and Jack handed me the keys to his Beamer, the car he loved and the final car in his long series of love affairs with cars.

Jack came home from that appointment and wrote, as he did every Monday for the previous 17 years, to our group of friends we emailed around the world in the Tuesday Letter. Here's what he said:

“Had a 30+ minute follow up session with our internist this a.m. and he reiterated the misery entailed in toxic cancer treatment. We stuck to our guns, so to speak, and he reassured us that we could change our minds at the drop of a canister. An interesting twist; in Oregon if caught in a traffic violation while within a certain number of days from having a seizure and being on anti-seizure medication you can be in mucho legal trouble. So that's me pushing the walker in case you come driving by Sand Ave. The question this week is how long is the holding period? Remember statistics lecture #13 on multi-factor problems? Geeze, Louise!! End of lesson 3.”

On April 15 Jack was determined to drop off some cleaning, get groceries, and get to the post office to mail a book to one of the nurses who had been so helpful the week before in the hospital. We did errand number 1, then to the grocery store, where Jack was using his walker and going around talking to all his employee buddies there as he was primary grocery shopper. We got to checkout, me standing behind him and then it was clear, at least to me, Jack appeared to be having a stroke. An emergency vehicle was called by an employee.

Now back to the hospital scene where Jack, the man of good words under difficult circumstances, stated his final sentence. I had been in the hallway with the doctor who was born and trained in Germany trying to understand the implications of what he suggested. I knew Jack's wishes of no cancer treatment, but now we were facing the implications of a stroke and its aftermath, which, without treatment, could be no speech or movement. I decided that would not be the way Jack would like to end his days. I went back into the emergency room and brought the doctor in and introduced him, telling Jack he was German and would be doing surgery on him. “Das ist gut!” With that the gurney was rushed away, me following for a time, and then long waiting in the waiting room. In the three days which followed Jack did not speak again, but his daughters and I think he much enjoyed listening to the jazz music I brought in on his iPod. Words were gone.

In the many years preceding these events, Jack wrote often and much of this remains. More than a year after Jack's death I tried to quantify his printed words. The number of pages I could identify were about 2500 in his own authorship and over 3000 pages in joint authorship. Much of the writing was professional work as a university professor, but some of the best reveals his own brand of humor and his way of seeing the world. I hope this has been reflected in this ebook collection.

Publisher's Note

As wife, widow, co-author, and now publisher and editor I am totally prejudiced, but Jack is one of my favorite writers. From my perspective Jack lived the last 2 1/2 weeks of his life with intention. He was totally consistent through his words and actions with the values developed over a lifetime.

On Jack's 73rd birthday I put a collection together of all the Tuesday Letters I could find with this inscription, "Tuesdays With Jack, I loved everyone of them! Happy Birthday 2003." I hope Jack's children, grandchildren, and now a great grandchild born in 2012 will enjoy Jack's words for years to come as well as his friends and the friends made through this collection.

I want to thank Mike VanDeWalker for the cover, and the picture below was taken by Andrew Kim in Spring 2009. This room is where a good number of the Tuesday Letters were written.

And for the last words, I'll leave them to Jack. This was the note inside a dictionary he gave me a very long time. "An odd present, you think. Perhaps. Scan awhile at random and soon you will be hooked. Words, second to experience, are very nice. Words enrich anticipation, heighten the present, and engrave memories. Words most of the time are what it's all about. This is a better word book: open ended, pictures, and few value judgements. Mix a rainy nite, soft stereo, and a warm bathrobe; add a pencil and paper, begin to write and then the book. Think, write, look up, think write...If nothing else, it's a good leaf presser (be sure to use wax paper)."



