

Caca Pasa

Historias de un Hombre Viejo
(An Old Man's Stories)

by J E Ted Thayer

Caca Pasa

Published by J E Ted Thayer
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Back cover – Claudette Thayer at age 39, wife

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DEDICATION

At the suggestion of my loving wife Claudette, this book is dedicated to our children, John and Janet, without whom, much of this work would have been impossible.



John and Janet circa December 1967

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Preface



Writing was always a staple in my life from my earliest days as a broadcaster creating commercials, to writing assembly planning as a Hughes Aircraft engineer. News and commentary were my forte in the '90s and people liked it. I didn't report the news, I told it. That's probably why my writing style includes strange punctuation and odd phrasing. I always wanted to write something other than news stories, but it had to be something interesting that could be read out loud.

It was the spring of 2010 when I decided to write this. But how could it be a continuous work as enjoyable as my newscasts? I needed a subject that would tie it all together. After considerable thought, I fell upon the answer: Pain!

Hurts come in many sizes and shapes, ranging from broken bones, cuts, bruises, burns, diseases of advancing age, zits, ingrown hairs, toothaches, stubbed toes, boils and carbuncles, to failed projects, depression, missed opportunities, lost love, and so many heartaches nobody could list them all in a space this small.

I've had my share, but until I sat down and started listing my own painful occasions over the years, I had no idea that so many could be so memorable! With this unique subject as the thread connecting them, here is a more-or-less chronological collection of my life's experiences.

About the title: It's Hispanic slang. Look it up.

Some Basics

I was born in Red Bluff, California in January of 1941. My dad was just finishing a job on nearby Shasta Dam. He moved mom and me to Porterville that February. Daddy had acquired a job teaching, coaching football and training the ROTC boys at the nearby college.



I was not yet a year old when, on December 7th, Pearl Harbor was attacked. During my second summer my dad enlisted in the Navy and - between the base in San Diego and the San Francisco Presidio - was trained as a commissioned officer. We visited him on several occasions during that period in 1942. And then he went to sea.

The Hand in the Door

During World War II, the Navy was good to its commissioned officers and their families. My dad was given a 90 day TDY (temporary duty) for training at the VA Hospital in South Tucson, Arizona. Large with child, yet undaunted, mom drove from California to the Old Pueblo in the summer heat. Brother Billy was born at St. Mary's Hospital in Tucson in August of 1943, midway through the TDY. A few weeks later Mama, baby Billy and I returned to Porterville, where we had lived since February of 1941 - and daddy went to sea.

After Billy turned one (I was a little over three at the time) he was in the back yard in one of those cage thingies moms keep their little ones in to help them stay out of trouble. The playpen - yeah, that's it - was on the porch, elevated a few steps above the yard. As I recall, I was allowed out to play with my

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toys on the grass in the sun. Our mommy was inside doing mommy things and we were happy little campers playing outside in the fresh central California air.

The back yard was surrounded by a six-foot wooden board fence, worn by the seasons to a rustic tan. At the right rear of the yard was an equally worn garage with a driveway running along behind the fence from the left. There was a door into the garage about two feet right of where the fence abutted the structure. It, too, was rustic and had what I recall was about three-quarters of an inch of space between the top of the door and the building.

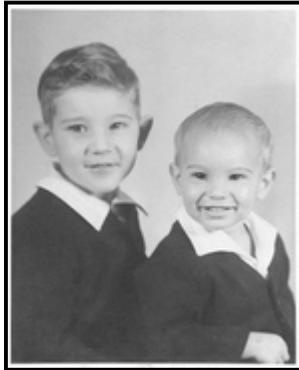
Out of my peripheral vision I saw movement near the door in the garage. I turned and stared as four fingers made their way through the crack above the door. The hand felt around, back and forth across the crack, as if looking for a way into the yard. My dad wasn't home, so it wasn't him playing a joke on us. I was scared and I screamed for my mommy! I kept screaming and finally she came out of the back door. It seemed like an eternity, but there she was, looking concerned.

Billy started crying and I ran to my mom and clung to her skirt, hiding. She asked what was wrong and I said there was a hand in the door to the garage. She glanced toward the back of the yard and asked, "What hand, honey?" I whispered, "The one on top of the door." She looked and saw nothing. Mommy said, "Well, I don't see any hand, baby. It must be your imagination." She turned and went back into the house, leaving Billy and me again alone on the porch. I stayed close by the play-pen, guarding my little brother Billy.

The incident scared the dickins out of me, yet that scary set of fingers never returned. Be that as it may, the hand in the door crack has stayed with me for a lifetime!

Discovery

I remember the little girl who came to visit our San Francisco Park Merced apartment with her folks before my dad shipped out. The men were Naval officers who got their commissions in 1942 and had already been on active duty in the Pacific early in World War II. They were preparing to re-join the fleet in the Pacific, the reason they had dinner and drinks together with their wives. The little girl, and I, barely four years old at the time, ate at a tiny table set up especially for us littles. Brother Billy had been fed and was asleep upstairs in his crib.



I recall after finishing dinner we children had to go to the bathroom so, hand-in-hand, we climbed the stairs to the second floor and went in there together. Quite innocently, and very much by accident, we discovered that little boys and little girls are different.

Mothers are always suspicious of children when they are being very quiet. The specific punishment escapes me, but I suspect that not long after our mutual discoveries, both of us were unceremoniously blessed with very warm little bottoms!

The Fall

I think the first real pain I remember (other than an occasional and well-deserved swat on the backside) was when I fell at the bottom of the stairs in the apartment at Park Merced. My dad was off fighting World War II at the time and my brother was nowhere in sight. My lower lip cushioned the fall onto the

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concrete floor and I ended up with a “V” slit just under my lip where a lower incisor had cut through. I don’t remember much of this, of course, but I know it hurt like hell because I still have the scar! But, I’ll bet my mom hurt more than me. Mommies are like that – yeah, they are!

The Arm-eating Washing Machine

With daddy going wherever the Navy sent him, the Thayer family moved a number of times, ending up in Tucson for a second time. The city was growing east and south and we were housed in a nice home, south of what is now Southgate Shopping Center. After he had mustered out of the Navy, my dad spent time in the Reserve, and was stationed at the VA Hospital in Tucson as its Recreation Director.

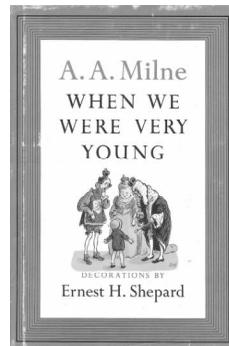
It was 1945 and I was all of four when my mom, who once was the teacher at the one-room Orme Ranch school north of Phoenix, decided to home school, even though our house was across a big lot from the elementary school that served the neighborhood. My first reader was *We Look and See* followed by *Fun with Dick and Jane*. I remember clearly, “Look. Look.



See Spot. See Spot run.”

Mom also read a lot to my brother Billy and me from the A.A.Milne books *When we were Very Young* and *The House at Pooh Corner*.

(I was so fond of those books that mom gave me a new copy of *When We Were Very Young* for my 44th birthday!)



Brother Billy and I played with each other and our next-door neighbor. Carlos was a little Mexican boy, about three, I think.

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Cargles, as my brother called him, introduced us to June Bugs. We had a tall row of Eucalyptus trees running along the south side of our driveway. For some reason, June Bugs liked to hang out there.

One day, Carlos came out of his house with a long piece of black thread. He hollered at my brother, "LaVeel, catch one of those bugs!" Billy quickly trapped a green-backed June Bug with a black thorax and gold trim around his wing covers. The insect was beautiful and looked like an emerald decorated with gold leaf. Billy handed the beetle to Carlos, who held it upside-down, its little legs waiving in the air. He exclaimed, "Teddy, tie the thread to his foot and we'll make him fly!" That I did, and in no time flat we had a gorgeous green and gold airplane on the end of a thread flying around us in circles. Wow! What fun! While it lasted. June bugs have a finite power supply, so after about ten minutes it finally pooped out. It would fly for a few seconds and then drop to the end of its tether. So we threw it back into the air for a few more seconds of flight until it couldn't go anymore. I went into my house and asked mom for a pair of scissors. She watched while we cut the thread so the poor thing could make an escape. It walked across the driveway and climbed slowly onto the Eucalyptus tree trunk where it rested. June Bugs are seasonal, so we played with them for about three weeks, if my memory serves me.

Well, enough about June Bugs ... we came here to talk about the arm-eating washing machine. Remember, these were the mid-forties. With World War II winding down, the gigantic American manufacturing complex turned from making the machines of war to more peaceful endeavors. AM radios housed in the new plastic, Lucite, came into favor. And washing clothes became much easier with the advent of advanced washing machines. Ours was not new; it had a few years on it.

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A washing machine back in the day was a round tub with a three-winged vertical agitator which wiggle-waggled in soapy hot water to clean the clothes. When the wash cycle was done, the soapy water was drained and the clothes were run through a wringer sitting atop one side of the washer. A piece of clothing was fed between the 18-inch rollers, which squeezed the soapy water out of it and dropped it into a tub or wicker basket. Once-upon-a-time, wringers were operated by hand with a crank on one side. Using a recent-vintage motor-driven wringer, a skilled home-maker could feed all the clothes from a load through the wringer in one continuous motion. After the squeeze-water was removed, new clean water was added to the tub. When the wash had rinsed for a few minutes, the clothing was put through the wringer again. The load then was taken out to the back yard to be hung out on the clothes-line to dry in the sun. In those days, clothes-pins were used to secure the clothing to the line. Older clothes-pins were solid wood pegs with a wide slit up the middle to accommodate the cloth and secure it to the line. Replacements were two wooden pieces, coupled together with a spring. Both types are still available in the housewares departments of many general and hardware stores around the country.

One day, I decided that I could wring out the wash for my mom. It was a snap - I had watched her do it many times. I scooted a chair from the kitchen into the washroom, and positioned the laundry basket so the clothes would be caught when they dropped from the wringer. I drained the soapy water and climbed up on to the chair, where I reached into the tub and started feeding clothes into the wringer. I was wearing a long-sleeved flannel shirt at the time. After about four pieces of laundry, the left shirt cuff caught in the wringer, which started reeling my arm into its white rubber clutches! I started screaming for my mom. It munched up some more of my arm and I screamed some more. The wringer had crawled up to my arm-pit before mom got to the washroom. Thank goodness

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there was a safety release on top of the wringer. Just as the fabric started to tear on my shirt-sleeve, she whacked the release lever. Although both my ego and arm were bruised, I was safe and intact! Since that day, I've made it a point to avoid washing machines at all cost.

Baseball Bat Incident

So there we were in the back yard of the house in South Tucson playing catch with daddy. Brother Billy was all of three and I was five. Daddy was teaching us to play baseball. We had a big softball and mitts and a baseball bat. Daddy would throw (lob) the ball to one of us, who would throw it to the other, and back to Pop. Catching the ball at the time was more or less hit and miss. I don't think we called our dad Pop until after our sister Mandy was born, but that's another story altogether. We were being watched by our admiring mom.

For some reason unbeknownst to me at the time, we started trying to hit the ball with the bat. I think I went first as the catcher. Pop would throw the ball past Billy, who would try to hit it with the bat, and I would make a valiant attempt to catch it on the fly. After enough pitches to make it boring for a three-year-old, we switched positions and Billy would be the catcher, er, ah, run-and-go-getter. Mama loved watching her men play ball.

It was my turn to try to hit the ball. Billy was standing upright behind me, waiting for Pop to hurl that leather-clad orb to his waiting hands. Dad wound up like a giant spring and let fly the grandest lob of all time! It was magnificent and I held my breath as it headed my way. I picked the bat up around my little shoulder and took a mighty swing at the ball as it passed. There was a ker-thunk as the ball bounced off Billy's glove onto the ground. He crouched and moved forward to pick it

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up, just as I completed my monstrous swing – right into his forehead! All of a sudden there was blood everywhere and from somewhere deep in Billy’s newly-forming vocabulary came a word (actually four of them) that I had never heard before - cussing so vile I can’t remember what it was. Our daddy grabbed him and covered his mouth as if to shield Mama from some dastardly evil. I had popped Billy right on his left eyebrow, an injury laid open much like you’d find on a boxer’s brow. After some oo-ing and ah-ing on the parts of Mom and Pop, Billy was declared fit for duty and a tiny bandage was applied to the injury, which had swollen up some and turned black-and-blue. To this day, you can still make out a scar in the left-most hairs of my brother’s eyebrow.

We still don’t play well together after all these years!

2nd Grade Bully in Petaluma

After the stint in Tucson, the family moved to Petaluma, California where my dad became the Recreation Director. For the first couple of weeks we lived in a motel in Sabastapool, not far north of Petaluma. I remember it was winter and rainy. It was fun to get up and go out to the ditch by the road in front and jump up and down to break the ice that formed on the puddles. I also got to play in the gravel parking lot with my toy cars and trucks, making roads and going “Rrrrrrdn-rrrdn.”

One day we moved to a new house where there were a lot of houses that looked very much the same – tract homes. I was in the second grade and the grammar school was only about four blocks away, so I walked to and from school with my little lunch-box every day. That was a time. I recall the beginnings of math and printing and, God help us, cursive! The teacher was very patient and we all printed our spelling words, but we’d have to practice our cursive with all its curly-cues and

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such. Every day we had to write on both sides of lined paper, teaching the muscles in our little fingers to make ever-smoother transitions from letter to letter.

One day on the way home from school, a boy who lived two houses down and across the street grabbed my lunch-box and ran off with it, finally hurling it into the roadway. I wasn't pleased at all, and there was a dent and some scratches in my lunch-box, which did not go un-noticed at home. Mom asked, and I told her about the incident. She advised that I walk home via the next street over.

The very next day, the same thing happened. My bully neighbor grabbed my lunch-box again, ran off with it, and eventually dumped it in the street. Mom was concerned. When Dad got home from work he commiserated.

The third day, the incident happened again. When I got home with my now beat-up lunch box, my dad was there – waiting. He said that I could not allow this to happen anymore and that the only way to stop it was to make the kid stop. My dad was a big guy, standing six-foot-four, weighing in at maybe 190 pounds. He had been an excellent swimmer in his younger days and once competed with the great Hawaiian swimmer and surfer Duke Kahanamoku. Pop admonished me that he would blister my butt if I didn't track down that bully and make him stop bothering me.

Well, I walked two houses down and across the street to the kid's house, and in tears rang the doorbell and waited. In a twinkling, the door opened and it was his mother. She seemed very nice and asked if she could help. I told her yes, she could. I said I needed to talk to her son. (I don't remember his name.) She excused herself and came back with the youngster. He stepped out onto the stoop and I said, "You can't be mean to me any more." And then I clobbered him

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with a big roundhouse punch in the nose. He yelled and grabbed his nose. His mother (whom I had appraised properly) admonished him to apologize, shake hands, and make friends. With some trepidation, we did just that and there never was a problem after that. Pop was proud.

Tonsillectomy

I was in the third grade and we had moved into a gingerbread house on a corner across from the Elementary school. We lived just down the street from the Petaluma Cooperative Creamery, which was on another corner across from the school. (My brother and I liked to visit the Creamery, where they made milk, cottage cheese and chocolate milk. They gave us free samples.) Our yard had a huge fig tree that we loved to climb on, which furnished enough figs to assure that we had sore little butts from the resultant diarrhea.

That was the year that my folks decided that there had been enough illness and that the tonsils had to go. My dad, being the ever-thoughtful scholar, decided that I should also be circumcised. (I was born when he was preoccupied with heavy equipment, so I was saved – at least temporarily.)

The big day came and we all went down to the hospital for the operation. I was not afraid – stupid kid ... didn't have a clue! I recall lying on my back with a mask over my mouth and nose. The doctor suggested that I count backwards from 100. I got to 92 before my throat began to hurt. I wept and then cried and then I turned into a baby in a dark cave, cries echoing among the crevices. The crying stopped and I woke up with a sore throat. I slept as they took me home.

My throat was sore when I woke up. And I didn't even notice that something was different with my little pee-pee until they

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changed the bandages. Well, I got salve for my pee-pee and orange sherbet for my throat and Tinker-Toys and an Erector Set to keep me busy. I spent the days in my folk's bed while little parts on either end of my torso healed up. At night I had nightmares in the bunk bed I shared with my little brother. He had to sleep in the top bunk because I was recovering from surgery. I got over it and eventually got my bunk spot back.

3rd Grade Paddling

The 3rd grade was boring. I spent a great deal of time looking out the windows in the classroom. I could do the work and pass the tests without trying, so I was bored. Mrs. Clark was my teacher. She was a good one and did her best to keep me challenged and interested. I loved to watch the birds out on the playground and in the trees that grew around it. One day she asked if I would do a project so the other kids in the class could derive as much pleasure watching the birds as me. Of course, I took her up on it, and in no time had acquired a copy of *Birds of North America*, the Bible for American Bird-watchers. I put together a shadow box full of pasted-up cut-outs and a plethora of feathers gathered from around the school yard. I got an A-plus for the project and, even though I failed to produce the required amount of homework, I passed the class with a B-minus, if I remember correctly.

The Bird Project gave me a big head and it wasn't long before the school yard bullies were teasing mercilessly. I couldn't tell you who threw the first punch, but mine was the one the Principal saw as he walked across the blacktop. He was on me like a duck on a June Bug! I was taken by the collar at the nape of my neck and hauled to the front steps of the school building. And then came the dreaded words, "Assume the position!" (This was back when corporal punishment was acceptable in most California schools.)

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Our Principal carried a leather rig about the size of a ping pong paddle. It was double-sided, made of two thick pieces of cow-hide sewn together, which made for a very formidable tool for tanning bad boys' hides. I got four whacks with that thing for my transgression and was admonished that young gentlemen don't fight on the playground. I complained that the other kid started it, but was met with naught but an icy stare from the big guy.

I took the lurid tale home to my dad, who was not terribly sympathetic. He, also, was a firm believer in children behaving themselves on the playground at school. He did not cotton, however, to an adult taking a leather paddle to his eldest son without first conducting a hearing. It got interesting from that point. We walked across the street to the school, up the front stairs to the Principal's office, where my dad threatened to take a piece of his hide. Pop had put on a few pounds since retiring from the Navy as a Lieutenant Commander and had a fearsome aura when pressing a point. The Principal's apology was heart-felt and he assured us that the other boy would be punished for his misdeeds, also.

It turned out to be a good day, after all.

Carmel Valley Barbed Wire Trip

The family moved from northern California to the Monterey Peninsula the summer before I started the fifth grade. My dad had been hired as the Recreation Director for the City of Monterey. Somehow, we were able to stay at Governor Goodwin Knight's home in Carmel Valley while dad sought quarters closer to work.

The Knight spread was nice. The house seemed quite large, although my little brother and I inhabited a small space toward

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the back stairs – probably so we wouldn't bother mom and dad with our comings and goings. There was a tiny closet and just enough room for our bunk bed. Being kids, we didn't mind at all. On the terraced hillside above the house were several tiers of fruit trees – apple, cherry and plum. Surrounding the area was an expanse of grassland, mesquites and oak trees, great for kids aged eight and ten. And about a hundred yards east of the house a swimming pool was under construction. There was a little bit of rainwater in the bottom; just enough for us kids to get our feet wet and play with our toy boats.

Little brother Billy was the victim of a fierce attack one day in the orchard. We were partaking of cherries and apples. All of a sudden he started screaming at the top of his lungs, jumping up and down, holding his crotch! My mom and little sister came running to the rescue. After moving him away and diverting my sister's eyes, mom pulled Billy's pants and shorts down. He screeched and pointed at his privates. There, firmly attached to his little scrotum, was a huge red ant fiercely defending the anthill upon which Billy had been standing!

I think he experienced more pain than I did, but I too was injured on the Knight place. We were exploring, running and playing in the mesquites one day. I recall dodging between two trees when something grabbed me by the left leg and threw me to the ground. My pants were torn and there was a stinging pain from my shin, just above the ankle. After getting loose from the barbed wire, I pulled the pant leg up and saw a v-shaped laceration. It didn't bleed very much and I managed to make it up to the house without help. Dad took me to town.

The doctor didn't take any stitches. Instead, he applied a green salve and bandaged the wound. (The green color came from chlorophyll - the medical rage at the time.) It took a few weeks for the wound to heal. I still have a triangular scar on my shin,

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a reminder to keep an eye peeled when you're running around on undeveloped property.

Nettles, Thistles – Whatever

After Carmel Valley, we moved to a place adjacent to the Del Monte golf course in Monterey. South of the fourth fairway was a road that wound its way up into the hills overlooking the bay. Newfound friends and I loved to peddle our bikes up there about a mile and coast back down at break-neck speed. What fun! How crazy!

One day we were on our way speeding down the hill ... I think I was third in line. We were flying! Toward the bottom, the road split - turning slightly left in one direction toward the highway, while the other turned hard right up a draw to the golf course. The two kids in front of me safely made the hard right turn. I didn't. I hurtled off that road directly into a bed of thistles and nettles! Nothing was broken; there were no cuts or bruises and the bike wasn't even dented. But it felt like I had landed in an ant farm!

Don't ever get involved with nettles ... they have these tiny little spines that stick in the skin like cactus spikes. They sting so badly that they actually cause chills. They have little barbs on them so one can't just wipe them off. Either they wear off or they are pulled out with tweezers. A cold shower accompanied by vigorous rubbing helps a little, but the only true relief comes from calamine lotion.

God works in amazing and mystifying ways in his dealings with children. When they are doing dangerous and stupid things, he manages to keep them relatively safe while instilling a stern message at the same time. He spoke to me

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that day ... clearly. *Don't try to turn right when you're going too fast – try a little more liberal tack.*

Just Shaving, Dad

Kids do dumb things. Ask any parent. Ask any teacher. Art Linkletter made a living out of the darndest things kids say. But, I don't think I'll ever make a living describing the darndest things kids do. Take me, for instance.

When we lived near the Del Monte golf course in Monterey, we were latchkey kids. That's what they later called kids who were locked out until the folks came home from work – but we had keys back then, when neighbors looked out for each other.

One day, I was home from 5th grade, baby-sitting my little sister. Ah, 5th grade! I remember it well. We had recess at Del Monte School. There was a huge Cyprus tree in the grass outfield and we used to climb it to the top (which was flat) and survey the area, which included the Monterey beaches. Majestic! And fun!

We played mumbly-peg and marbles and bottle-tops. Bottle-tops? Back then milk came in bottles sealed with card-stock stoppers. Bottle-tops. Kids collected them. Much like today's kids collect trading cards. But the game was more like marbles because it was not just quantity that mattered, but also quality. Bottle-tops from another state were coveted. You played by slapping a bottle-top on the playground from waist height. Others would try to take it by covering it with their own. To increase a cache of bottle-tops, one only had to cover a competitor's bottle-top with their own and not be covered by another in turn. Great fun!

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At any rate – sorry, I strayed from the main subject – I was home trying to keep my little sister Mandy out of trouble. For some reason, I went into the main bathroom and found the stash of razor blades my dad used for shaving. I knew they were very sharp so I only took one. I went into the living room and sat down on the couch. I wanted to see what it felt like to shave. But not my face.

With a bare double-edged razor blade I shaved the back of my left index finger. Got some fuzz. So I started working on my left forearm. Everything was working just fine when I slipped and a 1½-inch red streak appeared just above my wrist. It just stung a little ... funny, it didn't hurt at all. I got some cotton balls and alcohol and was doctoring away when my little sister (the spy) called dad. He came home. Didn't say a thing. Just loaded me in the car and we went to the doctor to get a few stitches.

Another note from God: *When you know you did something stupid, your dad doesn't need to say a thing.*

Busted Coccyx

The family used to drive to Arizona for summer vacation. We'd visit my grandma and grandpa Ted in Camp Verde, and drop in on Uncle Charlie and Aunt Verde at the T-Anchor Ranch nearby. We'd also stop by the Quarter-Circle-V-Bar ranch-school to visit with Charlie and Minna. Mom was among the first teachers there and we were always welcomed with open arms and had to stay for supper. We also visited friends on the Navajo and Hopi Reservations north of Flagstaff, taking along gifts of blankets and clothing.

On our way to Arizona we usually stayed overnight in Bakersfield or Mojave, California and Lake Meade

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campground or Boulder City, Nevada. We always went swimming in Lake Meade, a huge treat for the whole family and comforting relief from the Southwest's summer heat. Vacation was always a great experience for us. (Are we there yet?)

On the way back from Arizona one year in the mid 50's, we stayed overnight at a motel in Bakersfield. There was a swimming pool there and we kids swam and played and dove for coins in it until we were called in at bedtime. The next morning I was out at the pool before breakfast, flirting with a pretty little girl about my age. I was being the guy, showing off, splashing and running around when, all of a sudden, I slipped. I flew into the air and came down squarely on the rounded edge of the poolside! Right on my butt! Squarely between the cheeks! Owwww!

The ramifications were significant. I had a broken or dislocated coccyx and there was no relief from the pain other than aspirin.

When we got back home, my dad got an appointment with a highly recommended Osteopath, a doctor who could both diagnose and adjust. Dr. Bertha S. Heath determined that I had dislocated my coccyx and commenced to adjust it. Now, we all know there is physical pain, but then there is the pain of embarrassment. Imagine a twelve-year old lying facedown on a leather-covered table, pants around his knees. Feature an old woman inserting a lubricated digit up the boy's rectum in an attempt to adjust his tailbone! Good grief! But, the job got done.

God works in strange ways. Remember? His message once again was clear as a bell: *Act stupid and you will take it in the butt!*

Scouts in the Wilderness

I was a member of Boy Scout Troop 2 in Monterey, California and earned the rank of Eagle Scout. On the way to that pinnacle I encountered a pain I had not experienced in my young life. It was a physical pain of unimaginable magnitude.

We went on numerous camping trips over the years, an integral part of scouting since its inception. On many occasions we trekked the five miles from Big Sur into the Los Padres National Forest Wilderness to Barlow Flat. Barlow Flat is a clearing in the forest between steep, tree-strewn California coast hillsides. The Big Sur River runs down the middle, coming from one end of a small lake straddled by steep cliffs. There are rainbow trout in the lake, as well as in the river. Barlow Flat is a place that creates mellow, laid-back young men. It's a way to meet God that the profane never get to experience.

One year we took the trails south of Salinas from Laguna Seca through the Los Padres Wilderness to Barlow Flat. We Scouts, ranging in age between 11 and 18, looked forward to the hike to Barlow. It was huge! Some 18½ grueling miles up, down and around hot summer mountains populated in places with cactus and mesquite, but in other areas with cool, friendly pines. Each of us had pack-boards loaded with sleeping bags, tents, blankets, rain gear, food and survival supplies. Packs weighed anywhere from 25 to 45 pounds.

The temperature was in the 60's when we left out of Laguna Seca as the sun was coming up; it hit the mid-80's by noon as we made the ridges between the north and south forks of the Big Sur river. The goal was to get to Barlow just before nightfall. I think I was 12 at the time, and totally unprepared for such a tough hike. About three hours into the trek, I was sweating profusely and I realized that it was not going to get

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easier. My legs were tired; my back and shoulders hurt from the thirty pounds of camping gear; and my chest started to ache. It had dawned on me that we were going to be hiking for another eight hours with just water breaks and snacks.

At noon my throat was hurting just below my larynx. It was a dull ache. I realized that we were in the middle of nowhere and that the only way out was to walk. What a shock some of us had when it dawned that each was responsible for getting himself to Barlow Flat. Each of us knew that the others would help if it came to that, and that the adults were there to protect us. But it hurt terribly. The area above my pecks, the low-neck muscles next to the larynx and the area just below the larynx screamed with pain! I wasn't sure I could make it, but I made up my mind to give it everything I had. What a harsh way to build character!

In the middle of the afternoon we came into the pine trees and more-or-less flat trail. My pain had subsided. I was tired ... but not so tired that quitting was a consideration. We made it to Barlow Flat a little ahead of schedule, set up camp and had a wonderful week being Boy Scouts in the wilderness.

It wasn't until many years later that I recognized the pain for what it was, and it's true what they say: *Depression hurts*.

Break-Neck Jump

Walter Colton Junior High burned to the ground the summer between 7th and 8th grades. We all knew the kid who torched the school. So did the cops. He got a year in juvie. He told the Court that he didn't want to go to that school anymore.

We attended Fremont Junior High in the 8th grade. It was quite an experience not having to walk to school. The kids in my

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neighborhood either rode the school bus or got a ride.

Fremont was a newer school - quite nice, actually. Unlike the 7th grade experience at Walter Colton, we had P.E. at Fremont. We had to dress out to learn and to play sports including baseball, basketball, flag football, volleyball, badminton, and track.

It happened when we were learning the different skills that make up track. My class was a competitive bunch. Coach had a sand pit created and set up a high jump area for us. We started jumping over the bar at three feet. At that time (1954) the *Fosbury Flop* and landing bags were unknown tools of the sport. There were four very big, very athletic boys in my class - Claude, Tony, Sal and Mike – all except Claude were big Italian kids from fishing families. Claude and I were just tall and lanky and competitive. And each of the five of us set out to be the best high jumper.

The smaller kids made it to about four feet, if my memory serves me correctly, leaving the “big kids” to compete for top dog. Everybody got to 5’11”, but when the bar went to 6 feet only Sal and I made it over ... just barely. Coach set the bar at 6’1” and Sal went first. Three times he tried. Three times he missed!

The warning bell rang, signaling time to wrap it up. I took two big breaths, ran at the bar and did the most awesome swan dive, clearing it by at least two inches! I lit on my head and heard a crunch in my neck. The pain was almost instantaneous. The bones in my neck had been dislocated, but I was the winner!

They called my dad and he took me to Dr. Heath for a check-up. She was on me like stink on you-know-what! After a

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thorough examination she declared that a couple of adjustments would do the trick.

Several decades later, after a diagnostic x-ray, the radiologist asked if I knew when I broke my back. He said there was a small chip floating near one of the bones in there! He said there was no danger of future damage but, in the end, I'm reminded of the lyrics in the Bobby Bare song:

*I got arthritic elbows boy, I got dislocated knees
From pickin' fights with thunderstorms and chargin' into trees.
And my nose been broke so often I might lose it if I sneeze!
And son you say you still wanna be a winner?
Now, you remind me a lotta my younger days with your
knuckles a clenchin' white,
But boy, I'm gonna sit right here and sip this beer all night.
And if there's somethin' that you gotta gain to prove by winnin'
some silly fight,
Well okay, I quit. I lose. You're the winner!*

First Lost Love

At one time, we lived in a very nice home on the hillside about a mile west of my alma mater, Monterey Union High School. Not far away was a street that ran up a steep incline, ending in front of a new home at the top. Before the house was built, after the road was constructed, many of the kids in the neighborhood built soap-box racers out of two-by-fours, skates and produce boxes. We had great times riding them down the street at break-neck speed.

The family that lived in the house at the top included an absolutely drop-dead gorgeous teen-age girl. We struck up an acquaintance and it wasn't long before I couldn't stay away! I took every opportunity to visit.

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There were times when neither of her parents were home. We shared stories and played the phonograph and sat very close. We held hands and our hearts fluttered. I think we both were Freshmen.

One day we shared a kiss. Oh, my heavens! What bliss! I had played Spin-the-bottle at parties with friends in the past. Kissing girls was always fun. This was different. Remembering this just now generated a forgotten feeling. Claudette and I have been married over 50 years and the love I have for her has only grown. I have to confess, though, I don't recall that "first-kiss" feeling any time during our long relationship. Perhaps it's just a one-time thing reserved for adolescents. At any rate, that first lip-lock led to holding and touching, each tender and tentative.

I thought we had established a bond, but I found out it was all a ruse. I was being played like a fiddle! When she wasn't home she was seeing my best friend! Two-timed! Broken hearted. Well ... so much for first love.

Bone-head English

College-prep was my placement when my Freshman year in High School began. But, somehow I ended up in a Bone-head English class.

It was boring and demeaning. A model student, I was not. I passed notes, played jokes on my classmates, and was – at least in the eyes of the teacher – generally disruptive.

One day after lunch, I was so disruptive that the teacher decided on public punishment. There would be no trip to the Principal's office. Instead, she dictated a paragraph which I

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wrote on the front black-board. Then she said that I would not be allowed to leave the classroom until I had written it one-hundred times.

The classroom had windows along one side, two huge black-boards in the front. An equal number in the back. There were four black-boards along the remaining wall, which also had front and rear doors to the hallway. It would be possible to write the sentence twelve times on four boards and thirteen times on the remaining four boards. It was also possible to finish before school was out for the day.

I would later be transferred to the college prep English class. But that day, I printed the following tome 100 times:

I will not talk incessantly in English. I shall keep to myself unless I have something pertinent, relevant or otherwise beneficial to the class, as a whole, to say.

Football Practice

I was a Freshman when I went out for football. I qualified for the Junior Varsity second string playing Center and End ... Center because I could figure out how to stop the guy trying to get my quarterback; End because I didn't like getting tackled and had sense enough to step out of bounds just before some big bruiser moved to put the hurt on me. Those two positions didn't come until I learned the other part of sports pain - training.

Anyone who has ever gone out for football knows the drill. You go to the sporting goods store, buy the jock straps, the team jersey, socks and spikes. The school provides the other parts of the uniform, the pads and the helmet. The coach provides the training.

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When the time comes, you show up for summer training. This is usually about two weeks before school starts. Every day you join several-dozen other kids who want to play football. Every day you go through conditioning training.

You learn how to run in place wearing ten to fifteen pounds of uniform and protective gear. From running in place you learn to hit the deck face-first and immediately do ten push-ups. You learn how to get up off the ground, run twenty yards, stop, spin, run the twenty yards back and drop for another ten push-ups. You learn to run 100 yards as fast as you can, stop, spin, and run back to the starting line. You learn to do what feels like 100 sit-ups in less than two minutes. And you get to where you can do as many push-ups as the coach wants, sometimes numbering in the several hundreds at a time.

End of day one, you're exhausted. You stand in the soothing hot of the shower in the gym after practice. Once home, you're tired and after dinner, you hit the rack.

Day two you can hardly get out of bed for the pain. Every muscle in your body hurts. You're there for more pain when practice starts. It was easier the first day! You think you could just die from the pain when you get home after standing in the shower at school to loosen up. After dinner, you're ready to drop, but you climb in the shower and get more relaxing heat. Your head hits the pillow and you're gone!

Day three it still hurts. The hard training is starting to work. You can deal with it and you notice you're getting stronger. The quantity of running, push-ups, sit-ups, squat-thrusts and jumping-jacks ramps up. Pushed to the point of exhaustion, some of the other kids give up and quit. But you push on ...

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After two weeks you are like a rock. Strong. Solid. In shape. Ready to play football. You've learned basic plays and played several spots, both offensive and defensive. Now the coaches have to choose two teams of two strings – Varsity and JV. Now is the big day. At the end of practice, the head coach announces that the teams are posted on the bulletin board in the gym.

I made it. God, it hurt to get there, but it was worth the pain!

To Bee or Not to Bee

It's Spring in Monterey and the flora and fauna are out in force. Pollen, mold, weeds, moths, flies, beetles, yellow jackets ... Yellow Jackets! Yeah, that's it!

The one bug that can turn a Central California picnic into a disaster is a Yellow Jacket. These cousins of honey-bees love anything that smells like people food! They covet Cokes, pine for Pepsi, and are dippy for Dr. Pepper! Put a hot dog on a paper plate and a Yellow Jacket will show up with about fifty hungry friends! Got a cake? Yellow Jackets really like their cake! Oh, and Ice Cream, too! Yellow Jackets bite and sting. Being wasps, they don't leave their stingers in you like bees. Spring is clean-up time. Mom does spring-cleaning, makes dad go out and tidy up the yard and puts the kids to doing chores like mowing lawns, raking leaves, and mucking out the flower beds. Remember, troops, this was the 50's ... a time when the litmus test of a modern family's success was *Leave It to Beaver*. (According to Wikipedia, the Cleaver clan exemplified the idealized suburban family of the mid-twentieth century.)

So there I was, raking the leaves out of the flower-bed under the kitchen window. There was a large root sticking out that

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didn't belong so I went to the garage and located a hatchet. Being a Scouting family garage, there were a number of sharp hand tools around. As a Boy Scout, my axemanship was iconic!

Tool in hand, I proceeded to hack away at the root in an effort to remove it from my mom's special flower spot. All of a sudden, I felt hot metal in my forearm! For a second, I thought a piece had broken off the hatchet and stuck in my arm. Not true.

I looked down at my forearm and there was a bee, stuck to my skin. Its little butt was jerking away, pumping poison. I whacked it and the little guy came apart. He fell to the ground, but his stinger stayed behind, still pumping away. As I recall, it felt like I had been stabbed by a hot steel shard. Owwww! It took tepid water, tweezers and baking soda to calm things down. Moms are good at bee sting repairs.

Bees hurt. Yellow Jackets are also painful, but they don't leave their stingers behind. The other thing about Yellow Jackets is (something I learned later in Tucson, Arizona) they bite! Their little mandibles are just right for munching out! And people have tasty parts. Take it from me, I know these things!

The Axe Yard

Weren't we just talking about axes? Yeah, that's what I thought. There I was, the icon of axe-men, the skilled demonstrator in the Boy Scout axe-yard at the Big Sur Camporee week-end during the summer of 1957.

I had been taught about knives, hatchets and axes by the best: R.D."Lefty" Sproull, Scoutmaster of Monterey Peninsula

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Troop 2, one of the first recipients of the prestigious Silver Beaver award. Lefty was one of the kids who comprised the beginnings of the scouting movement at the hand of British Lord Baden-Powell. Baden-Powell wrote *Scouting for Boys*, the Boy Scout Handbook first published in 1908 by Sir Arthur Pearson. During the writing, Baden-Powell tested his ideas via a camping trip on Brownsea Island with the local Boys' Brigade. It began August 1st, 1907 – heralded as the start of the world-wide Scouting movement.

At any rate, there I was, the icon of axe-men, teaching other young men how to use and care for all manner of sharp instruments through a series of comprehensive camp presentations. I sharpened three-inch pocket knives and demonstrated how to use them to create wooden chains from small limbs of Pine. I showed Scouts how to file and hone a Sheath Knife to so sharp an edge that it could cut a piece of newspaper held between the thumb and index finger. Obtaining that edge on any sharp instrument was the deal. Bottom line: A double-bladed axe should be capable of shaving a man without need of soap. That was my job during the 1957 Camporee: Axe-manship.

I had done about a half-dozen demonstrations and was in the middle of a break when I decided to re-sharpen the single-bladed axe. With four tent-pegs driven in the ground to support the blade, I went after it with a fine 12-inch file, using the hip as the guide to the edge. When both the hip and the edge were shiny on one side, I turned the blade over and went after it again. Next I picked the axe up and held it so that I could hone it with a sharpening stone, rough side first, then the smooth side. After both sides of the axe blade were complete, I grabbed a piece of newspaper and sliced it in two with the newly-sharpened blade. Perfect!

Apparently, the lesson learned with the double-edged razor

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blade when I was in the 5th grade didn't take. I decided to see if the axe blade really was sharp as a razor. Hairs on my right arm shaved right off! But then ...I slipped. You know. Oh, yes you do!

It took three cat-gut stitches internally and five on the skin to close up the wound. Again it was my dad who came to the rescue. We drove all the way from Big Sur to Monterey to see the doctor – the same one who cared for me five years before.

Once again, my dad never said a thing! An object lesson on how to make a kid feel guilty!

Clothes-lined in Carmel Valley

Dave, one of my good friends back in the late '50s, lived up Carmel Valley in a very nice home with a huge yard out back. The whole spread sat on about an acre.

Dave drove a 1949 Chevy 4-door sporting a straight six cylinder engine and three-speed steering column shift. The car was in great shape for its age and my friends and I used to mooch rides from Dave all the time. All he asked was that everyone pungle up a buck whenever he needed gas. This was back when regular gasoline ran two-bits a gallon. (There was no unleaded gas in the '50s.)

My dad bought a 1955 Pontiac Star-Chief Convertible in 1957. It was dark green over light green with a white top. It was mine to drive from Friday after school until dark on Sunday. Wonderful for goin' to football games, the Youth Center, the beach, and the sock hop. (Also great for draggin' Main and pickin' up chicks!)

Jim didn't have a car of his own but his dad, the local Coca

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Cola bottler, let him use the family's new '57 Chevy Bel-Aire on special occasions. It was a '57 Chevy !!! Even back then, everyone lusted after GM's sweetheart. Dave and I were so jealous!

But, once again, I stray from the story. We were at Dave's house in Carmel Valley, playing in the back yard. I don't remember exactly what we were doing but the three of us and another good friend, Fred I think, were running around when all of a sudden I found myself flat on my back, blinking at black spots in front of my eyes. I was clothes-lined. Literally.

In the '50s many families still preferred to air/sun dry their clothing after a wash. Almost every home had a clothes-line set up back of the house. Such was the case at Dave's place. I had run into the clothes-line strung across a part of his yard. It caught me square in the mouth, peeling my gum back about an eighth of an inch from my upper left primary incisor. Yow! There was blood everywhere!

Well, they took me in the house. I washed my mouth out and saw there was nothing to be done other than put a gauze pad over the wound and take some aspirin.

Dave gave me a ride home. Neither God nor dad had anything to say about it.

Speeding Conviction

The Order of DeMolay is a young men's organization based on the ideals of Freemasonry. The namesake of the organization is the famed historical figure Jaques DeMolay. DeMolay, a member of the Knights Templar was burned at the stake during the Inquisition by the Catholic Church because he would not divulge the names of those with whom he

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associated, nor where the Craft kept its legendary treasure. DeMolay's simple act of defiance was the essence of fidelity, a virtue lauded by the Order. Most of my friends were members of the Monterey Chapter of the Order of DeMolay.

In the summer of 1957, DeMolay Chapters from across California assembled at the fairgrounds in Monterey for their annual Conclave. It was a week-end of business, brotherhood and bonding. There was a dance with the local chapters of Job's Daughters and Rainbow Girls attending, much to the delight of the guys from all across the state.

There was plenty of free time for the guys, so I packed a few friends, including a kid I had been friends with in Porterville when I was four, into the convertible and headed out to show them Salinas, some 29 miles northeast of Monterey. Salinas is the base of Spreckles Sugar, a major produce player, and the home of Bud Antle, one of the largest lettuce growers in the world.

We had just cleared the city limits of Salinas when we got "lit up" by the local answer to Barney Fife. The city had set up a speed trap in which the speed-limit went from 55mph to 25mph around a corner leading from the outskirts of town. Barney was just waiting for a convertible with young men in it! Over my objections, he gave me a ticket for exceeding the speed limit by 30mph – a misdemeanor at that time, now considered a felony! Well, that was just special! Talk about putting a damper on your day!

My dad and I went to the Salinas Traffic Court the following Wednesday. From the witness box I testified that we had been trapped and that I never intended to break the law, much less get stopped by the police while I was escorting DeMolay friends from across the state. I even submitted written

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corroborative evidence from three of my passengers. There were no other witnesses, prosecution or defense.

No luck. Hangin' Judge. Guilty! Pay the Bailiff \$30. Hey, things are tough all over. And my dad didn't say a word!

Bewildering Bowling Score

Bowling was a favorite pass-time in the late '50s. There were two bowling alleys in the area; an elderly four-lane setup in the basement of an old building in downtown Monterey and a brand-new automated, twelve lane outfit in Del Rey Oaks. The guys liked to play the old alley because we got to load, set (and duck) our own pins. On dates we preferred to treat the girls to the comfort of Brunswick automation.

I remember bowling the night after Graduation. Four of us attended the dance, had some eats and then headed for Del Rey Oaks. As we were getting out of the car we were approached by a young man who said he and his friends could not drink everything they had obtained. He had a six-pack of Country Club Stout, a well-known ale of the time, and a half-pint of blue label 100 proof Smirnoff Vodka. The girls went inside to reserve a lane while we boys haggled over the alcohol. I got the vodka and my friend got the Country Club Stout.

It was stupid - teen boys tend to be that way - I know, but I chugged that half-pint right there in the parking lot. We went in and the longer we bowled, the better I played and the drunker I got. When we finished I had a 260. Yes, 260! My friends were amazed. The world was being seen through my eyes with double vision. I bragged that it was easier to hit twenty pins than ten!

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I was delivered home at about 3:30am. Still blasted, I snuck in the house, fell into bed and slept until noon. Unbelievably, I never got sick. When I woke up, I was still drunk. My dad, who was reading the newspaper, asked if I had a good time. I said yes. He didn't have any other questions so I ate a half-gallon of vanilla ice-cream for brunch! Another good day.

College Christmas Break

After High School I joined the Marine Corps PLC program. The Platoon Leaders' Course was designed for college kids and included three six-week summer training sessions between the Freshman and Senior years. I attended Arizona State College (now Northern Arizona University) and majored in Civil Engineering.

Over the Christmas break I visited a local radio station and discovered a new love. Broadcasting. The station manager helped me get the required license and gave me a job working an hour a day.

There was an ADOT note posted at the Student Union one day. The Arizona Department of Transportation was looking for a few young people to help clear snow from the highways around Flagstaff. I put in, and in no time was working overnight on a truck, plowing snow off the highway and spreading cinders to give better traction.

In short order, it had become apparent that my work goals were pretty messed up. It became obvious to me that I was wasting everybody's time and money studying to be a CE. I had always wanted to drive trains!

I discussed the dilemma at length with an acquaintance. We concluded that I should secure a job as a Broadcaster. Radio

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was the source of my greatest interest. The conclusion we reached was decades before its time: *Just do it!*

I dropped out of college, took WFs on all my courses and set out to get a full-time radio job. I struck pay dirt not far away. KVWM in Show Low had an opening. After a rickety bus ride from Flagstaff, I checked into a local motel and hitched a ride down the road to the radio station. That was the beginning of a great career, something I never regretted.

Every decision comes with consequences. I returned home to Monterey not long after losing the job at KVWM. It turned out that the owner was a perfectionist who went through young DJs at a rapid rate. It didn't take long to learn that he had been averaging an employee a month. That's exactly how long I had been there when I got the boot!

Boot Camp & Celulitis

There were no openings at Monterey area radio stations when I returned home from Arizona. I got work driving school buses for the Monterey School District. That summer I became the lifeguard in Carmel Valley at the Saddle Mountain Ranch, a high-end recreation spot.

Toward the end of summer I got a packet in the mail from the US Marine Corps. It contained Orders. A platoon of 26 former PLC candidates had been formed and we were ordered to attend six weeks of enhanced Basic Training at MCRD in San Diego. Enclosed in the packet was a one-way train ticket for a ride on the Southern Pacific Owl over-night from Salinas to San Diego. We would be met by our Junior Drill Instructor.

I went bowling with friends a couple of days later. My game was going well when disaster struck. During the first shot of

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the sixth frame, my stance was crooked and I hit my left ankle with the bowling ball! Talk about hurt! And it swelled up like a balloon. At the hospital they found nothing broken, just a big, swollen bruise. Aspirin and ice packs were prescribed for both pain and swelling.

When the time came to catch the Owl to San Diego my ankle had healed to the point that there was only a tiny spot left as evidence of the bowling incident. It no longer hurt to walk. I was ready for Boot Camp!

The Marine Corps Recruiting Depot is where Marines get their first taste of military organization and discipline. For the first week or so physical and mental stress is imposed on the young recruits. Exposed to calisthenics, close-order drill, forced marches and demeaning chores, the platoon's strength and agility improve quickly. When not being physical, the men are in class learning about the Marine Corps, its glorious history, its traditions and its rules – all of which must be committed to memory. The Uniform Code of Military Justice is studied at length. One part of legendary Boot training is a requirement that a recruit memorize, and be able to recite on command, any or all of the General Orders imposed on all Marines.

Marine Drill Instructors back-in-the-day were tough and nasty. “Alright, ladies, we’re going on a little march this morning,” would be the demeaning warning of the day’s activities. When a guy would screw up by taking a wrong step during COD (close-order drill), he would be dressed down as being “lower than whale sh*t, and that’s the lowest thing on the face of the earth!”

Getting chewed out by the D.I. was scary. He or the Junior D.I. would be in your face - as close as a quarter-inch, nose to nose - screaming at the top of his lungs.

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Being berated by the D.I. was a badge of honor, in its own perverted way, because many young recruits would tear up and their lower lips would tremble. “Is the baby afraid of the big bad Drill Instructor? Is he going to break down and cry right now?”

When a guy could get through a dressing-down like that and be able to grin at the D.I. and take some more as a result, you knew he was becoming a Marine. “Oh, you think that was funny? Are you a happy little boy? Do you love having the Drill Instructor yell at you?” Every question required a “Yes, sir!” or “No, sir!” at equal or louder volume. “What’s that, I can’t hear you, sweet-cheeks!” And the incident was always followed by at least twenty push-ups.

After about a month of hard training, I woke up one morning with a pain in my left ankle. When I stood, I almost passed out from it. My leg from the heel to the upper shin was swollen. I put in for sick call and was berated as a sissy for it, but when it became obvious I couldn’t walk, the Junior D.I. got them to come take me to the clinic.

They admitted me to the Base Hospital. It took very little time to discover that I had Celulitis, a disease that occurs in sandy climates. It gets into the body through scratches or abrasions and infects those sites before expanding rapidly. They put me to bed and for two weeks gave me four penicillin shots a day.

At the end of the first week, a Navy Corpsman took me into the hallway, sat me down on a bench and told me that the infection had not subsided and I couldn’t go home until the injury was healed. My Orders would terminate in just over a week, so he said they were going to make it drain. He had another Corpsman hold my leg down, told me to be a man and, using a stainless tool, gouged a hole in my ankle!

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What followed was hourly soaking in a whirlpool filled with hot water infused with Epsom salts. In three days the wound finally gave in and gushed puss. It sounds gross. It was. But it got the job done and when Boot Camp ended Private Thayer was allowed to go home.

My Orders assigned me to the Marine Corps Reserve with a requirement to attend two-weeks of training each summer. During my six years in the Corps I was never ordered to leave the mainland even though we were fighting the Viet Nam war!

The First Flu Shot

My Broadcasting career took off after my return to Monterey. My dad gave me the car to travel through central California, personally visiting radio stations in search of work.

I got an offer from KPER in Gilroy, where I met my wife. Just before we married in 1962, I landed a better job at KAGO in Klamath Falls, Oregon. That stint was followed in short order by a move to Coos Bay and KYNG, where as the principal of a Wake-a-thon, I stayed awake for 15 minutes shy of a week! I was given a free vacation for two in Salem as a reward from the radio station. When Claudette and I took the vacation we listened to KBZY, where one of the other employees had moved. We visited the station and liked it. It wasn't long before I got a call with an offer I couldn't refuse. More about changing jobs later.



KBZY was a fun place. It broadcast rock 'n' roll from Salem, the capitol of Oregon and the only independent city in the U.S.

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that does not recognize daylight savings time. It was a friendly place to work and the benefits were good.

In the fall of 1962, KBZY employed a nurse to come to the station and required its employees to get Flu shots. I dutifully complied and came down with a reaction the very next day!

I was down for three days with fever, chills, aches, upset stomach, the whole deal ... as the result of a shot that was supposed to protect against the disease. Even though it was likely that my vow would be tested soon enough, I swore to never to get another Flu shot ... even if it was free!

Report for Training

Summer came to Salem and so did my Orders from the Marine Corps. I was to report to the Commanding General at Camp Pendleton just outside Oceanside, California. I had been unable to join a Reserve Unit the year before, so I missed the required two-weeks of training. The Orders had me doing a month in the Motor-pool learning maintenance management. The Orders included a round-trip airplane ticket.

Upon arrival, I was escorted to the General's office and invited to sit with him. He knew my history and said that I was going to learn in four weeks what it took most Marines to learn in a year!

First, I was to report to the Captain of the Unit to which I had been assigned. The Captain would show me where to bed down. The general said I would report to that Company, but would not muster with them because I would answer directly to him. He said that I would flex my hours to accommodate the learning curve. Because of this unique relationship my mailing address was c/o Headquarters Company, Headquarters

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Battalion, Headquarters Regiment, U.S. Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, California.

My first assignment on that Monday was to report after lunch to the driver education class, read the book, take the test and obtain the basic military driver's license before chow that evening.

When I entered the classroom there were about twenty guys studying in there. The Sergeant asked what I needed so I told him my orders. He called and spoke with the General, telling him that it took a week of training to get a license and that part of it included learning to drive a Jeep. The general told him to give me the book and a Jeep and see that I took the test before chow. I had my license two hours later! Before I left, the Sergeant told me the General wanted me driving a deuce-and-a-half before noon the next day and I was to obtain a 25 ton endorsement before the end of the week. He said that both commissioned officers and non-coms on the base were briefed on orders from the General to provide what ever I needed!

The next day I inspected and learned to drive just about anything that moved, including the General's car! I qualified that day on half ton and one ton pick-ups, 2½ ton and 5 ton trucks. By the end of the day I had my 5-ton endorsement. The training Sergeant told me I was to see the motor-pool master on Wednesday morning for an all day training session with a 25 ton tractor and trailer set-up.

I have to say it had become a little scary, being trained so quickly on equipment I had never seen before. By afternoon Wednesday I had learned how to hook up and drop a flatbed trailer, and then used it to haul a huge AMTRAC personnel carrier across open country with no road to a meadow in the oak trees near Oceanside. I dropped the trailer and drove a cross-country bee-line back to the Base. With the help of the

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Motor-pool's top dog, I had qualified before the end of the day and had my 25 ton endorsement before chow!

Thursday, I was introduced to my new home where I would become a full-fledged mechanic and learn how to run a Motor-pool maintenance operation. My MOS was driver/mechanic.

Oceanside Suntan

When that first Summer week-end at Pendleton came, I was invited by new-found friends to go to the beach at Oceanside. They said the girls in Oceanside were cute and loved to hang out with Marines on Saturdays. We spent all day at the beach. No problem!

By Sunday there was a problem. When he spotted me in the morning, the CO, who had his quarters in the billet, was not happy about my color. Even though I didn't answer to him, he warned that I'd be run up on charges if I couldn't do my job!

I had been uncomfortable and it was hard to sleep Saturday night. Sunday morning, I had a hard time putting on my tee-shirt. My back was really touchy. So were the backs of my legs, making it hard to sit!

I made it to the Motor-pool Monday and, although my fatigues felt like sandpaper every time I moved, I was able to do my job. All of a sudden, the learning curve included how to deal with pain – something everyone in the military should know!

One of the nice things about active duty state-side is it's just like a regular job – for most regulars, it's 8 to five. By Friday I was starting to fray around the edges and was looking forward to the week-end. My folks had flown my wife to Monterey from Salem, Oregon and they mailed me round-trip tickets.

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Meanwhile, back at the ranch ... the sunburn had matured and I was feeling prickly!

The week-end reunion with my wife was wonderful, albeit a little touchy! I was peeling. Claudette was helpful. She removed several very itchy strips from my back. But, it was my function to create the monster gross-out of all time!

Very carefully, I worked on little corners of dead skin across my chest to form an edge that I could grasp.

I went into the living room where Claudette and the folks were chatting and I peeled a huge sheet of skin off my chest! Older folks and wives are so easy to gross out!

Napping in Stockton

Perhaps the most hurtful pain is the kind that happens when your foot goes to sleep. Especially if someone like a spouse or other close friend is nearby – they always seem to want to tap the sleeping part!

My work had taken me to KGON in Oregon City, followed by KFXM in San Bernardino, California, and finally to KSTN in Stockton. We rented a new apartment in a two-story building with a swimming pool. Claudette was large with child.

I was the morning DJ at the radio station. After the air shift, as it's called, my duties included writing advertising copy, commercial production and light equipment maintenance.

It was my custom to take a nap after work each afternoon. While I slept with the bedroom door closed, Claudette would listen to the radio, watch TV in the other room, or visit with neighbors down the hall.

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One afternoon the ‘phone rang. (This was back in the days before AT&T was broken up. You rented a telephone that was attached to the wall or sat on a table or desk. Ours was a wall phone in the kitchen.) At any rate, Claudette knocked on the bedroom door and said someone wanted to talk to me.

I nap on my stomach with my arms raised, my head resting on my hands. When Claudette woke me, I got up, went to the door and reached for the door-knob. That should be *tried* to reach for the knob. My arms wouldn’t work! I couldn’t feel my hands at all! When I reached for the knob I could just barely tap it with my knuckles. There was no way to grab the knob, so I called out, ”Honey, I need some help.”

“What?”, she asked.

“My arms went to sleep and I can’t get the door open.”

Claudette giggled and opened the door. When I came out to the kitchen she laughed out loud! When I asked her to hold the handset up to my ear she snorted! My arms still didn’t work and my hands were starting to wake up! Owwww!

I couldn’t tell you who was on the ‘phone or what was involved in the conversation, but I’ll never forget the pins-and-needles pain in my waking hands and arms while I was on the ‘phone.

My wife was eventually forgiven for tapping my hand after I got off the ‘phone and asking, ”Is this still asleep?”

“The Other” Flu Shot

I was at KDON in Salinas, California when the staff was

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notified that we would all be inoculated against the Flu - for free!

I was beside myself. Thrilled.

But, hey, it was free! All I had to do was hike my little fanny down to the Monterey County Health Department, and Zap! I'd have my free Flu shot!

I remembered the Flu shot I got at the hands of the KBZY management in Salem, Oregon. Trepidation crawled on me like a spider skulking in the night! Would there be a reaction again? If so, would it be more devastating or less than the illness I had in Salem? The objective, after all, was to keep the staff from getting sick during the Flu season. Oh, my. If I refused, could I be fired?

Well ... I caved in and got the inoculation.

I went down that very night! I was couchin' it for five days! Aches. Pains. Chills. Diarrhea. Damn! It was much worse than Salem! I vowed never to submit to free Flu shots again. Even if Medicare paid!

Crushed in the Parking Lot



When we moved to Salinas from Stockton we had a Chevy Corvair Monza. It was a sweet little sporty car and it was fun to drive. But it had one problem. Its engine was an air cooled opposed six that blew head gaskets regularly, one at a time!

Many folks remember the Corvair – it

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was the one that always seemed to have oil leaking out one side or the other of the rear end grill-work. This was also the car that Ralph Nader wrote about in his book *Unsafe at Any Speed*. (Nader was dead wrong – my little car was a dream and handled like one!)

Five of the gaskets in the engine had been replaced. Twice in Salem, another two visits to the shop in Santa Cruz and one in Salinas. Each was a simple job that involved dropping the engine about eight inches, pulling a cylinder head, replacing the gasket and putting it back together. The gasket cost 25¢ and the labor charge was \$65 – every time!

I was fed up with my baby and wasn't about to spend another \$65.25 on it. Claudette and I went to the local Ford dealer and went shopping with our little mint-green trade-in.



We settled on a sky-blue Mercury Comet station wagon with a small-block V8 engine and a manual transmission. The 1965 Comet Wagon was the one that had four headlights one above the other on each side. Quite stylish. It was a beautiful vehicle and it was perfect for a young couple with a one-year old son.

I loved that car more than the Corvair. It, too, was fun to drive but it was also utilitarian. Great for hauling stuff, for shopping, and for vacationing.

After a little more than six months, the engine started to miss. I took it to the dealership for a warrantee fix. No such luck! They told me that the drive-train warrantee was 12,000 miles and the car had 12,048 miles on it. Even though it had just under 12,000 miles when the problem developed, they refused

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to make the necessary repairs without pay. They said it had a burnt valve and needed a valve job.

Being a Marine Corps mechanic, I decided to do the work myself. I pulled both heads and took them to a Santa Cruz machine shop, where the valve job was accomplished. With a gasket set from the local parts house, I completed the work. It was good and the Comet ran like a clock!

Another incident a few weeks later affected our Comet. I was touching up the valve lash and the timing. Finishing up, I put the valve-covers back on the engine, attached the air-cleaner, closed the hood and went into the garage to put my tools away. That done, I closed the garage door – right on the hood of the car! It made a crease across the hood, about six inches from the front, fender to fender! What a heart-breaker!

That wasn't all. The insurance agent said I'd have to pay a \$200 deductible to get it fixed because it was a collision! I was taken aback! An hour later I had examined my policy and determined that the accident was not a collision and was completely covered under its Comprehensive provisions. A call to the agent bore fruit. I cited the parts of the policy that applied and wrapped up the dissertation with the fact that the car had not collided with the garage door, I had dropped the door on the car. BIG difference! He agreed and I got my error fixed free. (Oh, wow, as Ben Stein would say.)

About a year later, my poor heart was crushed in the parking lot next to the radio station. I had parked near a light pole early in the morning. (I was a Morning Man, remember?)

At any rate, I finished my shift, took the elevator down from the penthouse level of the Savings and Loan building to the parking level, and got in the Comet. I hit the starter, put it in gear, popped the clutch and ... Wham! The light pole next to

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the car had a very large, low support. I had rammed that car straight into it! The whole left front of that car was caved-in. Oh, woe is me. What a heart-break! There was a \$200 deductible because it was a collision, and I got it fixed. But, it was never quite right after that.

Not long after, Claudette and I went car shopping again. We traded the Comet wagon in on a new 1967 Dodge long-bed ½ ton pick-up with a big engine and a five-speed tranny. Good trade, but it still hurt to leave our baby.

Night Owl Move

In April of 1967, Claudette and I moved to Tucson, Arizona where I had been hired into a two-fold position: Morning Man and Chief Engineer at KIKX-AM.

We loaded up the green Dodge pick-up with half our stuff, including a fridge and a stand-up freezer loaded with frozen food. We rented a U-haul trailer for the rest of our stuff. We took off mid-morning headed for Bakersfield with son John, 2½ years old, and brand-new daughter Janet at 2½ months. When we got to Bakersfield we stopped at a motel and had a hard time worrying about the frozen food overnight. There was no electrical outlet available. Well, the freezer was only a year old and was supposed to keep for up to three days, so we just prayed.

The next day we were on the road after breakfast and diaper-changes - headed for Needles in the middle of the Mojave desert. We drove up over the pass at Tehachapi and down to Mojave, where it was summer. We had a picnic basket and stopped for diaper-change and cheese & crackers. Then it was onward toward Needles.

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The sun had set by the time we started the long drop down the highway into Needles. All of a sudden, there was a crash and the sound of flapping wings on the windshield. I hit the brakes in time to see a huge owl flop off the hood of the truck. We pulled off to the side of the highway and I marched back to where the great bird lay twitching. I gingerly picked it up and carried it back to the truck. It was alive but didn't move so I put it on the floor under my legs.

There was a bar-restaurant just up the way, so we pulled over there and I took that majestic animal in and asked the bartender if she could take it off my hands. She agreed and immediately began tending to it. The people in the bar were all googly-eyed and said they'd sure be pleased to care for it. It didn't take but a few moments before they had the owl up on its talons, looking around. The good deed done, I headed for the door and my wife and babies.

We stayed overnight in Needles where there was an electrical outlet for the freezer. More diaper changes, then some dinner at the restaurant next door, after which we hit the sack.

Next morning early we headed for Tucson, but not before stopping for gas. I mentioned to the mechanic that the truck had gotten a little warm in the desert east of Mojave. He noted that vehicles from the California coast ran warm because they only had a little bit of anti-freeze in the radiator. (They called coolant anti-freeze back then.) At any rate, he suggested that either 50% or 100% antifreeze would keep the engine cool. So with a full gas tank and a radiator full of anti-freeze we were on our way!

Tucson was nice when we got there – mid-80s – typical for April. I checked into the radio station and was referred to a motel on the north-east side of town. It was to be our base of operations for the next several days while I got my sea legs

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and found a new home. There was an electrical outlet available so the freezer was fine. Everything in it was frozen solid. The second day of our stay at the motel, we got out a baggie of peaches that Claudette had put up earlier in California. They were heavenly!

Mid-week, we found a seven year old adobe home. The original owners needed to move, so we accommodated them. They moved in on a lease-purchase agreement with the rent payments applied to the down-payment. We paid \$16,000 for a 1600 foot house that would have cost over \$45,000 on the coast. What a smokin' deal!

Airport Fall

My first task was to design and re-build the main studios and modernize the KIKX-AM transmitter site. It became a model of modern broadcasting, with super-high-fidelity equipment and a sound very much like an FM station. Fellow broadcasters from across the city were very complimentary of those achievements.



KIKX was a contemporary Rock'n'Roll station with the Barron K morning show featuring me (Ted Behr) and Jefferson K. Some years and many jobs later my intrepid partner changed his name and became the announcer for the *Hollywood Squares*.

Part of my function as the Chief Engineer was to conduct the annual Proof-of-Performance, a high-tech series of tests and measurements designed to document that the facility met all of the FCC requirements in every aspect.

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On a Friday night toward the end of my third year at KIKX, I conducted the signal measurement phase of the Annual Proof. One of the monitor points was on the tarmac at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. About midnight, with a special piece of equipment in hand, I approached the tarmac at D.M.. Because it was dark, I didn't see the parking berm at the edge of the tarmac and tripped over it, falling hard on my side. Ouch! Hip-pointer!

After finishing the signal-strength reading, I decided to go to a nearby medical clinic just to be safe. The Emergency Medical Technician on duty cleaned up the wound and put a butterfly bandage on it. He asked the doctor on duty to write script for oral penicillin since the fall was on dirty blacktop.

The prescription was filled at a nearby pharmacy on the way home. After relating the incident to my wife, I took the first pill and hit the sack. It was about 2:00 o'clock in the morning.

I woke up just after sunrise with a strange sensation in my fingers and toes ... a slight itch. I went to the bathroom and washed my hands. The warm water made them itch like crazy! I went to the kitchen to plug in the coffee-maker and get a drink of water. Both my feet and hands were itching by then.

Apparently, my bout with Celulitis at Marine Boot Camp had created the conditions for a penicillin reaction. It was the classic allergy ... itching, swelling and welts spreading from the fingers and toes toward the torso. A 'phone call to the T.M.C. Emergency Room revealed that ice-water would help. The nurse added that if the problem made it past my elbows or knees, I was to get to the hospital ASAP.

It took all day Saturday for the symptoms to subside. I spent the time watching TV with hands and feet in a bucket of ice-

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water. There were no repercussions except that now I keep a MedicAlert medallion on my person when away from home.

The Ultimate Accident

The summer of 1971 came along and we took a quick vacation over the 4th of July weekend. It was great! Sh'ma and sh'pop said they would like to have son John for the summer and they wanted him, at the ripe old age of seven, to have the experience of day camp in Monterey. Hey – works for me!

We packed the kids up and headed out for Bakersfield via Needles. We took a number of vacations over the years and stopped many times in Needles, staying at a really keen motel (that was too costly) and always had breakfast at a local pancake house. Needles was just about half way to Bakersfield and the motel had a nice swimming pool where we could get relief from the heat.

We liked the motel pool in Bakersfield, too. It was almost cool there compared to Needles! We arrived in time to take a dip before the folks showed up. They took us all out to dinner. Nice for a young couple raising two kids. Janet was five. John was just ready to turn eight. After dinner the adults sat by the pool chatting while the kids played in the water. It was a good time to be alive.

In the morning we were treated to breakfast, took another dip in the pool and loaded up. After we said our good-byes it was off, via Tehachapi and Mojave, to the great stinking desert!

We made it safely to Needles, where we stayed and played at our favorite motel. The food at the restaurant was super and the air-conditioner at the motel worked very well. (As I recall, that's why we spent the extra coupla bucks!)

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We had been traveling for quite a while the next day – we had made it through the Phoenix metro area and were traveling on Interstate 10 heading south-east near Picacho. Up ahead there was a covey of flashing red, white and blue DPS lights. The Highway Patrol was investigating a grizzly traffic accident and directing traffic around the horrific scene.

As we slowly crawled by the site, it became obvious what had happened: A motorcycle with two people on board had passed a trucker when their front tire blew out - just as it returned to the outside lane in front of the eighteen-wheeler. The truck had run over the bike. The truck's left fuel tank had been torn off by the impact. The bike was crushed into little bits. Scattered along the median were those little parts, the handle bars, the cycle's gas tank, what appeared to be two bodies, and a helmet with a human head peering out of it. It was horrible, heart-breaking.

The tractor-trailer rig was parked on the side of the highway. The driver was sitting on the right front bumper with his face buried in his hands. Such a sad scene ... something neither Claudette nor I will ever forget.

The End/Beginning

When we got to Tucson after the 1971 long week-end, we were met with a big surprise. The radio station had a new engineer, flown in from Texas, and I was informed that I had a week to find another job.

It had been decided that my pay was too high in relation to the other employees. Somebody forgot that I was doing two jobs, announcer and Chief Engineer, for about two-thirds the cost of two of the least expensive employees. Management had

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reasoned that the station could share the cost of a common engineer with its sister station in Texas. This way they could afford a new program director, who would do an air show as well, for less than the combined outlay for their announcer-engineer (me) and the existing program director.

On its face, it seemed a reasonable business decision, but as often happens when the sales, promotional and technical aspects of a business are misunderstood by management, disaster is not far off. During a subsequent meeting with the station manager, I predicted that they would be in hot water with the Federal Communications Commission within a year.

A complex AM station with a directional antenna system such as KIKX pretty much requires a full-time engineer, or at least an on-site part-timer. There are a number of regular operations that are not common to non-directional stations. Among them are daily tower base-current readings, tweaking of output power adjustments, regular record-keeping, routine cleaning, inspection and maintenance, and staying after on-air employees to keep up with their own logging requirements.

Also included in the technical duties of the Chief Engineer are regular communications with the F.C.C. regional engineer, annual proofs-of-performance, and continuous documentation of changes made to the electrical equipment. For instance, a new piece of equipment gets installed; a wiring diagram must be created and a record kept describing the installation.

None of the above can be done adequately by an engineer who has to commute from another state, so the stage is set for a technical problem that can bring operations to a halt until the Chief arrives. Even with a local back-up contractor, lack of documentation can stymie the best efforts to fix the problem.

Part of the deal I made with the station manager was to keep

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me on for a month so that I could take care of the annual tasks required by the F.C.C. and help the Texas engineer become familiar with the technical aspects of the operation in the process. That I did, and I warned him of the dangers he faced that could affect both the station License as well as his own.

Several months later, I got a call asking for help. The south tower had taken a lightning hit and the station was off the air. The new Chief had no clue what to do and was in a panic. I agreed to help provided that I got \$100 a day cash (at that time a tidy sum) for my services, payable on demand.

First, I put the auxiliary transmitter on the air non-directional and notified the F.C.C. that the station was at variance because of the damages. It took two days to get the parts together to replace the ones damaged by the lightning. That required a partial proof-of-performance. By the time all the requirements had been met I was owed a pretty penny!

When I went for my cash, they stiffed me, claiming that they didn't have the money! The next day, I went to the Pima County Sheriff's Office and requested back-up. Back at the radio station, I let it be known that I was willing to place a mechanic's lien on the property and pad-lock the building if the cash wasn't coughed up forthwith! Somebody, a secretary I think, made a run to the bank and I was paid within minutes!

One of the other warnings I gave the manager was that he had to make certain that promotions being planned to celebrate the new programming stayed within the boundaries set by F.C.C. Rules. Failure to do so could jeopardize the station License. He failed to heed the warning. The first promotion had the new employee kidnapped and held for ransom in Florida. Tucson police and the F.B.I. investigated. After about a week the kidnapping was determined to be a hoax, perpetrated by the radio station.

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It took years before the claims leveled against the owner took full effect. He had lost appeals of the federal charges all the way through the appellate process. His attorney told him it would cost upwards of a million dollars to get to the Supreme Court - if they agreed to hear the case - and he would probably lose that appeal also. The owner finally gave up. The radio station was shut down and the license abandoned. That was the end of KIKX. By that time, I had opened my own business with the help of Jerry Lewis! But that's another story ...

Porta-Tronics

In 1971, after it sunk in that I needed to find another job, I made some calls networking with some old friends in broadcasting. Their tips lined me out with three radio stations that wanted morning men who could also handle engineering. I got offers from each of them. One was in Denver CO, a second in Spokane WA, and the third was in Long Beach CA.

Claudette didn't want to move to the Northwest. She grew up in Oregon. Because of our tour of Oregon radio stations KAGO (Klamath Falls), KYNG (Coos Bay), KBZY (Salem) and KGON (Oregon City) we already knew that it rains every day somewhere in Oregon ... which leads to the reasonable assumption that it would be wetter still in Washington state. Denver was, at the time, the fourth largest AM radio market, a step down from Tucson, the third-rated AM market. I had never before taken a cut in pay to move, and that was the choice. Denver was out.

Last on the list was Long Beach. My experience at building and re-building radio facilities made the job enticing. The offer was first, to create new facilities for an existing station that planned on changing format to rock'n'roll and second, to star on the morning show. Claudette and I talked at length

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about the job. It was just what I wanted, a great engineering challenge and being morning man at a prominent broadcast facility in the LA area, third most prestigious in the nation! The move would involve transplanting a mother and her five and seven year old children to the LA metro area. There was a lot of concern about finding good affordable housing and good schools reasonably close to Long Beach. Good luck! This, also, would be a bad choice.

With no other choices, the idea of going into business was discussed at length. I was an experienced Chief Engineer and had a lot to offer as a broadcast consultant. The decision was made to try consulting at \$100 per day plus expenses, meals and lodging. There are only so many stations within a reasonable driving distance from Tucson. I hit them all and spent three months working myself to death.

The money was great, but I wasn't home much. So, I hooked up with KCUB in Tucson to provide vacation relief for their DJs. That money was helpful but there was no guarantee of further employment after the vacations. More discussions ensued. We finally settled on taking a shot at business. My electronics expertise was sufficient to make a go at it. If I could hit the ground running, we could make it work.

I hocked the pick-up truck for \$2,500 and created a budget that included tools, parts, business cards, invoicing and billing paperwork, bank accounts with credit card machines, an accountant, the necessary insurance policies and the required state and local business licenses. We purchased enough food and household supplies to last a month. We ended up with \$130 in unspent cash.

It was the Memorial Day weekend. I had placed ads in the Tucson newspapers touting Porta-Tronics as the only TV repair business in the area that would make a house-call for

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just \$12.50 plus parts, and if repairs couldn't be made on site there would be no charge. Saturday the phone began to ring. It kept ringing Sunday. We had Tuesday booked with eight calls and Wednesday already had two appointments on the books. It was looking good.

Late Sunday we were watching the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon on KGUN 9, when there was one of those compelling presentations that just makes you want to give something right away. I looked at Claudette and said, "We have everything we need and there are 130 dollars left over. We are either going to make it or we're not. I want to give that money to Jerry Lewis. What do you think?" She agreed!



I drove down to the TV station with the money. Jake Jacobson was hosting the local broadcast with help from broadcast icon Larry Schnebly, who had been the Head Resident in my dorm at NAU!

Jake made a big deal out of our donation, interviewed me on camera with Schnebly, and recommended that anyone needing their TV fixed should call and get an appointment.

The phone at home (yes we started by working out of the house) rang off the hook! By the end of the telethon we were fully booked through Saturday and had several house-calls booked into the following week. We hit the ground running because of the generosity of Tucson's TV viewers and the Jerry Lewis Telethon!

Claudette's 35th

My wife's 35th birthday was memorable. We had lots of friends and their ages ranged broadly. We invited an elderly couple from up the street, and there was a selection of friends and relations who brought their friends along.

It was a pot-luck kind of affair with plenty of tasty things to treat the palate of the pickiest eater. There was the usual spread of salads ranging from tossed to fruit as well as an assortment of dressings. At least six different dips were on the table and there were chips and crackers and meats and cheeses of all sorts. It was a big spread.

My sister-in-law brought a dip that was just incredible! It was basically made of cottage cheese, layered with diced tomatoes and diced Hatch chilis. Talk about a hit! Yummy.

I provided my infamous watermelon punch. Here's the recipe:

Cut about an inch off one end of a large watermelon to gain access to the heart. Remove heart and dice into 1/4 inch pieces. Set aside in bowl. Remove all but about 3/4 of an inch of pulp and place in another bowl lined with cheesecloth. Squeeze juice out of pulp through the cheesecloth. This should make several cups of the liquid. Position the melon with its uncut end down, in an appropriate container. In the melon, combine a half-cup of juice, a couple of tablespoons of the diced heart, a quart of 7-Up and a quart of Vodka. Refrigerate for at least two hours to percolate. Serve in Old-fashioned glasses with or without ice. It is best to prepare two watermelons so there will always be one chilling while the other is being consumed.

The thing about watermelon punch is that the taste of the vodka gets absorbed by the flesh of the melon and it becomes

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flavored by the heart and juice. One drink of this luscious elixir is sufficient for most astute partygoers.

It was your typical cocktail party with everyone of age welcome to create their own favorites at the bar. Several of those in attendance helped me host. The stereo was playing hit music, and Claudette was the center of attention.

Not so typical in our home was the waft of smoke from a group out on the grass in the back yard. They were smoking doobies away from the older revelers. I also discovered a clutch of folks in the main bathroom with a mirror and razorblade, snorting short lines of coke.



Everybody was happy, Claudette was happy, and at least one of my brother's friends was way happy. So happy he decided to crawl into the fireplace! Everyone was laughing until he said he felt sick. Ooops! We fished him out of the fireplace and whisked him out the front door into the front yard, where he sat next to the big mulberry tree for the longest time.

In celebration of Claudette's birthday, we had bought a new living room furniture set the week before. It was the big stuff; consisting of a seven-foot couch, monster rocker, ottoman, and great big love-seat. It was all covered with teddy-bear fabric, all nice and cuddly for sitting or snoozing. I loved to lie on it on Saturdays and watch ABC's Wide World of Sports.

One of the partiers who came with a friend was a chain-smoker. (Claudette said she was a hooker!) She was tipsy when she arrived with my friend. At one point, the woman sat

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on the arm of the love-seat spilling ashes on the floor. There was an ash-tray just inches away. Speaking with a swooping gesture, she grazed the back of the loveseat with her cigarette. The hot coal rolled off and instantly burnt a hole in that brand-new furniture - just like that! Claudette freaked at the sight. My friend apologized and whisked his date into the night.

That loveseat burning, something that remained as a reminder for all of the over 25 years we owned the furniture, turned out to be the only untoward incident in an otherwise memorable birthday party evening. Indeed, a happy 35th for Claudette!

Present from Sh'ma

Our childrens' grandmother doted on both of the kids, but especially on son John. My mom, Ruth, was always generous to a fault. She would scare up ten or twenty bucks every couple of weeks and send it along with instructions to go out to dinner, or buy new underwear, or take a drive. She would also send little presents to the kids. Although she was very generous, she favored our first-born, Johnny.

One incident almost precipitated a schism between the parents and grandparents when one child was favored over the other with no special occasion as the reason.

Although I was not home at the time, Claudette remembers the day the mailman showed up with what could have easily been a shoebox. It was addressed to Johnny. Even though it wasn't his birthday, it was a present. It's been too long ago to remember what it was in it exactly, but Johnny was elated. He ripped it open, threw the box down and began playing with the toy immediately.

Janet, just 2 ½ years old at the time, picked up the box, peered

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into it, put her little hand in there and felt all around the inside and even fished in the corners, hoping for something. Anything. Then she shook it and again felt around inside for something. There was nothing.



Tears welled up in her little eyes, and she turned to her mommy and asked, “Where mine?”

It was late in the month and we only had one dollar in our checking account at the time, but Claudette knew exactly what to do. She packed both of the kids in the car and took off for the toy store. Janet got to pick a toy for herself. And when he asked why he didn’t get one, Johnny was told, “Sh’ma already gave you one.” Nobody remembers for sure what it was, but little Janet chose a very special toy bought by her mommy ... with a bum check. [I went to the bank and made it good before it cleared.]

Wisdom Teeth Overdose

When we moved to Tucson, I was in my mid-twenties and still growing teeth. Wisdom teeth, for which there was scarcely room in my mouth. It hurt - and I was always chewing on my gums as the teeth grew in. One day I’d had enough. The dentist was called and an appointment made to extract the teeth. I asked for something other than a local anesthetic.

The day arrived soon enough and I found myself in the dentist’s chair, up to my eyeballs in white sheeting. An assistant came in the room and inserted an IV in my arm. She said the doctor would be along in a second. When my dentist came into the room the assistant slowly injected a solution of saline and sodium pentothal – the truth serum. I faded away

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and woke up a short time later in a recovery room adjacent to the one with the dental chair.

It felt like I had cotton in my mouth. It was gauze, covering the gaping holes where once there had been budding wisdom teeth. A pain-killer had also been administered so it didn't hurt much. I was given a prescription for pain pills with instructions to take two every six hours until they were gone and to change the gauze as needed.

Claudette took me home and I went right to bed to recuperate. Six hours later, about dinnertime, I took my first two pills. The gauze was changed and then I went back to sleep. Another six hours – midnight - and Claudette woke me up for two more pills. Another six hours went by and Claudette wanted me to get up and have something to eat. It was all I could do to get out of bed. It felt like I had a huge weight on my shoulders. I sipped some soup for breakfast, went to the bathroom, took two more pills and then dragged myself back to bed. It was daybreak

About noon, after dragging into the bathroom and taking care of my business, I got a drink of water and took two more pills. I was exhausted and went back to bed. At 6:00pm Claudette had a hard time waking me. I felt sluggish and weak. It was then that I decided to call the dentist and ask about the medication. I left a message and he called back a short time later. He asked me what I had been taking and I told him two pills every six hours as I had been instructed both verbally and in writing. He asked if I thought I needed to go to the hospital and I said I didn't think so ... yet.

The dentist apologized and said he had made a big mistake. He said I was supposed to take ONE pill every six hours ... AS NEEDED for pain. I had been taking what I believe was

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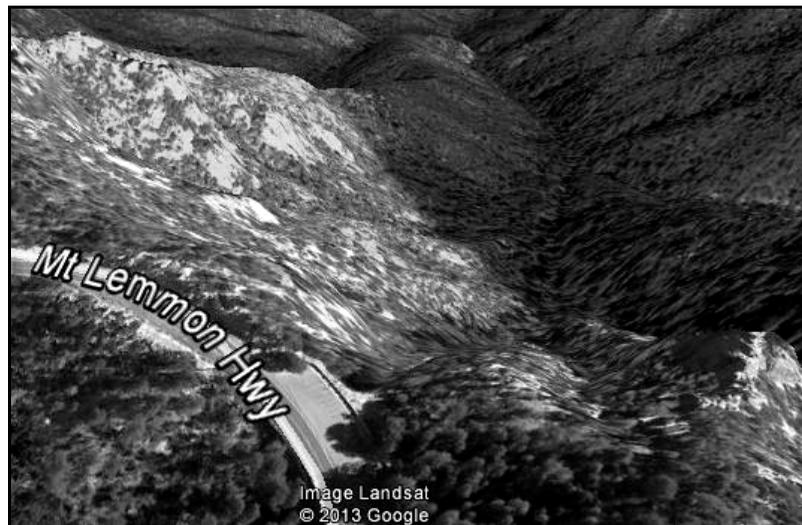
Percodan – roughly equivalent to today’s Oxycodone. It’s the closest to death I’ve ever been. I’m not going there ever again!

Mt. Lemmon Climb for Gold

I think the most compromised I ever became was in the middle of an adventure to go find gold on the north side of the Catalina Mountain range.

About twenty miles up the Catalina Highway north of Tucson is San Pedro Vista. It’s a scenic view with a highway turn-out. On the side of the turn-out, a rock wall guards a precipitous drop - with no trail - overlooking a canyon far below where one might locate the elusive gold-bearing quartz.

Below is a view - courtesy of *Google Earth Maps* - of the precipitous drop we dealt with off San Pedro Vista. Not quite straight down!



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There were two of us and I reckon we hiked something like three miles out and three-quarters of a mile down through high chaparral, giant boulders, mesquite, scrub oaks and giant stands of Ponderosa pine. Whenever we changed directions, my friend Rick and I would stop and make a rock pile pointing the way back – an old indian trick picked up when we were Boy Scouts.

We were packing blankets, extra clothing including jackets to keep out the mountain cold overnight, canned food, candy, fire-making supplies, coffee, sugar and a six-pack of Beer.

After a couple of hours we reached a creek running along the bottom of a canyon from west to east. We stopped to rest for a while. The creek water was ice-cold so we each took a few refreshing sips. Then we broke out the beer. It was summer and maybe 100 degrees in town. We were hot and sweaty, so even though it was almost luke-warm, that beer tasted great! After carefully placing the remaining four bottles in the creek, we made another rock pile and left the empties next to it as a reminder of the chilling booty waiting just several feet away.

We followed the creek a good distance to the east until we came upon a waterfall that dropped maybe thirty feet down a rocky face. The thing was located between two sheer cliffs and it appeared there was no way around it. We decided to see what could be done. Rick walked all over one side, getting as close as he could to the edge, but found no easy way to circumvent the cliff to the east. I took the one on the west and met with no better luck. The only way around would be to retrace our steps up the mountain about a mile, hang a left for at least another quarter-mile, and then hike back down to the bottom on the other side of the falls. Bad idea. We were stuck.

Each side of the canyon was quite steep and there were many Ponderosa pines growing up the sides. In amongst them were

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all sorts of brambles and underbrush – not very hospitable, it seemed. Still questing for gold, we checked the sides of the canyon for several hundred yards upstream, looking for traces of quartz in outcroppings of granite. There were some bare granite faces, but none with quartz in them.

Gold is found mostly as veins in quartz, which is generally contained in granite rock formations. Rain, freezing winters and hot summers crack the granite and release its gold-bearing quartz. The quartz eventually breaks down and releases the gold into creeks and washes, traveling down-stream until it reaches a curve, where it drops out and finds a resting place where the water flows slowly. Prospectors pan the curves in washes near the foothills of mountain ranges, looking for the tell-tale signs of the mother-load somewhere up on the mountain. Rick had found gold flakes in a wash north of the Catalinas near Oracle. We were after the source in the canyon.

The shadows in the canyon were almost up to the highest tree-tops when we started thinking about making camp. It would be dusk soon with the sun slowly creeping behind the steep terrain above us.

In the middle of the creek, about a hundred yards up-stream was a huge flat rock maybe ten by twelve feet sticking out of the water about a foot. There were enough big stones near it to allow someone to walk onto it without getting wet. And it was big enough to allow us to set up camp on it with room to spare. Best of all, there were no bugs on it – they had claimed the shore as well as the hill sides.

We gathered up some rocks and made a fire-ring in the middle of our camp. With kindling and sticks from the under-brush we made a fire. It was time to rustle up some grub ... that is what south-west campers say in the great outdoors, isn't it?

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Rick had one of those little-bitty government-issued two-piece olive-drab Viet Nam era can-openers that fits on a key-chain. I had the real deal, one borrowed from Claudette's kitchen. There was a can of soup in my pack. Rick had brought some canned pinto beans which he opened with his field can-opener after punching a hole in the top of it with his knife. I deftly attached my wife's monster can-killer to the soup ... I think it was Campbell's chicken-noodle. It was open in mere seconds.

We dug out our cups and filled them half way with creek water. The soup was split between them and they went on the fire to warm along with the beans, still in their raggedy container. We had instant coffee and little packets of sugar, just right to cap our feast after washing the cups and spoons in the creek. It had started to cool a little and a breeze kicked up, pushing cold air down the canyon. We stoked the fire to create enough heat to keep us warm for most of the night.

Mountains have their own air-conditioning systems. Cold air from high on the mountain, being more dense, displaces warmer air in the canyons and flows down-stream developing chilly winds in the evening. After midnight or so, the winds calm and the cold air settles into every nook and cranny.

The air above eight-thousand feet or so hits close to freezing in the summer. That air comes rolling down the canyons, making adequate clothing and cover a requirement for camping out. We had good coats and blankets, and the fire was warm. But we hadn't counted on the rock ... it was cold to begin with. Before the night was out, we discovered that bugs might be preferable to flat rocks! One of us had to stay awake to stoke the fire while the other slept. We took turns, about an hour-and-a-half at a time. But it was still cold without some sort of bedding between us and the rock. When first light arrived it was freezing cold. We built the fire up a bunch and made hot water for coffee. It was too cold to cook

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anything else so we shared a couple of candy bars and made some more coffee.

When there was enough light we broke camp, put out the fire and packed up our stuff, including the trash. It was time to return to the parking lot at San Pedro Vista.

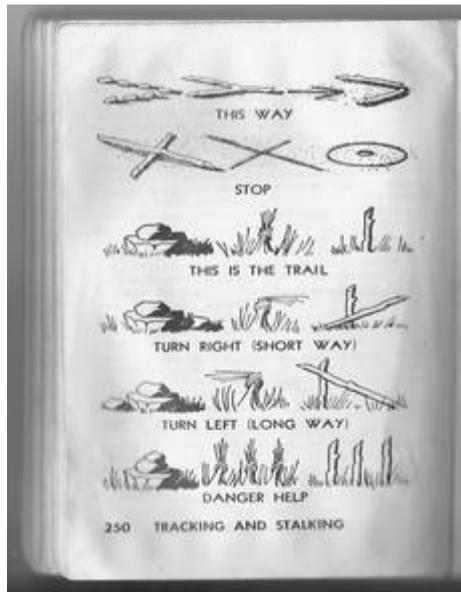
Problem: Rick said he couldn't walk. He complained that his knees felt like they had spikes hammered into the joints. Mine hurt also, but not so much that I couldn't walk. The hike from San Pedro Vista was rough on knees and heels. Each step of the way down the canyon sides caused ever so little bits of trauma, adding up over the several hours it took to get to the bottom. Not until the overnight chill had set in did the injuries manifest themselves.

With Rick disabled, we were looking at big trouble. Looking up, the Ponderosas almost joined at the top of the cliffs above. If people came looking for us and missed the rock piles left to guide us out, we were stuck. Even a helicopter rescue would be dubious because we probably couldn't be seen from the air. We talked it over and concluded that no matter how much it hurt, the only option was to climb out. I had some aspirin in my stuff and gave three of them to my friend.

I helped Rick across the boulders in the creek. There was no cane or thumb-stick available so I stayed close in order to catch him in case he slipped. One foot at a time, with me close at hand, he gingerly stepped upstream. After fifteen minutes or so he picked up the pace a little and said it didn't hurt as much, what with the aspirin and all. We walked gingerly for over forty-five minutes, slowly warming up as we picked our ways up the side of the creek. Then, just ahead – seemingly out of nowhere – appeared the spectre of our rock pile trail marker pointing up the hillside. Glory be! There were two empty beer bottles next to it! Four bottles of Bud had been

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chillin' in the creek all night, just waiting for us to come along! Oh, goodness!



A quick word about trail markers: The Boy Scouts of America June 1953 edition of *Handbook for Boys*, Pages 249 and 250 are instructions for the use of trail markers. “Notice that they are either scratch marks in the dirt, or made of sticks, grass or rocks that you find in the open.” We had used rocks stacked two high, small on large, with a third large one (“a long way”) on the ground

next to the side pointing the way home. On the left above is page 250 © 1948 Boy Scouts of America.

We recovered the beer and sat down next to the water to rest and refresh our-selves for a while. Being the ever-thoughtful campers that we were, we put the four empties in the bottoms of our packs and saved the other two for later, further up the mountain.

Then the real work began.

Following the direction pointed by our trail marker at the bottom of the mountainside, we started the painful trudge toward San Pedro Vista, above us, some three miles away. We cleared the tallest of the trees after climbing for about fifteen minutes and were confronted with scrub oaks,

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mesquites and underbrush. Among the scattered flora were boulders ranging from a few inches to as much as ten feet across. We had to weave our way slowly up and around these obstacles, all the while being mindful of the direction we had to travel to find the next rock pile direction-pointer.

After what seemed like hours we came upon the next marker, which turned us a little to the left, headed east toward boulders and short cliffs. We skirted the cliffs on the low side and continued on a line that climbed ever higher on the side of the mountain. Not long after the left turn we ran into a number of open spaces populated with summer grasses scattered among low bushes. Here and there scampered a rabbit or a squirrel flushed from its cover.

The pain that had plagued us earlier in the morning began to subside ever so slowly. Rick wanted to stop and rest for a while, but I urged him to keep going until we came to the next trail marker. He reluctantly agreed.

After what seemed like another hour of huffing and puffing and grunting and groaning we came upon the next rock trail marker. It pointed straight up the mountainside toward more cliffs surrounded by mesquites and patches of cactus. I was glad we had pressed on, because now we really needed to rest. Guess what? We still had cold beer insulated in the blankets in our packs! The break was a welcome respite and the beer gods had blessed us with something well beyond refreshing.

Rested somewhat, with aching parts feeling much better, we began the trudge toward the top. It would not be long before we could pack our stuff in the back of the car, click on the air-conditioning and make our way up the road to Summerhaven for some R & R. It began to warm some, what with the direct sun on us now, and we finally broke a sweat. Good news.

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We were within ear shot of the parking area when we came upon a cliff with no way around or over. This was not the way we had come in the beginning. We began to retrace our steps but found no recognizable landscape. Even with the guidance of our stone trail markers a wrong turn had been made back there somewhere. The wilderness is a place where Mother Nature creates dangerous situations. This was one of them. People have become lost in the wilderness and perished within a couple of hundred yards of civilization.

After stopping to gather our thoughts and discuss the situation, we decided to try to track ourselves back the way we came in hopes of finding a clue to the right direction. There was enough evidence of our passing – scuff marks in the dust, trampled grass, broken twigs. It seemed like a long time, but it had only been a few minutes when we came upon the trail marker we had overlooked. In our zeal to make short work of the remainder of the climb we had simply screwed up.

The remainder of the trek out of the canyon was a scramble that, for whatever reason, came with very little pain at all. We reached the wall at San Pedro Vista in maybe ten minutes and climbed over it to the stares of a half-dozen startled tourists.

They say in football, “Work it out and the pain will go away.”

With our gear stashed in the back and the air-conditioner blowing a refreshing breeze, we drove up the road and parked in front of the bar. Inside, painless, we sat down and had a couple of ice-cold beers. It had been a marvelous adventure.

Guilty about Buzzy

When I worked at KPER in Gilroy, California, a group of local girls used to call and ask me to play their requests. One

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day, the giggly voice on the phone invited me to come visit. It wasn't clear where she lived, and she didn't give me her phone number before she hung up.

When I got home from work that afternoon, there was a note on the door of my second-story apartment. It said, "Sorry we missed you. The girls in Apartment 8." Since the bunch that called asking for tunes were apparently pals, I figured the note must be from them.

There were only so many apartments in Gilroy back in 1961. It sounded like it might be fun to try to find the elusive Apartment Number 8. It was just a matter of elimination. So, I went out cruisin' apartments, looking for buildings with more than six. Early on, I knocked on a front door in the older part of town and was greeted by an elderly couple. They were very nice, but not the people I was after.

Finally, I found a set of dual-level early 60s rental units with a large parking lot in front. I scaled a wide set of brown wooden stairs to the second floor, turned left and walked about twenty feet to the front door of number 8. This was back in the day when folks didn't worry that a bad guy was going to pop out of no-where, take your wallet and beat you senseless for no particular reason. Nevertheless, I hesitated for a second before knocking at the door. Olga answered.

I was taken aback. There, standing in front of me, was the homeliest woman – no, ugliest woman - I had ever seen. She put the wicked witch of the West to shame – right down to the wart on her nose! This was Olga ... a real honest-to-goodness sweetheart. She was a teacher and spent most of her money on her wardrobe, which was top-of-the-line all the way. Olga invited me in and introduced Willis, the girls' best buddy. Olga picked up the phone, dialed it and proceeded to gloat, "Ted Behr is here!" Whoever answered said bring him over.

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Ermenia's beauty salon was tucked in behind several parking spots next to a corner Standard Oil gas station on the south side of Carmel Street at Hecker Pass Road. Across the way on the other corner was a Sno-White hamburger joint. Willis worked there.

So there I was near the door of the beauty shop, being introduced by Olga, with Willis hovering nearby. Although Ermenia had left for the day, there was Rita and Nellie ... and Claudette. Leering at me from behind her customer, she



waited with baited breath for the handsome Ted Behr to stroll through the doorway. (Radio people rarely look like they sound and this was not much different!) Be that as it may ... standing right there in front of me was this drop-dead gorgeous platinum-blonde creature that instantly found me somewhere between on the floor and total oblivion. This girl had me ... big-

time. Many years later I learned that Claudette thought I was some kind of cretin who reminded her very much of Ichabod Crane!

Well, Olga suggested that we all adjourn to her apartment for some cheese, crackers and wine. Nellie declined. Rita shared the apartment with Olga, so she was in, and Willis was along for the ride. That left Claudette, who excused herself so she could go home and change out of her work clothes. So began a relationship that has lasted over half-a-century.

The gang accepted me into its fold and we palled around for some time before the real connection was made. Claudette and Rita had planned to attend the California Cosmetology

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Convention in San Francisco, something they did every year. They would take off late Friday and check into a motel. Then it was out for dinner and entertainment. Saturday was an all-day affair with competitions, displays of new products, and all the fun stuff that happens at conventions. Then it was out to dinner again, and return home Sunday morning. Olga liked to tag along and eventually Willis was invited to join in. For some reason I don't recall, Willis could not go to the 1961 Convention, so the girls invited me to tag along. That's when Claudette and I finally hit it off.

After returning from the Cosmetology Convention, Claudette and I went out pretty much regularly. We went to the movies a lot. It was a good summer.

I looked forward to meeting Claudette's family and shortly after we started dating she invited me home to meet her folks. Her step-dad, Lane, was a long-haul trucker and wasn't home a lot, so I was lucky to meet him when I did. We hit it off pretty well. Claudette's sister Karen (actually her step-sister) was in grade-school and she was a friendly little kid. Claudette's mom, Ma Kat, was an on-again-off-again acquaintance. She was an early breast cancer survivor and she suffered from hormone deficiencies that made it very difficult at the time to maintain normalcy. She was a good woman who had been dealt some really bad cards in life and managed to survive, and even though it was difficult at times I was proud to have made her acquaintance.

Then there was the dog. Buzzy was his name. He was supposed to be a great hunting dog – he was half Springer Spaniel and half Setter. His hunting prowess is another story altogether, however, best told later. Buzzy loved everybody.

All he wanted was someone to pet him and play with him.

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When I first met him, he was in the dining room in a play-pen that had been set up for the family's orange Pomeranian, a



feisty little mutt that barked at everything seemingly all the time. Poor Buzzy. Claudette had stashed him in the play-pen so that he and I could become friends without any unfortunate incidents. That done, he was let out to visit. He was a sweet pup, barely a year old, black and white with long hair on his legs, ears and

tail. It looked like his tail was wagging him, he was so happy to be in the company of humans!

Claudette and I hit it off, her dad was ambivalent, her mom was suspicious and her step-sister thought it was cool. After a whirlwind courtship, we agreed to marry, I took a better job, left her in Gilroy in November, and moved to Klamath Falls, Oregon.



It was Christmas when I returned to Gilroy with a diamond engagement ring for my girl. It was a tearful event that ended with a super Christmas gift for me. Aw, c'mon you guys! It was a watch! I returned to Klamath Falls a couple of days later with sweet memories and anticipation of things to come.

I spent the majority of January 11th - my birthday - driving to Gilroy. I arrived late that night, had something to eat, chewed the fat for a while and then crashed. Friday, I helped pack a U-haul trailer with Claudette's stuff. After that we had to drive

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to Hollister, the closest County Seat, to submit our blood tests (mine from Klamath Falls and Claudette's from Gilroy) so we could get our California Marriage License. From Hollister we made our way to Monterey where we had arranged to be baptized by a Presbyterian Minister, a good friend of the Thayer family. The occasion created an unusual set of circumstances because neither Claudette nor I committed to the Presbyterian Faith. We asked the Minister instead to consecrate our mutual beliefs in God.

We were married the next day in front of the fireplace at the Thayer home in Pacific Grove with Claudette's little step-sister in attendance. Following wedding cake, hors d'Oeuvres, and small talk, mom and dad took the wedding party to dinner at Slat's Fish Grotto in Monterey. From there it was back to Gilroy. We hooked up the trailer, loaded Buzzy in the back seat, got in our hugs and kisses and good-byes, and took off on our way to a new life.

Buzzy dog was beside himself with glee!

We drove from Gilroy up through the San Francisco East Bay and by late evening were a couple of miles away from the turn to the north that would take us up to Interstate 5 into Oregon. It had begun to rain when we cleared San Jose and it was still coming down when we stopped in Vacaville at a charming little motel for our wedding night. I turned off the ignition, turned to Claudette and asked, "You got any money?"

After some freshening up, things got awkward. Claudette and I had only been dating for a few weeks when we began to get really acquainted. And then I skipped town for a better job just when things started to get serious! While we had indulged in our share of closeness, there was never an untoward moment. This limited experience made intimate contact on our wedding night sort of an uneasy affair (to coin a phrase). Fortunately,

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we had brought along a secret weapon. We'd probably still be there if it wasn't for the company of good ol' Buzzy dog!

I had to be back at work Monday and we had a ton of stuff to unload and pack upstairs into the Gingerbread house in Klamath Falls, so after a light brunch we lit out around noon Sunday. It was still sprinkling. By the time we got to the California-Oregon border the drizzle had turned to snow which continued all the way into K-Falls. When we arrived it was cold and dark. And late.

We took the mattress out of the trailer and struggled with it through the front door and up the stairs to our apartment. The mattress from Claudette's double-bed was unceremoniously dumped on the floor of the dining room. There was an old oil heater in the kitchen. It provided the heat for the whole place, making the bathroom and front room much cooler than the dining room. In the front room was my great feather bed with brass posts. Our second night together was spent in that soft feathery spot, surrounded by cold and cuddleness.

Buzzy was not impressed because he was being paper trained and had to spend the night in the bathroom!

Monday morning the clock went off at 5:00. I had the morning shift at KAGO-AM radio at 6:00am, and had a snowy and icy road to traverse up the hill to the station. Claudette, being the dutiful wife, got up and made coffee which she served up in my gray enameled steel cups. She percolated it on the stove in a flat-bottomed coffee pot using Folger's ground coffee. With a spoonful of sugar stirred in, it was delicious. No new husband could have asked for more. And then I was off like the wind, to my first workday as a married man!

Claudette spent a good deal of time getting her stuff out of the

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trailer and tidying up the place. There were plenty of clothes and a good amount of bedding. There was bedroom furniture with lots of drawers in it. I don't remember if she toted them up to the apartment or not. She did take time to play with her puppy.



It had snowed enough in the last day that there was about nine inches on the ground. When I got home from work and after playing with him a little, we decided to take Buzzy outside. Aside from the quick whisk into the apartment the night before, Buzzy had never been in the snow. When he saw the snow in the front yard, his eyes got big, his ears picked up, his nostrils flared and he jumped right into the deepest part! He put his head down like a snowplow and just jammed all over the yard, stopping every now and then to snort the white stuff out of his nostrils. We cheered him on, and Buzzy had a blast! It was cold out and we all tired of it after about ten minutes.

We went back inside where the dog and I played some more.

Guilty About Buzzy is the title of this story for good reason. I tried hard to give the pup the play time he needed, but I eventually tired of it. Buzzy so much loved to play. And he loved hugs and kisses. Me, not so much. Buzzy was wound up tight whenever I was around. My attention was in demand all the time and I grew to resent it.



What made the situation worse was that he was my wife's dog. She got him when he was just

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six or seven weeks old and the two of them were pals from the get-go. I wasn't the least bit jealous of their relationship; and he was never possessive. But still, I felt guilty about being turned off by a super-friendly year-old puppy.

Looking back on it, all I really ever had to do was “man up” and ask Claudette for help. Never did.

After a couple of months we moved to Coos Bay and rented a little house in Empire. There was a better job at KYNG. After a few months I was asked if I'd do a wake-a-thon to raise money for Mercy Hospital in Coos Bay. Sure, why not? The object was to stay awake as long as possible. I played music, interviewed passers-by and hosted drop-in guests lined up by the boss. The local chapter of SPEBQSA (the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America) dropped by and did a great live concert on the air, and there were all sorts of dignitaries. The feat made national news, but I began hallucinating early in the morning of the seventh day. I became very paranoid and was certain there were bad people stalking me. The doctor said that was it. I had stayed awake for fifteen minutes short of a week!



My step-sister-in-law, Karen came to visit for the summer and she and Buzzy hit it off. She had her twelfth birthday in Empire and Buzzy was her best pal when she took the cake out to the gathering in the yard. What I lacked in motivation, Karen more than made up. Between the newly acquired kittens scampering every which way and the Buzzy puppy, she had her hands full.

The notoriety earned during the Wake-a-thon got me a pretty

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good job offer about a month later. We packed up the china and moved to Salem and rock radio station KBZY, where I took the mid-day shift.

Eleven months later, we moved again when a friend called from KGON in Oregon City. He had been at KYNG in Coos Bay when I was there and he had been lured away to take the position of Program Director at KGON. He needed a good morning man. Claudette, having experienced three moves in 1962 in just seven months, had decided not to unpack the china when we had moved to Salem!

Six months later, Claudette, Buzzy, the china and I made it back safely to Monterey, where we stayed in the basement of the Thayer home while I worked as an apprentice electronics technician. That paid education, along with the Federal Communications training taken while in Oregon, eventually helped create better job opportunities. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, we got pregnant with son John.

The D.J. opportunities came with KFXM in San Bernardino and only two weeks later, KSTN in Stockton. In mid-September of 1964 an offer came in from KDON in Salinas. They needed a Chief Engineer and Disc Jockey. Claudette was large with child and both she and Buzzy were suffering from Stockton's summer. The new job came just in time! Johnny was born September 19th at Carmel Hospital. Buzzy was ready for a new buddy.



Just before another move three years later we were blessed with another pal for Buzzy. Janet was born in Santa Cruz in mid February of 1967. We moved to Tucson in mid-April.

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My career in engineering and electronics continued over the years as the children grew. Buzzy was the constant companion and guardian. While the kids and the dog still played a lot, Buzzy always went into a tizzy whenever I came around. Sadly, he still craved the love affection I was never able to adequately provide.

One day, he didn't react like he had in the past. His back legs gave out as he approached his water dish on the slippery floor in the kitchen. He got back up and went about his business, so I praised him and slipped out the front door without another thought.

Claudette looked very sad when I returned. She wept when I asked what the problem was. She said that after I had gone, old Buzzy had collapsed several times more. She took our aging puppy to the Vet, who explained that he had been suffering from heart attacks. He explained that Buzzy could only live with the help of very expensive medications. These were way beyond our means, so our pal, our old family friend and companion was allowed to sleep. He was in his late teens. He was a good dog.

Stubbed Toes

The late 70s were tough on the young Thayer family and its electronics business. The economy was headed into recession and business was slow. The slowdown of retail income put a real crimp in the budget and we were forced to cut back.

The mortgage payments were cut to half, the thermostat was adjusted to conserve energy (and dollars), all credit card dealings were curtailed and long distance calls were stopped except for emergencies. On the business side, I expanded the antenna side to help increase revenues.

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I enlisted the help of eldest son John to assist with a couple of construction projects. It should be noted that he was a good worker but pulled up short when it came to quality control. Over the years I had been remiss in instilling the work ethic in my son, so there were always loose ends to be tied up at the end of any job. But, then, that's why they invented inspectors.

We worked on a TV antenna wiring job at an apartment complex on the east side of Tucson one Saturday morning. I had spent several days pulling coax cable in preparation for the final hook-up to the antennas, amplifiers and outlets. John got the ground floors and I took the second floors, wiring the outlets in each of some forty-eight units scattered among three large buildings.

I went at it like a house-afire, finishing my assignment in a matter of just about three hours. The object was to finish by noon so we could go home, have lunch and kick back for the rest of the day.

I checked on John to see how he was doing. He allowed as how he'd be done in another ten or fifteen minutes, so I went to the other end of the complex and began inspecting the outlets in each apartment. In the first eight units there were three bad connections. There were a couple more in the second set of apartments. I found another bum outlet in the last set. John walked out of a middle apartment before I had finished so I asked if he was done. He answered in the affirmative.

My son lied to me. Blatantly! He hadn't even begun the eighth bottom unit in the last building. I asked if he had done the last one and again he lied! Failing to complete a job and then lying about it is unacceptable. My heart ached from disappointment.

I yelled that he'd better get in that f-ing unit and finish the job right away or else. He grabbed his tools and hot-footed it into

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the last apartment while I took off to take care of the defects I had found.

I finished in time to see my son walking toward the truck. Asked if he was done with the last unit, he said he was, so we went over there to do the final inspection. He had completely missed one of the outlets! I blew my stack and he lit out running. I chased after him and just as we got to the truck I caught him in the butt with my right cowboy boot. He yelled and I ordered him to get in and wait.

I noted a sharp pain in my right foot – the index toe was broken. I limped to the last unit and finished up. When I got back to the cab I asked if my son was ok. He had been crying, but he bit his lip and said he was ok except for his butt! Then we shared a Coke and a good laugh about our painful parts.

When we pulled up at the house, Claudette noticed both of us walking funny and she asked about it. I told her that I kicked John in the butt and he couldn't sit down. My boy said that was just fine with him because I couldn't walk!

Memories of Buzzy

Earlier, I mentioned our dog's hunting prowess. He was half Springer Spaniel and half Setter, breeds well-known for their hunting traits. He came from good stock. His mommie was the Spaniel and his dad was the Setter. He looked like his pappy, just not as stocky.

When I was working at KDON in Salinas, we lived in Aptos, a small development south-east of Santa Cruz. We had obtained our first home there for a hundred dollars down. It was a 1600 square-foot place with a two-car garage. The mortgage was for

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\$11,390.00 at 3% interest and the payments were \$97.00 a month! Boy, those were the days!

I had a 30 Remington rifle that my dad had bought for me while I was still in high school so we could hunt deer near Ely, Nevada. It was a fine pump-action with a kick like a mule! I thought it might be fun one day to take my little family and Buzzy dog and the rifle to the dump to plink jars and tin cans. After lining up a batch of targets in a spot set up for shooters, I drew down on the first one – a tin can.

Slowly, I squeezed the trigger until the rifle fired. BOOM! There was a loud yipe and Buzzy dove under the vehicle! He was scared to death and would not come out until I put the gun inside. When we got ready to leave, he wouldn't get in the car until I had stashed that Remington out of sight!

From that day on, whenever Buzzy caught sight of that rifle, he'd run and hide! Buzzy dog was a lover not a hunter.



And there was no accounting for Buzzy's strange taste.

Somehow, when we lived in Tucson, he developed a taste for a peculiar plant grown in Watsonville, California and it wasn't lettuce. I was sitting in the living room eating the bits of flesh from a head from this special plant, dipping them each in mayonnaise, when Buzzy sat down in front of me to beg. For some unknown reason, I peeled a leaf off the thing, dipped it in some mayo and offered it to him. Very gingerly, he grasped the fleshy part with his little front teeth and pulled it off. I set the leaf aside and

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peeled off another. Buzzy wagged his tail and leaned forward for another taste. I think he must've eaten a quarter of that thing before we finished it off. Believe it or not, Buzzy had developed a very special taste for artichokes!

Giving Away the Pinto

Cutting back business expenses was very tough as the Carter recession worsened. Claudette and I caucused regularly, trying to figure out more and better places to cut.

We had purchased a 1974 Ford Pinto Station Wagon late in 1973 and had driven it for a year when a call came in from the Tucson dealership. It was the owner, Jim Click. He allowed as how that model had remained in high demand, so the car had not depreciated. He said we could have a new 1975 Squire Wagon equipped with a more powerful V6 engine for the same price we had paid for the old one. He said the loan at Valley National Bank would be rolled over for the same amount and the payments and interest would remain the same. Sounded like a smokin' deal so we cleaned out the '74 Pinto and traded it for the new one. That car had a very special place with the Thayer family.

Later that year, in the used car lot at Click Ford, I came upon a carbon-copy of our Squire Wagon. That wagon was for sale for \$3,000.00, \$500 less than the new one. According to its identification code stickers and the original window sticker, the vehicle was manufactured at Matuchen in March of 1975. The vehicle codes revealed it was a custom-built Executive Order car from Transportation Services painted Ford 5418 White, with a 2.8 Liter V6 power plant, C3 automatic transmission and 3.40:1 rear axle – the same as the newer car.

From its stock baseline the wagon departed substantially from

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the standard parts and options available in 1975. The interior Trim Code was BU – Random Stripe Cloth & Corinthian Tan Vinyl – found only in the Maverick, Comet, Granada and Monarch lines at the time. The steering wheel came from the Ford LTD line equipped with Speed Control, which was retrofitted in the engine compartment. Upon further inspection, I found it had special suspension, heavy-duty air-conditioning, 80amp alternator, a three-core radiator, special hood and spare tire locks, and a Mustang map light assembly, as well as the LTD Speed Control. It was a truly a one-of-a-kind Factory Custom car. I bought it.

Fast-forward to the dinner table in 1978. After a lot of discussion of the pros and cons, we decided to sell the stock car. The payments on the Special Order Squire Wagon were less than Claudette's new-bought one. We were up-side-down on the loan, so it was going to be a hard sell to give it away without penalty. It was a sad affair and Claudette wiped away a tear as we traded away the Pinto paper for a dollar with a nearby used car dealer. It was a pretty car without a blemish on it. He got a good deal.



We restored the custom Pinto three times, joined a car club and won some awards with it. I sold it in late 2013 to a good friend who owned a mexican restaurant for \$1,350 and \$100 worth of red mix burros!

Losing House #2

The recession was bad for business. So was technology. Until the economy caught up with small businesses like mine, there were plenty of profits to be made.

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When Porta-Tronics opened for business in 1971, TV repair was known for the “fast 50”, the average amount made from a single house call. In the early ‘70s most television sets had at least four vacuum tubes. Many had up to twenty. Six tube types failed regularly. They had to do with signal processing and picture tube power. My people carried sophisticated vacuum tube testers which they used to test the tubes in broken-down TVs. Older versions with lots of tubes would usually have three or four little tubes and one big one that needed replacement. Coupled with the house-call charge, the bill very often was a little over \$50. When the four-tube models broke down it was usually because one or more of the big tubes went bad. The tab usually ran close to \$50.

I tried to schedule eight calls per technician per day, which grossed a little over \$300 a day each. By the mid-70s we had three techs and grossed around \$1000 per day. Labor costs and wholesale materials used about 75% of the daily take. Office space, supplies, telephone, advertising and labor took another 10% off the top, leaving a tidy 15% (\$150 per day) in profits. We worked five-and-a-half days a week and rolled a little over \$3,500 a month. From that the Thayer family made the house and car payments, fed and clothed the kids, and generally led a common middle-class life. Not bad at all for the ‘70s.

By the time the third quarter of 1979 rolled around we weren’t making enough to make ends meet. We had one-and-a-half employees: Claudette and me, with occasional help from son John. The decision was made to close up shop and liquidate. We also decided to sell the house, which by that time had a second mortgage on it and was just costing too much.

I went job-hunting and landed a management job at the University of Arizona that was to begin the first week in January of 1980. I was one of two managers at the University Instrument Shop. I was charged with building a research and

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development operation equipped with electronic parts house, design and engineering lab, and printed circuit lab. It was a government job that offered reasonable stability and good pay.

We rented a two-story town-house early in 1980 and had moved our stuff in just before our home of 13 years was sold. I'll never forget the day we made our last tour of the place. It felt like we were abandoning an old friend. Both Claudette and I wept openly. It was a sad day, one that would be repeated again some twelve years in the future.

Transportation

Every guy loves his cars and his girls. The folks let me drive the Pontiac convertible back in the late '50s. It was a beautiful vehicle and a massive chick-magnet, to boot! Later, I drove the new, spartan English Ford – definitely *not* a chick-magnet.



Claudette and I started our marriage with a really nifty automobile. It was a '61 Dodge Lancer that my mom and dad had given to me when I left to take the job in Gilroy, California. It had a massive Chrysler slant six engine with four-on-the-floor. It was way cool! This is my best girl in Coos Bay, Oregon with our red baby.

When we got to Salem, Oregon the Lancer was traded for a mint green 1962 Chevy Corvair Monza with an Air-cooled opposed six, dual carbs and dual exhausts. We outfitted it with a new transverse leaf spring in the rear which gave it extreme stability. We used to take it out on road rallies. Fun.

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In Salinas we traded the old Chevy Corvair for a brand new sky-blue Mercury Comet Station Wagon. It had a small-block V-8 engine and column shifter. The conservative lines and quad headlights made this automobile a classic beauty that complimented both of my babies - handsome Johnny and the lovely and sweet Claudette.



We traded the Comet off on a green Dodge long-bed pick-up with a big V-8 and five-on-the-floor. I went looking for more photos and could find none. Being the “duh” husband, it took a while for the hard facts to sink in ... mommies don’t have time to pose with cars when they can pose with their babies!

The Spur

Now, we can get down to the problems that come with aging. As father time creeps up on us our parts begin to deteriorate, one piece at a time.

When I was working at the University of Arizona, more often than not, I climbed the stairs to the offices on the third floor of the Physics Building. There was a perfectly good elevator available, a hydraulic one, but it was slower than molasses in January, and most employees elected to take the stairs.

One morning I was making the turn onto the second flight when there was a sudden stabbing pain just above the inside of my left knee. When I stopped and straightened the leg the

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pain lessened some. After reaching the third floor and sitting in my chair the pain seemed to go away. Since it didn't return, I went about my business and had forgotten about the incident by day's end.

A few days later, the same thing happened as I walked through the doorway to an adjacent engineering lab. My legs almost went out from under me from the snapping pain. It felt like someone had shoved a knife in my femur just above the inside of the left knee. Again, I straightened up and the pain subsided. A telephone call to the family doctor set up an x-ray appointment to try to find the problem and perhaps a cure.

A radiologist read the x-ray film and said I had a bone spur above the knee. He said the tendon that attaches to the knee ran right over the spur and when conditions were just right it would hang up until the pressure was released with a painful "pop". I asked what could be done about it and he said that surgery could be done to take the spur off the bone. He said my doctor would confirm it involved a chisel and hammer. I wanted no part of any kind of chisel, much less a hammer! So after some serious interrogation, my physician suggested favoring the spur so it could grow over on itself and stop catching the tendon. Aspirin would be most helpful.

I had learned self-hypnosis when I was a senior in high school. I understood the power of hypnotism and decided to give it a try each night before going to sleep. Couldn't hurt.

I'd get into the bed, pull up the covers and lie on my back. Some afternoons I would just lie down on my back. Beginning with my toes and fingers, I'd think to myself four or five times, "My fingers and toes are getting warm and relaxed and heavy." Next would come hands and feet with the same chant four or five times, "Now, my hands and feet are feeling warm and relaxed and heavy," Then my thoughts moved on to wrists

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and ankles, forearms and calves, elbows and knees, biceps and thighs, shoulders and hips. Finally, my tummy and chest, and the neck, ears and face got attention.

With my whole body feeling heavy, warm and completely relaxed, I visualized the spur in the left knee and spoke quietly to my little guys, those healing properties of the blood and the hormones that help fix infirmities. I urged them to work on the spur, using their powers to round it off and make it smooth. There were times when I dozed off in the middle of this exercise. I learned long ago that it was ok to doze off.

After about five weeks of this daily hypnosis, the painful catching and snapping had stopped. I asked the doctor for another x-ray session which revealed that, indeed, the spur had rounded off and become smooth, looking very much like the button on a mushroom. Say what you will, I contend that self-hypnosis can create a healing mind-over-matter environment.

Bicycles and Bees

Perhaps the worst pain of all is that of a parent confronted with an injured child. Two incidents come to mind that illustrate this allegation.



We lived on Sunny Drive on Tucson's east side in the '70s. Son John had a keen bicycle that he rode everywhere in the neighborhood as well as to the convenience store, the school, and – believe it – the swap-meet. Ah yes, the swap meet. From an early age Johnny loved to visit the swap meet that set up essentially across the main entrance to our

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neighborhood. Saturday mornings, he'd be found combing the aisles of trade looking for some gem worth more than whatever item he had brought along. Eldest son John was a serial trader. He had an amazing story to tell about his trading prowess almost every weekend. He took off on his bike one Saturday morning at about 8:00am with a beat-up old Sony portable am-fm radio. He traded it for a pair of desk-top stereo speakers. Those were parlayed into a box of old 45rpm records with the machine to play them. Johnny came home about noon to leave his bike and take the little red wagon back to the swap meet. He returned with a stereo complete with 100 watt amp, turntable, am-fm stereo tuner, and studio-quality speakers. This young man was the king!

We were talking about bicycles, weren't we. Sorry.

One evening, there was a knock at the front door. I got up from my perch on the living room couch and answered it. There, standing next to a friend was Johnny, with his hand covering his mouth, looking shocked. His friend said that Johnny had crashed into the culvert at the entrance to the neighborhood. The two had been out taking a last ride of the day. He had helped Johnny bring his bicycle home and parked it in the carport. The boy left just as Johnny mumbled something through his fingers that I didn't understand. Asked, "What's up?" poor John uncovered his mouth and literally gushed a stream of blood. What a shock! He covered his mouth again.

Stoically, I said we should take a look at this and guided him to the main bathroom. I asked him to do what he could to clean up enough so we could see what was damaged.

With him busy trying to clean up, I took a wet towel back to the front doorway and was cleaning up the blood spattered on the floor when Johnny's mother appeared, asking what was

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going on. She had been in the kitchen. At the same time, the boy came out of the bathroom holding a wash cloth over this mouth. She asked again, "What's going on?" He just looked soulfully at her and removed the wash cloth. Claudette gasped, her hand automatically covering her mouth. And he mumbled, "I crashed."

About that time ol' dad's Boy Scout training kicked into high gear. It was time to get the injured boy to the hospital.

Johnny had a broken upper jaw and was missing five teeth. He was accompanied from the emergency room at TMC to the radiology department where the pros took charge. From there I went back to the ER where I collapsed from shock on one of the gurneys. After some orange juice, I was told that they had called an oral surgeon and were busy prepping Johnny for the procedure to repair his broken jaw.

After that, it was sort of a blur, but I recall stopping at the accident site and searching for Johnny's missing teeth. I found three, but it was too late, the surgery was done and it was the wee small hours of the morning. I went home, and Claudette went to the hospital, leaving me to care for daughter Janet.



Janet fussed and worried about her brother until the hospital released him to come home.

On the other hand, Johnny didn't worry much about his sister a few years later when she took a header over the handle-bars of her bike on a back road.

For no reason I can recall I was following daughter Janet as she rode her bicycle full-tilt down a blacktop road that turned

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to the right and became a dirt road. The thoroughfare was a short cut used to bypass a cemetery near the townhouse we moved into late in 1979. I think I was going somewhere on business and she was doing that kid-on-the-bike thing trying to beat dad to the intersection.

At any rate ... where the blacktop quit and the dirt road began was a dip – the kind made by vehicular traffic when it's wet.



Janet's front wheel hit that dip at light speed, stopped short, and she went flying over the handle-bars into the dirt. She hit the dirt on both knees and both palms, grinding dirt and gravel into her skin. Fortunately, nothing else was hurt except her pride. I picked her up and helped her into the pick-up then put her bike in the back. We went

home where, after cleaning with warm soapy water, it became clear that some patching was in order.

We have to change subjects here to get the bees into the story.

Some years ago I met a beekeeper – an apiarist, as they call themselves. He was a good guy who managed hundreds of white-painted wooden beehives. He transported the bees on a forty-foot flatbed trailer to farms and orchards all over the southwest, where they would pollinate crops.

There were other apiarists across the Southwest and they competed for air-space above adjacent growing areas. This resulted in what are called bee wars. Honeybees are territorial and the more aggressive breeds will kill to maintain their territories. My friend bred Russian bees. His strain was very aggressive, but it would not attack its keepers. He said the

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only strain more aggressive than the Russian bees was a new strain from South America that attacked any living thing that violated its territory. This Africanized strain had escaped captivity and at that time was slowly working its way toward North America. My friend's Russian bees could hold their own in any bee war, but at the time he worried what would happen if the Africanized bees made it to the Southwest.



One day he was making modifications to the frame of the flatbed bee carrier so he could carry more hives. After welding extra braces to the rear, he stood up too soon and lacerated the top of his head, creating a new part separated by a bright red crease. He cursed, grabbed his handkerchief and used it to quell the blood dripping down his forehead. I figured we'd be heading to the hospital for some stitches but we walked over to his honey processing building instead.

Honey is created by the bees and is stored in the honeycombs located in their hives. The honey is harvested by removing the top of the hive and taking out the honeycomb racks. The racks are mounted on a jig that can be made to spin inside a large tub. After a hot knife removes the wax covering the tiny cell tops in the honeycomb, the jig is spun and the honey flows out for processing. After any residual pieces of wax are filtered out of the raw honey all that's left is to bottle and label it.

My friend the apiarist reached into the processing tub that had recently held raw honey, scooped up a gooey dollop with his fingers, and applied it to the cut. He used his handkerchief as a bandage to protect the wound. I asked if that was all he was going to do and he said yes. The properties of the honey would

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make the wound heal quickly and leave little or no scar. I saw him a week later and there was no evidence of injury.

Now then ... let's get back to Janet and her bicycle. Since she had injuries to both palms and both knees that were almost identical, I thought it might be interesting to see how they would heal under different circumstances. Claudette objected, but Janet was up for it, so we put honey on her left-side wounds and Mercurochrome on the right side. Four days later Janet's left side was completely healed and her right hand and knee still had scabs. My friend the beekeeper was spot-on! Both Johnny and Claudette were duly impressed.

Root Canal 1982

The last time I recall, when almost anybody went to the dentist, a thorough cleaning was mandated. Then a second appointment was made to get the work done. I have always thought that this was a scam because I remember as a kid a cleaning was done first, followed by any pressing dental work. That changed some time ago to a cleaning followed by an assistant's lecture on dental care, usually followed by x-rays. Now, it's just cleaning and with luck some x-rays.

I managed to escape the routine raping of my wallet one day in the mid '80s when a toothache from somewhere in the outer limits occurred. They say the only thing more painful than an infected eye-tooth is child birth. Suffice it to quote Bill Cosby, who described child-birth as equivalent to having one's lower lip pulled up over the face and tied behind the neck.

Shortly after I was certain my face was about to fall off, a visitation was granted to the dentist's office. As soon as I cleared the main door and they had my name, I was whisked into an examination room where a dental assistant clipped a

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napkin under my chin and prepared a tray for cleaning. She asked me to open wide so she could do a good cleaning and I said no. Don't ever say no to a dental assistant! They get very uppity. After all it's their job! You have to take it to the top very quickly or there will be hell to pay!

Having side-stepped the cleaning successfully, I waited for an eternity. Doctor asked where it hurt. I pointed and he tapped on it with a pointy dental tool and asked, "This one?". My man apologized and said the tooth was badly infected and would require a root canal without anaesthetic. Provided the pain went away sometime soon, I agreed. What was I thinking? No pain-killer? Oh, my God!

The dentist grabbed his trusty drill and very gently carved out the top of the infected tooth as the assistant bathed it with cooling water. He stopped for a few seconds and said he wanted me to say when it started to feel warm. Finally, the time came and he picked up a syringe. "This is it," I thought to myself as he removed the needle from the tool.

Ever so gingerly, he placed the sharp end of the needle on the top of the tooth and tapped very lightly on the opposite end. As the needle broke though, there was a sudden release that felt a lot like taking a dump. The pus oozing out of the wound didn't smell much better, either. With the needle back on the syringe, the pain-killer worked in an instant. Ahhhhh ...

At that point it went pretty fast – he drilled out the nerve and filled the resultant cavity with an antibiotic. A temporary cap was glued on, a cast was taken and I was told to come back in a week. He also wrote a prescription for an oral antibiotic. The next week a pin and a new permanent cap were installed using epoxy glue. Somehow, there must be a moral here, but I have absolutely no clue what it might be - because neither God nor my dad had anything to say.

Now, About Pootsie



Decker was tired of caring for his dog what with having to pick up after her and all. For some reason he had to move to a place where they didn't allow pets, so he was forced to get rid of her. He used to bring her into the TV shop we had in the Tucson Truly Nolen building where we would fawn over her and scratch her little ears. On the day he had to move he came into the shop, plunked the little animal down on the counter and said, "If you want

her, she's yours." We took her.

Pootsie was less than a year old, but not by much. She had the squat stature of a miniature Dashund but she looked like a black toy Doberman with short legs, right down to the tan-tipped eyebrows, feet, ears and tail. She was a pretty little thing and she liked her new family.

The kids just loved her. As this yarn was being spun, Claudette noted that Pootsie was probably the Thayer family's most-photographed pet.

Pootsie's pal was Tiger, a Main Coon Cat that out-lived her. Pootsie made it to seventeen years. Tiger was twenty-one when he passed, so we'll depart here to write about the cat some.

I was out on a house-call when Tiger became a member of the

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Thayer clan. There was a bunch of little kittens hiding behind the living room couch in the home where I was fixing a TV.



After I finished the job, the owner asked if I would like to take a kittie home for free. Of course, the answer was yes. We moved the couch out from the wall and a passel of puddies went flying in all directions – except one. He was the runt, just a tiny little thing. He stood his ground, though - didn't move an inch. I bent down behind the couch and gently picked him up. I was sure he was the one I wanted because he was so little compared to his

brothers and sisters. Yep, he was it.

The children were delighted with the cat. I had to teach them to feed him. Turns out he was only five weeks old, not quite weaned, and had to be fed with an eye-dropper. That changed in short order to one of Janet's doll-feeding bottles. It had a nipple on it. The little kitty went after that baby-bottle with a vengeance, so the kids named him Tiger.

It wasn't long before he was introduced to a saucer with warm milk in it. He would lick for a few seconds and get some in his little nose, and then he'd sneeze with milk flying every-which-way! It took a few days, but Tiger learned to drink milk from a saucer like a champ. As he grew, he learned to drink the left over half-and-half or milk from my breakfast cereal dish, a habit that lasted his whole life.

Not long after he was completely weaned he was introduced to cat food for kittens. That began a very long life as a sort-of poster-kitty for Purina Cat Chow - except for one problem that

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turned up in the early '80s when he was about ten. One day when Claudette got home from work at the beauty shop she noticed him digging a hole and trying to pee to no effect. She watched as he repeated this several times, trying to tell her that something was wrong. She went in the townhouse and called the veterinarian who said to bring him in right away. Ol' Tiger just couldn't pee! Turned out it was a condition that occurs with male cats that eat just solid food. An older cat's renal system creates crystals that clog up his peepee. After a visit to the vet, the cure - as well as the key to a long life - is a daily serving of soft food along with the animal's daily crunchies. Tiger was over two decades old when he finally left us.

We were writing about Pootsie a while back. Remember? She and Tiger were pals but they sure didn't start out that way. When Pootsie was brought home from the TV shop, she was really interested in Tiger. Himself, however, wasn't too sure about this new animal that could look him straight in the eye. As a matter of fact they were both about the same size. When Pootsie got within a couple of feet, Tiger growled like a dog. No, really! He had a guttural growl like a German Shepherd! He probably picked that up from Fred. The German Shepherd that lived next door was named Fred. Well, we cured the insecurity between the two pets with baby talk and closeness. It wasn't long before they played like little children - what with running and jumping and chasing around and all. Claudette said she was glad Fred never taught Tiger to bark!

Pootsie was an adorable little creature. She was one of those pets that would show the burglars where the family jewels were stashed. Visitors were not just welcomed with a wagging tail - the dog's whole body wagged! One thing she didn't do was jump up on visitors, as do so many house pets. She was very good at sitting near or in front of visitors and would hold still to be petted. In short, she was polite - a trait certainly not learned from me!

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We installed a doggie door in the dining room wall of the home we bought after the townhouse. It was just the right size for both animals – about five inches by seven-and-a-half. The new house had a graveled side yard about ten feet wide and the full length of the house, just right for a Pootsie dog. The kids and I built the little girl a dog-house that allowed her to have shade in the summer and shelter in the winter. She was very possessive of her little yard. If she was inside the house when another animal happened along, she'd blast through the doggie-door nose first, barking and carrying on as if someone was coming to cart off all her goods. If Tiger was the culprit, the old cat would pay no attention at all. Pootsie would come to a screeching halt and sniff Tiger's butt.

Pootsie and the kids were inseparable. She was always at the heels of the last one in the house. And she slept with them. I never did figure out how the sleeping arrangements were made each night. When John and Janet were at school, Pootsie waited patiently in her yard for them to come home. When she spotted one of the kids showing up, she would blast through her little Pootsie door and make a beeline for the kitchen door, through which all but visitors entered. She loved her brother and sister.

My sister Mandy had some sort of sheep-dog, a regular-size breed that had herding in its lineage. Although Betsy failed to herd things, she was a fast learner and picked up tricks and games quickly. Betsy loved to play "catch the Frisbee" and she was very good at it. Whether one was launched twenty yards down a football field or just a few feet down the sidewalk, she would go for it on the fly. Betsy also would bark on command. And if you asked her to sneeze, she would!

Betsy's antics impressed me quite a bit. I wondered if Pootsie could be taught to do those nifty tricks. There is one word that

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applies. No. One need only understand that Pootsie had a huge stubborn streak caused by her Dashund lineage. Frisbees were too big. Barking was for intruders. Sneezing? Maybe.

Pootsie had a few tricks already up her sleeve, developed back in her early long-haired hippy days. During Claudette's 35th birthday party someone in the back yard gave her a taste of marijuana. (They were smoking doobies out there!) She got sleepy, wandered into the house and crashed right smack-dab in the middle of the living room. Mind you, there were at least thirty people at this party and they tended to roam. Pootsie was right in the glide-path! In time she sat up, looked around the living room and promptly fell over sideways. Gone.

After work one day we were sitting in the living room chewing the fat with our TV tech and a young neighbor friend. At the time, we were all recreational pot-smokers. Rick was not only a good TV tech, he was also a good friend. Bruce was also a good friend, and trusted. Bruce had taken his Levi jacket off and tucked it between the legs of his chair. As we chatted, Pootsie slowly and quietly sidled up to Bruce's jacket. Nobody was really paying any attention until Claudette noticed that Pootsie had an open baggie between her paws. Bruce had put it in the breast pocket of his jacket and Pootsie had quietly retrieved it. She was very busy eating little bits and pieces of Bruce's stash. No doubt about it: Pootsie turned out to be one of the original dooper-dogs!

It has been a Thayer tradition, from time immemorial, to open one present in the morning before Christmas breakfast. Tradition has it that breakfast consists of grapefruit halves with crushed candy cane pieces on top, followed by scrambled cottage cheese eggs, bacon and broiled peach-halves sprinkled with cinnamon. Champaign is always optional for the adults. After breakfast, the remaining presents are doled out by the eldest male adult in the room.

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Christmas of 1978 was fun. There were lots of presents for the kids and even some for Tiger and Pootsie. The family had just finished breakfast when the 'phone rang. It was Rick. He said there was a present hidden up in the tree. One of the kids retrieved a foot-long package containing a sampling of stems from some of Tucson's Very Best Historic Holy Cow Home-grown Goodness. It was a very fine Christmas for all, but in particular, the Poots!

Pootsie learned a number of interesting tricks, some actually on purpose. She took a liking to Ritz crackers and learned to roll-over when a Ritz was the reward. The little dog learned to sit on command, and to retrieve things when told "go get it!" It took immeasurable patience and hundreds of crackers, but little girl finally learned to sneeze when asked. There was never any amount of bribery, however, that convinced her to bark on command.

One afternoon after we had moved to Lee Street, I was sitting in my favorite chair sharing a family favorite snack: Ritz crackers with hard salami, kosher dill slices, Kraft extra-sharp cheddar cheese and Mezzetta Golden Greek Pepperoncini with French's classic yellow mustard on the side. Just for fun, I offered a tiny bit of Pepperoncini to the Poots. She took it, bared her teeth, curled her upper lip and ate the thing! I had been working on a Bud, so I got a saucer from the kitchen and poured some of the beer into it. When I offered it to Pootsie, she lapped it all up. That was the beginning, quite by accident, of a fondness for Pepperoncici and Budweiser on the part of our little trickster puppy Pootsie.

And there was Tiger

Tiger, Pootsie's good buddy, did not age gracefully. He grew to be a formidable force in the neighborhood and even though

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he had been “fixed”, he lorded over his property like royalty. During his prime, Mister Man weighed-in at eighteen pounds, not that unusual for a Long-haired Main Coon Cat. The rest of the neighborhood’s feline residents cut a wide path around our big ol’ guy. Such a foreboding presence, yet such a love.

Tiger took to napping in one of the trees on the property. He slept very much like the big African cats do ... sort-of hanging two legs on one side of a branch and two on the other side. Safe enough, one would think, unless one is an active dreamer. Tiger conjured up dreams the likes of which no animal in its right mind would dream! Heaven knows what he was fighting with or chasing after at the time, but one day he fell out of his tree and broke his leg. He was carted off to the Vet, who operated and put him back together ... sort-of. Old cats, like old people, don’t heal well when it comes to bones. His right rear leg finally had to be amputated because it just wouldn’t heal. It was a sad day. The Vet said not to worry, ol’ Tiger would mend very quickly and his remaining leg would end up looking like Arnold Schwarznegger!

All during Tiger’s trials and tribulations his buddy Pootsie watched, worried and fussed over him constantly. I never saw a dog clean a cat like it was a puppy before, but that’s what happened regularly. I’m relatively certain that no cat ever had such a loyal and caring friend as the Poots.

Tiger recovered and true to the vet’s prediction developed a leg on him that Arnold Schwarzenegger could brag about. As he got stronger, Tiger began to hop into the kitchen, emulating Pootsie whenever he heard someone at the door. Whenever I entered the house it was always with a cheery “Hello!” While Pootsie spun around in excited circles (as little dogs are wont to do), Tiger took to trying to speak. Remember, he could growl because of Fred, the next-door German Shepherd. He

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tried valiantly to copy my hello with a “heh, heh, heh” and every now and then would spit out a “row.”



It didn't take long for the whole family to recognize what ol' Tiger was up to and everyone egged him on enthusiastically. The kids would cheer when he came close to “heh-roww” and they went nuts the first time he actually coughed out a tentative “Helllll-low!” He improved quickly and eventually got so good at it we sent a VHS video tape of his antics to *America's Funniest Videos*. After a period of extended daily practice, Tiger managed to add a series of barks before his usual greeting, sounding something like “erf erf erf - hell-*loe!*” Now, admit it - as animal stories go, that one's hard to beat!

More about Betsy

Back a few pages ago we were talking about my sister Mandy's sheep-dog – the one that excelled at playing Frisbee. It turns out that Betsy wasn't just a plain old sheep-dog. According to an old family friend she was a McNab Shepherd, known for its gate, herding instincts, heel nipping and unique appearance. Betsy lived for 17 years - excellent for a medium-size dog. Her predecessor, a Pointer, also lived for seventeen years - quite a remarkable feat. My sister said she thought our friend was pulling her leg about the McNab breed. But when she decided she needed a companion who could always go boating with her (as Betsy always did), she realized, “the only animals that interested me were German Shorthaired Pointers and dogs with floppy ears, short hair and 2 black points on their eyebrows.” Mandy didn't want another pointer. “They

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are bigger than I want and extremely bouncy,” she said. “It is like owning Tigger on steroids!” It didn’t seem like there were many McNab Shepherds in Arizona, so just out of idle curiosity Mandy went hunting on line. To make a long story short, my sister located a McNab breeder in California and found herself another Betsy! That’s a nice end to a sad story.

Pets are Family

One of the reasons older folks don’t like to replace pets that have been close is mainly because of the trauma that naturally comes with the departure of any loved one. Pets are very much like children to older people and the occasion of their passing bears little difference from losing a child. Replacing a pet brings at least two guttural feelings to the table – grief and guilt. Grief comes with the realization that the animal has moved on to another plane, “that place not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.” Guilt comes with any proposition, however kind, contemplating replacement of that gentle little soul. There is no replacing the attachments people and their pets develop over the years. Adding a new life to a family, on the other hand, shouldn’t be looked upon as replacing a child. Remember, a kitten or puppy will become family as it grows.

So it goes with the Thayer family’s animals over the years. Mandy’s two dogs lived loving lives that brought joy into her life – and she will have years of companionship and joy with her new puppy. Brother Bill’s family has also had animals (including a horse) from the beginning of time! Johnny and Janet grew up with cats and dogs and loved each of them like they were kin. They had hamsters that escaped or disappeared or were eaten by predators. One of the hamsters even had babies! The kids were practically raised by Buzzy and Tiger. Today, each has house pets of their own.

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Claudette and I have had kitties from the third month of our marriage. We buried Tiger in Globe after twenty-one years as a close buddy. We picked up a stray at the country club that we called Miss Kitty. She developed a tumor after five years with the family and had to be put down. We replaced the girl with Murray and Misty, who were obtained from a litter of two males and two females born at the Vets office. Their mommy was the “house cat”, the animal available for blood transfusions and companionship. Our son John left his cat, Baby, with us. She ran away and we think the coyotes got her. Although, both Murray and Misty had all of their shots as required, Murray got sick with the equivalent of AIDS and sadly, had to be put down just two days before his 12th birthday. Misty was fifteen years old December 8th, 2013 and was still going strong as of this writing. Our animals have all been close family members and each was treated in every way possible as if they were our children. No doubt about it - having pets is a good thing.

Coccidioidomycosis

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *“Coccidioides is a fungus found in the soil of dry, low rainfall areas. It is endemic (native and common) in many areas of the southwestern United States, Mexico, Central and South America. Coccidioidomycosis, also known as Valley Fever, is a common cause of pneumonia in endemic areas. At least 30% – 60% of people who live in an endemic region are exposed to the fungus at some point during their lives. In most people the infection will go away on its own, but for people who develop severe infections or chronic pneumonia, medical treatment is necessary. Certain groups of people are at higher risk of developing severe disease.”*

It seemed to take forever for the doctors to figure out what

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was going wrong with me. In the beginning I had a quiet, intermittent, non-productive cough – kinda like a dry throat. Although there was nothing to tie the two symptoms together, I slowly began to lose weight. When I mustered out of the Marine Corps in 1964 I weighed in at 175 pounds, not fat by any means. I started to worry that there was a problem when I stepped on the scales one morning in early 1972 and saw the number 145 staring back at me. I was not a weight-watcher and seldom hit the scales for any reason, so this had me concerned. I started stepping on the scales every few days and saw the pounds peeling off quickly.

Claudette was in the loop and expressed concern that maybe I should see a doctor. So, an appointment was made with our family physician, who ordered up a battery of tests at the Tucson Thomas-Davis Clinic. They gave me a complete physical with blood-work, x-rays - including upper and lower GI and chest pictures, sputum samples and urinalysis. This took three weeks. It was disconcerting when there was no diagnosis and - no prognosis. They could find nothing wrong! Our family MD suggested that there might be another physician on the other end of town that might be able to help. He referred to an Osteopath on Tucson's north-east side. The new doctor poured over all the information created during my examinations and tests at Thomas-Davis. He observed that there were two tests that had not been done, both of them skin tests. He got two kits out of his stash and injected material from one just under the skin on one forearm. Then a second batch was injected under the skin of the other forearm. He said to come back in three days.

My right arm was itching at the injection site the day of the follow-up appointment. The doctor said he had administered one test for Tuberculosis and one for Coccidioidomycosis – Cocci for short. He said I did not have TB because there was no reaction at the site on my left arm. Then he remarked that if

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the blood test for Valley Fever had been included at Thomas Davis the diagnosis would have been made weeks earlier. With that, a quick blood draw was done in the doctor's office and sent to the State for confirmation.

I was admonished to go home and do nothing. The cure, he said, was one of two things – surgery or rest. He liked rest and explained why. Valley Fever is caused by a fungus growing in the lungs. The fungus displaces many lung areas where Oxygen is exchanged, thus depriving the body of adequate amounts of this precious environmental gas. Lacking Oxygen, the body uses its fat reserves for energy creating weight loss and very low energy levels in the victim. The doctor insisted that I stay in bed or on the couch doing nothing but reading or watching TV. He said that inactivity would starve the fungus of the Carbon Dioxide normally produced by an active human. As the fungus dies out, he said, the lungs would clear and normal function would return. When I asked how long it would take, he said between three and six months. The State confirmed the positive blood test and I spent the ensuing three months couchin' it and slowly putting on weight again.

During the recuperation period we visited our family doctor more-or-less regularly. The pounds weren't going on as quickly as I thought they should so I asked what could be done to gain back, and maintain, the weight I had lost. He suggested that I have a glass or two of wine before dinner. It would increase my appetite and make me sleep better come bed-time. That's back when wine-in-a-box came out. Not only did it fit in the fridge, but also you could buy a gallon of it at a time! We settled on Rhine as the wine of choice – it's a sweet drink with a nice bouquet. I packed on thirty-some-odd pounds during that period, and I think that's when I became an alcoholic!

One nice part about Valley Fever – if there is one ... once

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you've licked it, there is little likelihood of its return. I really got into smoked oysters, hard salami, extra sharp Tillamook cheese, ABC's Wide World of Sports and the Johnny Carson Show during that period. However, I don't think I'd ever want to repeat that period in the early '70s.

Genora's Peter Pan

During the writing of this piece I relied on my sister Mandy to proof-read and suggest changes to my submissions. She was a tremendous help, coming with great credentials. We are both the spawn of a family of educators. She was the only one of the siblings who became a teacher and she spent many decades as a dedicated (and decorated) educator. After a perusal of my submission(s) on pets, Mandy reminded me about some early Thayer family dog stories.

Pete was an English Bull Dog. He was purebred and came with papers – Genora's Peter Pan, they said. Purebred English Bull dogs come with two kinds of tails: bobbed or broken. Tail-bobbing is common to many breeds, but breaking appears to be something unique to Bull dogs. The animal's tail is broken to one side about an inch from its backside, then broken in the opposite direction another inch further, forming an "S" after it heals. While it seems barbaric, cropping or breaking is not that unusual in purebred circles. Consider if you will, Cockers' bobbed tails and Dobermans' cropped ears. Ol' Peter dog was the unwitting victim of a long tradition of tail-breaking that made him a proud, papered, one-of-a-kind English Bull dog!

Dad was the Recreation Director of Monterey, California. He had made many great connections as the Recreation Director of Petaluma before moving the family to Monterey. The names of those connections came along. I don't know who

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brought up the subject of dogs, but somehow Pop connected with a breeder near Santa Rosa. One Saturday in the early '50s the family was packed into the station wagon, along with a picnic basket full of goodies and a bunch of comic books, for a weekend jaunt to northern California. He said we were going to visit friends in Petaluma and then pick up a dog in Santa Rosa, north of there.

The weather was nice – central California nice – cool in the morning and warm with ocean breezes in the afternoon. The ride from a kid's perspective was uneventful. From Monterey we drove to Salinas and up highway 101 through Gilroy and San Jose, then via the “Great Highway” along the San Francisco beaches past Fleishacker Zoo and the Presidio, and over the Golden Gate bridge. Entering Marin County via the Waldo Tunnel, we traveled northeast around the bay, through Novato and north to Petaluma, the Egg Capital of the World!

The family visited with several families in Petaluma before staying overnight at the Clark's. (Payson was the guy who told my sister that her dog was a McNab Shepherd. Miriam Clark had been my third grade teacher.) We kids camped out in our sleeping bags in the family room on the second floor at the head of the stairs. Up there, we got to fiddle with a giant music box that played big steel disks punched full of holes. We wound the giant spring in the machine with the crank on its side and we played all of some two-dozen discs that were with it. It was nifty until we were forced to bed down for the night.

We lit out for Santa Rosa on Sunday morning. It was foggy and Pop drove carefully until it cleared eight or ten miles out of town. On the outskirts of Santa Rosa we stopped at what appeared to be stables. It was warm in the car while we waited as Pop went inside. When he came out, he had a big funny-looking dog with him on a leash. The thing had a jutting lower jaw populated with a row of tiny white teeth in front and two

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big fangs on each side, bowed front legs, huge shoulders, and a tiny little butt with a crooked tail. And there was spittle drooling out of its mouth! Then our dear old dad announced that this ungainly creature was our new dog named Pete.

Genora's Peter Pan was a pup, but not a puppy. He was a juvenile, more than likely eight or nine months old. The ride home in the station wagon with him on board was indescribable. English Bull Dogs have pug noses that don't pass air inward easily so they are mouth-breathers. In addition, dogs cool themselves when they encounter warm climates by panting. When English Bull Dogs pant, they drool. So now the picture is painted!

We children already had the seat in the middle of the car lowered to accommodate our lounging on the sleeping bags. We had our comic books scattered all around that landscape. Comic books were required fare for kids on lengthy trips back in the day. At any rate, three children ranging in age from four to ten are very much akin to a mob in the back of a station wagon. Add a drooling dog into the mix without a towel and you have chaos! Do you have any idea what an Archie comic book looks like when it's covered with dog slobber?

Well, Pete stopped drooling when we made the north bay and somehow we arrived home in Monterey intact. It was cooler there. We unloaded the car and set the camping gear out to dry. Then Pete was introduced to his new home. There was never any spring wound as tightly as that dog when he got a look at the back yard! He just went sproing! What a sight. He ran all over the place, sniffing the flowers, peeing on the bushes, jumping up and down, and drooling with excitement. Peter Pan had arrived.

After he had lived with us a while, it became obvious that Pete needed a dog house. You see, he snored. He slept with Billy

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and me in our end of the house. And he snored. Oh, God! He snored like a diesel truck running down a hill with the jake brake fully engaged! Peter dog slept on a pillow in a basket near the TV and it's beyond me how he got any sleep himself. The dog house we built for him was, as the one built for little Pootsie decades later, constructed by the loving hands of his family. What we found out afterward, was that even when he was in his little house in the back yard, we could still hear him snore. Pop moved the dog house to the furthest corner of the back yard up against the fence. Didn't make a whole lot of difference. We got used to it. Don't know about the neighbors.

You didn't want to play ball with Pete if you had a problem with dog spit. He was always hell-bent to hang onto the ball as long as possible. He'd eat the covers off softballs and deflate basketballs with a mere shake of his massive head. And he looked very strange hanging off the tether-ball as it slowly unwound from its pole!

Peter dog would eat a hole in the (recently patched) redwood fence in the back yard so he could make an escape and visit the assortment of construction sites in the area. The workers humored him and shared their lunches with him.

He became such a familiar sight that, if they found him waddling down the street somewhere, the cops would pick him up and drop him off at the Recreation Department, which was conveniently located across the street from the Police Department.

Then, there was the scary incident involving a neighboring toddler who pulled repeatedly on Pete's crooked tail. The dog spun around and barked at the child the first time. The second time his tail was pulled, he spun and growled. The third time, as the neighbors and the Thayers watched aghast, he spun, grabbed the baby by the wrist, walked him over to his mommy

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and unceremoniously spit him out. There was a huge sigh of relief as it sunk in that there was not a mark on that child ... just drool.

My mother banned Pete from begging at the dinner table and made him stay in the washroom while we ate. It wasn't so much the begging, but rather the gas. They called them SBDs.

He wasn't allowed in the living room when the folks were entertaining, either. Same reason.

Sadly, after many great years, Pete died from heart failure in his little house out in the left rear of the back yard, far away from his family – all alone in the middle of a very dark night.

Hughes was a Union Shop

Following the management position at University of Arizona, I worked as a multidisciplinary engineer at Hughes Aircraft Company's Missile Division Plant on Tucson's far south side. Hired initially as a "job shopper" in the mid '80s as a planner, I secured the job six months later and over a period of years learned the Manufacturing, Industrial, Product Quality and Ordinance Safety disciplines of missile-building. There were advancements and awards along the way.

Eventually, I had the responsibility of caring for a couple of production lines on the main Phoenix assembly floor.

Hughes Aircraft was a Union Shop. Generally speaking, the Union Contract required difficulties on the line to be solved using the line's Union Steward as a go-between. Most of the Stewards, however, worked closely with their engineers so the assembly workers and engineers could work shoulder-to-

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shoulder. This informal arrangement between the engineers and the Union Stewards made the work smooth and efficient.

We all know that every crate has its bad apple. So it is with Union Stewards. I was fortunate enough to get the swing shift for a few months. The mandatory work breaks precipitated call-outs for pizza in the wee small hours and camaraderie was the rule on the floor, rather than the exception. For a while the assembly workers on one of my lines fell victim to the “rules” at the hands of their Steward. She insisted that her people not speak with me unless she was present. Whenever I had to make a change to the Work Instructions, she’d require a conference over the changes while the line went on hold.

Though planning (Work Instruction) changes were my exclusive responsibility, I worked closely with my assembly workers, the Stewards and other engineers trying to find the most efficient and effective ways to manufacture the highest-quality products on the Hughes assembly floor.

I’m certain the Steward on my Swing Shift line was aware of my responsibilities, but she insisted on holding up production at the drop of a hat. For instance, should an assembler run low on solder and be needing more soon, she would stop the line until it was delivered. It didn’t matter that there was enough to last until break time or shift change. It was always something and her people confided (during breaks, of course) that they wished they could get her off their team.

There was a problem one night. It was a tiny one that I believe was settled on the line – so small I don’t even recall what it was. At any rate, the Steward complained to the Union that I was causing problems on her line and she didn’t want me running her show behind her back.

It doesn’t matter where you work ... it always runs downhill;

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in this case to my manager. Morning found me being interrogated for allegedly interfering with the Union Steward's duties. I had the greatest confidence in my manager. He was experienced, competent, educated and – most of all – one of my best friends. We sat sipping coffee at a long table in his office with the Union Representative and my immediate supervisor. There was no write-up at the time, but the outcome of the meeting would determine whether or not one would be forthcoming.

The boss laid it right out there in front of God and everybody. I was accused of causing trouble on the Swing Shift by failing to cooperate with the duly elected Steward assigned to my line. He asked the Union Rep to please elaborate and be specific. All the Rep said was that the Steward didn't want or need any engineers on her Swing Shift. That was it, in a nutshell.

My supervisor stuck up for me and noted that I was one of the best engineers he had and that I was chosen to work that line because there were some kinks that needed to be worked out in the planning and the line-flow. My manager noted that of all the people on his staff, I was probably the easiest to work with, the one who interacted most easily with management, supervision, engineers, Union leaders, assembly workers and the regular staff.

When my turn came, I explained the rules as laid down by the Steward as I understood them and suggested that maybe she just wanted to work the day shift. Well, after we all shook hands and went back to our regular work, that's exactly what happened. My gal traded shifts with the day Steward (who preferred the Swing Shift anyway) and I went on with my function as a support engineer.

I think it was a good day.

The Eyes Have It, Terrible

Hughes Aircraft was a great place to work. It was especially great for me because I was allowed to work more-or-less autonomously. In other words, I was allowed to work on my own with little or no supervision.

It began with the employment interview. As a “job-shopper” looking for employment in an engineering environment, I was given a one-page Engineering Drawing and a package of Work Instructions that had used the drawing as its guide. The interviewer asked me to compare the two documents and point out any mistakes between the engineering and the planning. Well, I poured over the Planning (Work Instructions) using a yellow highlighter to mark each planning statement and its corresponding engineering requirement. When the task was done, I had discovered seven errors in the Planning and one in the Engineering. The interviewer was floored! He said the best Product Quality Engineer in the factory had missed them all! Well, I was hired on the spot. My background checks and clearance had already been done when I signed with the Headhunter so I was asked to start the next day. The interviewer turned out to be the manager of the group to which I was attached. The next day he gave me the folder (containing the Engineering Drawings and the preliminary Planning) for the assembly I had critiqued during the employment interview. That was my first project on my own - with unfettered access to all associated employees, engineers and managers.

Some while later, I was assigned to a “Tiger Team” consisting of two people from the Tucson Plant Site – a Product Quality Manager and me - and about twenty other people from Canoga Park, California. Our function was to manufacture and deliver the first four Phoenix C-Plus Missiles, which were seriously past-due at the time. The team and its members were given top management authority to do “whatever it takes” to expedite

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the manufacturing and delivery process. I was the only Manufacturing Engineer on the team and was charged with creation and implementation of the Planning as well as problems associated with the assemblies. The Product Quality Manager and I obtained the assistance of other Tucson engineers to help our group. We had the best Manufacturing, Industrial, Product Quality and Ordinance Safety Engineers in the Tucson Plant, as well as top management, at our beck and call for the duration.

For a good part of my tenure at Hughes I had a very dark tint in my glasses to help with the beginnings of cataracts in both eyes. The glasses relieved the condition that made light seem brighter than actuality, even indoors. At the time I was six-foot-five and weighed close to 190 pounds ... behind dark glasses, a very imposing sight to some.

One of my assemblies needed a Planning change one day and I went to my desk to try to locate the folder for it. The folder was checked out. Some other engineer had it so I put out the call. Nobody had the folder. It was lost. When you're dealing with Classified information, you just don't lose critical parts of it. It's an unwritten rule! Using the authority granted as a member of the Tiger Team, I put out a call to toss the factory to find the missing folder. Thousands of employees looked high and low for that thing and never found it! That meant I had to do the unforgivable: Get a new folder made up.

Well, I went to the Data Center and put in a request to make up a replacement folder. The young lady that took the order told me in - no uncertain terms - that replacement folders are way off limits. I explained that the factory had been tossed to no avail and the only solution was to create a replacement. She was intransigent so I explained that I had full authority to order a new folder and asked that she honor my request. Again, she refused. So, I leaned over the counter, close behind

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those intimidating shades, and ever so quietly whispered to her that I would be back in five minutes and would be expecting that new folder to be ready.

Hughes' Tucson factory at the time was one of the nation's largest manufacturing facilities under one roof at some 2.1 million square feet. I wasn't a hundred yards down the hallway when my beeper went off – it was in the vibrate mode and startled me some. I hit the closest desk, in the Product Quality bullpen, and called the number on my beeper. It was my boss. He asked, "What in the world did you say to that woman in the Data Center?" I told him I said my replacement folder had better be ready when I get back. He told me she was crying and I needed to get back there and straighten things out pretty quick. Noooo problem! The Data Center supervisor was waiting for me at the counter with a new folder. I explained that I didn't mean to scare the clerk and that I wanted to apologize. She invited me in. Around the corner was this pretty little thing with great big tears streaming down her face. I said "Ooooh" and reached out to her. She accepted a big hug and my sincere apologies for making her cry. She smiled and I said I'd try to act less imposing next time. Right there in front of the whole Data Center staff her supervisor exclaimed, "You're terrible, Ted." And everybody laughed.

Large factories are very much like small towns. Rumors fly like the wind. That being the case, it was only a matter of minutes before some ten-thousand employees (including my boss) were calling me "Terrible Ted", a moniker that I proudly carry to this very day!

We rolled out the first four Phoenix C-Plus Missiles in early 1986, not only meeting the Navy's requirements, but also ahead of schedule!

I finally had cataract surgery on my right eye later that year.

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The left lens implant was done in early 1997. Since then, my glasses always have a less intimidating graduated tint.

Generous and Talented

There have been five women of significance in my life: My mom Ruth, wife Claudette, sister Mandy, daughter Janet and granddaughter Krystyllynn. There has been little written in this work about Janet. She is the subject of a number of good stories, among them the “Where mine?” story told earlier. But, I’m most proud of her for her unselfish generosity.

In her very earliest days in Tucson Janet slept in a crib. For the first few nights she spent in it, she cried herself to sleep. We had already raised son Johnny through the “midnight potty” stage and knew that Janet needed to learn to be alone. We had made the mistake of catering to Johnny’s cries and spoiled him trying to get him to bed down. Having survived that parental experiment, we vowed that Janet would learn to be alone when it was appropriate. She took to hitting the sack with no problem after just a few evenings of fretting. We’d wake her up at midnight to go potty so she would sleep ‘til morning. When she woke up, she’d play by herself in the crib until her mom or dad came and got her up. Even on Sunday mornings, while we slept in, Janet always played quietly. Her imagination took an unexpected turn one Sunday. She discovered a new toy.

Janet had been very quiet that morning, unusually quiet, according to her mom. Claudette decided to get her up and had just cracked the bedroom door when an all too familiar smell wafted past her nostrils. She called out, “Ted, come here a minute.” Being the ever-dutiful husband, I walked down the hall and joined the girls in Janet’s bedroom. She had made the most extraordinary painting on the wall next to her crib. In a

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word, it was magnificent. No artist – not Van Gogh, nor even Norman Rockwell – could have painted such a masterpiece! Needless to say, I was dispatched to the bathroom to collect soapy water and a bunch of towels to clean up the mess. You know what they say ... caca pasá!

Janet was always very gregarious. She loved to socialize. From a very early age she went out of her way to make new friends and she has always had many. The little girl next door on Sunny Drive was her best friend and they spent countless hours together gossiping and doing “girl things.” There was a friend down the street who was much less fortunate than Janet. Her family was hard-pressed to provide little more than food, clothing and shelter. Janet noticed that her little friend had no toys, no dolls to play with. One day Claudette looked in Janet’s room and noticed that all her dolls were gone. Except Janet’s favorite, Mrs. Beasley. The assortment of Barbies, the doll-house, the stuffed animals, all of them were nowhere to be found! Her mom asked what happened to all her dolls and Janet replied, “I gave them to my friend down in the cul-de-sac. She needs them more than I do.”

Growing up, Janet attended Lizzy Brown Elementary School on Tucson’s east side not far from home. We encouraged her to do well in school and vowed to reward her for good grades, especially for improvements. It was an E through U grading system at Lizzy Brown and Janet started pretty well. She brought home Ss, some S-pluses and some S-minuses very consistently. We praised her grades and told her how proud we were of her. When she got to the third grade we laid out a batch of carrots. One dollar for every improvement. By the sixth grade she was almost a millionaire! The last report card in the sixth grade was to be the pinnacle. She was going for straight Es for a whole year. All she needed was no glitches to cop the grand slam! Ol’ Dad committed another ten bucks provided she made it. The fateful day arrived and she came

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home in tears. She had scored an S+ in Spelling. “Daddy,” she cried, “I only missed one word all semester! This isn’t fair!” I took her by the hand and we hot-footed it up to the school, hoping to catch the teacher before he left for the Summer. He was still there in this classroom, packing up his stuff. With Janet hanging on every word, I asked him how he could possibly deny his top student - the one who missed only one word in Spelling all year - the honor of straight Es on her final report card. There are souls in Mudville who were crushed when the mighty Casey struck out. And there are those who would commiserate with Janet because of her loss at the hands of her dastardly spelling instructor. But, I know that teacher had my broken-hearted little girl’s best interests in mind when he handed out the grades. I know he cared because he took the time to squat down in front of her, look her square in the eye and whisper, “There’s no such thing as an E-minus.”

Some “Keepers”

Digging through a collection of old newspaper clippings, photos and other memorabilia like most folks have stashed away, I thought it might be fun to try to tie a few documents to some interesting old memories.



On the left is a charcoal cartoon done at the Monterey Fair Grounds in the Summer of 1957. The DeMolay State Conclave was going at the time and it featured a number of displays. Mine was a Hi-Fi I had constructed from scratch. It was a wooden cabinet containing a speaker, an amplifier and a record changer. It got me an A+ in high school science.

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Between the time I left the radio job in Gilroy, California and when Claudette and I were married, I worked at KAGO-AM in Klamath Falls, Oregon. I was the morning man but also had a desk job writing advertising copy. No problem. I just tried to remain the handsome dog!



THE KIKX SIX ARE READY -FOR FUN!

Why not consider hiring one of the KIKX Six to provide a fun evening.

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IN THE KIKX FABULOUS FALL FUNFEST

TED BEHR

KIKX-AM in Tucson was among the first in the nation to promote Rock Concerts with standing room only *Stadium*

Seating. The first show was at Hi Corbett Field in the Fall of 1967. The Doors concert with Jim Morrison sold out!

My partner on the morning show was a good-lookin' guy whose given name was Terry Ingstadt. The two of us were billed as the Baron K show – Ted Behr and Jefferson K.



Turn on the Winsome Twosome, Baron K . . . Mornings on Great 58 and hear how KIKX remains first when it comes to fun.

Behr and K. Put 'em together and what have you got?

A two-man team that tears up Tucson daily.

Backed up by Dynamic Double-power 20-20 news . . . KIKX comes on strong with the Baron-K show.

Jefferson K.

Ted Behr

We eventually went our separate ways. Terry disappeared but he kept showing up on television. I stayed in touch with the

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guy I knew from Tucson and asked him some time ago what had happened to Terry Ingstadt. He told me that he had died a horrible death. (That happens in the radio/TV business.) You might recognize my friend better as the good-guy announcer on the *Hollywood Squares* – Shadoe Stevens!

After departing the broadcast industry I went into business for myself and joined the Tucson Chamber of Commerce. The Transportation Committee needed a new member so I volunteered. Our job was to lobby anyone who would listen for improvements to the infrastructure, including auto, bus, train and air, as well as streets and high-speed corridor around the metro area. It was announced one day that Amtrak was planning to remove the Tucson stops from its train schedule.

We went into high gear lobbying Washington to keep Tucson on its roster. As part of the lobbying function I was charged with discovering whether there was a way to use Amtrak for a one day excursion out of The Old Pueblo. It turned out that a group could ride from Tucson to Lordsburg and back in one day with plenty of time for activities.



TO LORDSBURG AND BACK — Mr. and Mrs. Ted Thayer, son John and daughter Janet visited Lordsburg last Saturday in a rather unusual way. They discovered they could catch a train at Tucson and arrive in Lordsburg at 1:05. They spent the afternoon looking at the sights, took in a show and returned to Tucson at 4:55. The couple indicated that they are planning to get several families together to let their children enjoy a ride on a train and visit in Lordsburg. Glen Dorsett hosted the family while in the area.

(Photo courtesy of Glen Dorsett)

I called Amtrak to see if reservations would be needed and was told none were required at that time. After contacting the Lordsburg Chamber I made plans for an outing. We jumped Amtrak Number Two east-bound in the

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morning and arrived in Lordsburg in time for a nice tour of the area. We had lunch at the soda fountain in the old-timey Rexall Drug Store and then headed out to the local Movie to see John Wayne in *The Cowboys*. It was a two block walk from the movie just in time to catch Amtrak Number One back to Tucson, arriving in time for dinner. It was a great family outing proving that any group or family could make a fun day of it by traveling Amtrak.

Having archived pictures of Johnny and Janet here jogged me a few years back into yesteryear. It was December of 1967. Claudette decided to have Christmas pictures made for family and friends. Boy, did she get 'em! Johnny had turned three in September and Janet was ten months old, about to turn one in February. They were such cute kids. Hey, isn't that what all parents say about their off-spring? You bet your sweet bippie!



Claudette and I had a heated discussion about this next photo. She didn't like it. I said it captured the moment. At the time the photo was taken I thought she deserved some kind of special gift because of her selflessness and her giving spirit. Claudette loved roses. Every

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time I brought her those pretty flowers she wept with joy. So, why not a rose for every one of the forty-eight years of our marriage? That surely would be most excellent! She was overwhelmed. She was confused and she felt unworthy. She cried. And she laughed. It was fantastic! This photo is my beautiful Claudette with four dozen red roses celebrating her 48th anniversary with her ol' Terrible Ted.

Medic Alert Alert

A while back, before we got involved in that detour down memory lane, we touched on the 1975 Pinto Squire Wagon that once belonged to the wife of the Vice President of Ford's Western Division. I rebuilt that little car three times – well, the engine anyway.

The second time was just an engine build in 1988. It was a piece of cake compared to the inside-and-out tear-down involved in a complete vehicle restoration.

An engine rebuild involves disconnecting the engine from all the stuff hanging off of it and then lifting it carefully out from under the hood. The air-cleaner and carburetor are the first to go. The alternator comes off next, then the air-conditioner compressor, followed by the radiator hoses and cap, then the whole radiator. The battery has to go, and all those hoses and wires, too! After the distributor is taken out, a chain dangling from what they call an "A" frame is hooked to the front and back of the engine to hold it steady. The exhaust system gets unbolted, followed by the starter, drive-line, bell-housing and transmission, all of which are de-coupled and taken out from under the vehicle, leaving the engine dangling, held only by that chain and the front motor mounts. When freed, the long block, as it's called, is almost ready for transport to the shop.

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A final check makes sure the valve covers are off as well as any spare wires and hoses.

It sounds like a lot of work, and it is. You get filthy-dirty and have to stay clear of the wife, children and doorknobs until after some thorough scrubbing under a hot, relaxing shower.

Next day, it's off to the shop with the engine tied down in the back of the pick-up. Shade-tree mechanics, as we're called, must have pick-up trucks. It's the law!

The engine is worked over by skilled mechanics who clean it, further disassemble it, check for wear, paint where appropriate and then re-assemble it. New rod and cam bearings and piston rings are installed in the process, as are new parts from a gasket and seal kit. With spark plugs replaced and the valve train touched up, the remanufactured long block is ready to go a few days later.

While the shop works on the engine, the alternator, starter, air conditioning compressor, distributor, power steering pump and rack and pinion are cleaned up and painted as needed. Hoses and wires are necessarily cleaned or replaced. The radiator and battery are also given proper attention. Every nut, bolt and screw is cleaned or replaced and the engine compartment is cleaned and made ready for the power plant.

Removing an engine from a car is cake compared to putting it back in. True, it goes back pretty much in the reverse order, but a lot of care is necessary to keep from scratching, dinging or dirtying it. Dirt and grime are the enemies of new engines so clean hands, drapes and rubber gloves are mandatory. A key part of re-assembly is quality control, requiring acute care during the process. Every little nit must be just so ... and when the job is done there should be nothing left but pride.

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I was in the process of torquing the exhaust manifold bolts after running the re-assembled engine and touching up the timing when I ran into a problem. The passenger-side wall of the engine compartment is where the battery is mounted, and there is scarcely enough room to change spark-plugs, much less tighten nuts and bolts. It's a mighty tight fit for big hands and forearms. I had assembled a socket wrench, inserted it over one of the bolt heads and was cranking away when I felt a painful sensation on my right wrist. I let out a loud yelp and instinctively shook my hand to remove whatever evil thing was causing the discomfort. It could have been a sticker or a bug or just about anything. With the situation well under control, I went back to wrenching. After just a couple of turns it felt like a blowtorch had been pointed at my wrist! I yanked my hand out of the engine compartment and turned my wrist over so I could see what was happening. YOW! It burned even more! My Medic Alert bracelet was glowing red-hot, burning the flesh on my inside forearm! All I could do was turn the wrist over and let the bracelet dangle from its little chain. There was no way to undo the chain with my left hand without pulling the medallion against the burn! I sprinted though the kitchen door, turned the cold water on in the sink and put my wrist under the flow. The bracelet steamed as the liquid flowed over it. The soothing coolness of the water on the wound made things a little better.

So, what happened? I went back to the car and re-constructed the events that caused the injury. Every time I had turned the wrench, I twisted my wrist, causing the bracelet medallion to touch the positive battery terminal. I was hot and sweaty so my skin conducted the electric current easily through the bracelet into my arm and fingers and on through the wrench and bolt, thus completing the circuit. Every time the bracelet medallion tapped the battery terminal it heated some. It finally got hot enough to hurt when it touched the wrist the first time. The cause wasn't obvious. But the second time around, the

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medallion was glowing. It was one of those lessons learned the hard way. I had forgotten a very basic mechanic's law: *Don't wear rings or jewelry when working on machines.*

What if ...

I was hitting golf balls at the range not long ago when an old acquaintance stepped up and offered a few helpful tips. He asked what I was up to and I told him a little about my book. He was impressed so I asked him if he could suggest a subject for one of my stories. He asked me to write about something good passed between my Grandfather, my dad, me and my son. Wow, what a challenge!

My dad was impressed with his Uncle Bert and did his best to emulate him. Pop's father was estranged - persona non grata - a problem that creates broken families to this day. Bert was an old cowboy who lived in Ely, Nevada in a shack on a small pension and a pittance that the Social Security administration sent each month. He was a Freemason and a member of the Elk's Club – the BPOE – dad said those initials stood for the Best People On Earth.

When Bert passed away I was in high school and we took several days off to drive to Ely and take care of his final arrangements. I still have a huge horse blanket that he left. He was a real character, well known and loved by many folks in the area.

A peculiarity we discovered when clearing out his quarters, was his penchant for saving pennies. They were everywhere! They were under the bed and in the drawer with the socks and shorts; stashed in glasses and cups on table-tops and counters; there was even an old sock filled with hundreds of the little copper coins. When they were picked up and accounted for,

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we traded them for over fifty dollars in paper money! While we were amassing this small fortune left by my Great uncle, dad told me about when they met.

My father had lit out from Iowa for the old west and his mom's brother, his idea of a good man to raise him. My dad's middle name was Adelbert, named for his uncle. When he got to Ely, pop asked around and was pointed toward the shack



where Uncle Bert lived. He was out on the stoop and saw pop coming. My dad, ever the polite young man, introduced himself. "Good day, sir. My name is John Thayer. I'm your nephew from Iowa, Uncle Adelbert." My Great uncle Bert stood up from his seat, whirled like a tornado and kicked my dad square in the back-

side, knocking him into the dusty street. "Don't you ever call me that name again," he yelled. "My name is Bert ... Uncle Bert, to you!"

There's an important lesson there. If you're going to leave an impression, people need to know your name. So it is that my dad, some years later, became known to all as Duke Thayer. It took a long time for me to settle on Ted Thayer, but just like my Great uncle and my dad, folks around these parts know who I am. Son John never wavered from his given name and is a well-known person in his own right, of which I'm proud. His Great-great uncle and grandfather would also be proud!

When Dad Left

That brings us to an important day in everyone's life – the passing of a parent. My dad was born in September of 1906. He passed away at TMC six days after Thanksgiving in 1988.

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Duke accomplished a lot and he had a full and productive life. Among the many great things he pulled off was the design and construction of two homes for my mom. After having rented living quarters across California for two-and-a-half decades pop finally purchased the first Thayer home in Monterey. That ranch-style house set the stage when he took work in Pacific Grove and bought a big tri-level overlooking Monterey Bay. With both mom and dad working, there was adequate credit available to buy a chunk of prime land off Carmel Hill. After a few years the canyon property was used as collateral on a construction loan of \$45,000. The U-shaped structure that resulted fit perfectly in its high-end neighborhood. The day the final permits were signed off, the bank's appraiser paid a visit. The next day the manager of the bank called and said the house came in at \$65,000 and there was still \$5,000 left in the escrow account! Now, that's quite an achievement.

Both of the folks decided to retire sometime later and moved to Tucson. They bought a 42 acre ranch north of Sonoita, an area now renowned for its wineries as well as horses and cattle ranching. On a hillside they built a large adobe ranch-style home complete with a flat Santa Fe roof and Mexican *Canales*. Ramón, an elderly Mexican gentleman who had occupied a two acre parcel on the ranch for many decades, helped my dad and my brother Bill build the thing. Ramón knew how to make honest-to-goodness Mexican Adobe Bricks, capitalized here because they were the real deal! I have no idea what the property was worth, but they bought the ranch using the profits made from the Monterey home. "The Property" was used as collateral to pay for the new home and to make necessary capital and infrastructure improvements. I heard it rumored a while back that they had parlayed that \$45,000 bank loan in Monterey into an outfit worth not much less than some seven figures. Pretty smooth, I'd say.

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Mom told my wife to never allow me to build a house. She said it drove her crazy because there was never a day that a change of some sort wasn't needed. She said that in the end she was proud of pop's achievement and it was all worth it, but she'd never do it again. Mom liked my dad an awful lot. He was a good husband, a good father and a good man. Over a span of 82 years you couldn't ask for much more, you think?

Tucson's Worst Golfer

A confession: I have the official distinction of being Tucson, Arizona's worst Golfer. In the spring of 1989, Tucson's ABC television affiliate - KGUN-TV - ran a promotion to find the worst golfer in the Old Pueblo. After weeks of promos and progress reports, K-GUN Nine Sportscaster Dave Silver announced the award on the five-o'clock news one Friday evening in May. After months of hot competition with hackers, duffers and just plain lousy Cow-pasture pool players, I had persevered and won the coveted title!

The distinction was not without reward. I was fitted with custom Henry Griffitts golf clubs and Nike Air golf shoes. They came with six months worth of weekly lessons from the Pro at Ventana Canyon and free access to the golf course and all its amenities seven days a week. A membership at Ventana Canyon at the time required a five-figure initiation fee and monthly dues of \$2,000, half of which were credited for use in the Pro Shop and restaurant. I practiced three times each week followed by nine holes of golf. One of the practice sessions followed the weekly lesson and I played two 18-hole rounds each week. During a practice round I hit upwards of half a bushel of balls - a sizeable quantity, even for a Pro.

Golf Professional Dave Abbott was my instructor. We started slowly - with a seven-iron. I learned how to make a "rounded"

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swing and how to avoid “hitting” the ball. Dave said it was important to relax and let the club do the work. After a few days of practice, I was target shooting my seven at the 150-yard flagstick. Before the lessons, I was lucky to get the ball 110 yards somewhere down the fairway! Dave had me in the bottom of a deep sand-filled pot bunker one day, hitting balls up and out, landing them softly next to the practice pin nearby. Another time we were on the practice green where I learned to read the grain and predict the effects of slope on the ball’s path. He taught me how to bomb long, straight drives. And Dave took the time to remind me regularly of that old golf saying: “*Hit for show, but putt for dough.*”

After about six weeks, I finished one practice session with a sharp pain in my back just behind my left armpit. It felt like a marble was stuck under my wing-bone. An x-ray showed that somehow I had cracked a rib! My doctor sent me to the sports physician at the University of Arizona Medical Center. After reading the x-ray film, the sports doc called a bunch of students who were doing rounds into the exam room. He had me hold my left elbow out horizontally and move it slowly around in front of my chest. About two-thirds of the way around there was a popping sound from my back. He told the students to listen closely and then asked me to do it again. It popped again and they made “oo-ing” and “ah-ing” noises. He pointed out rather matter-of-factly, “That’s what we call a *snapping scapula.*” With that he turned abruptly and told me to take two aspirin three times a day for the next week ... and lay off practice for two weeks. When I had completed my penance, I returned to lessons and practice very gingerly for a while. Tucson’s Worst Golfer had finally arrived – with the help of K-GUN Nine, a great golf Pro and a snapping scapula!

Intra-Ocular Lenses

I read about a relatively common vision condition in older folks one evening in TIME magazine. My adventure with the young lady in the Hughes Aircraft Data Center that ended with some ten-thousand people calling me Terrible Ted had pointed up the need to do something about my sensitivity to light. The article described how to tell if you have a cataract: *Poke a hole with a pin through the middle of a 3x5 card. Hold the card about six inches from one eye and look through the hole at a light source across the room. If you have a cataract, you will see it projected upside-down in the pin-hole.* Well, in my left eye I saw a triangular shape; the shape in the right eye looked more like a hatchet. Sensitivity explained - I had cataracts!

A few days later I was sitting with an ophthalmologist, sharing my new-found knowledge. He explained that the pin-hole is an integral part of basic photography. An up-side down picture is created by the reflection of the subject as it goes through the hole, like a miniature slide show. What I described to him was exactly what he saw right-side up!

After some technical stuff involving measuring key parts of my eyes, we decided to do the left eye first. The operation involved making a tiny incision in the side of the eye, breaking up the existing lens, removing it, and placing a new hard plastic lens in the remaining lens capsule. The doctor said that the procedure would be done under local anesthesia and that I'd be able to see everything that was going on. No, thank you very much! Wanting no part of participating in an exercise where they planned to stick me in the eye with a sharp stick, I opted for general anesthesia.

The day came for the procedure and I showed up on time at the hospital on Tucson's east side. My medical chart was set up already. As I removed my shirt, shoes and socks and

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donned a sky-blue operating room gown and paper footies, the nurse went through the usual questions. I'm allergic to penicillin and adhesive tape – both give me hives – and a red plastic bracelet was clipped to my wrist as a warning.

After the nurse left, the anesthesiologist came to my bedside and shared friendly chatter as he slipped an IV into a vein on the back of my right hand, made a U-turn with the line, and secured it with two pieces of tape on my index finger and one around the wrist. He was such a nice guy, but when he was finished I had to ask, “Do you suppose you would do well with me as the new owner of your practice?”

He looked puzzled. “I beg your pardon?” he asked.

Then I dropped the bomb: “Did you check my chart?”

He answered, “Of course.”

“Then, you'd better check it again and then get that adhesive tape off my hand pretty quick because I'm allergic to it!”

You would not believe the apologies and the speed at which the adhesive tape was removed, the area cleaned with alcohol, and paper tape put in place to re-secure the IV!

After the excitement everything proceeded without a hitch. I got a new lens in my eye with no complications and when I woke up they had placed a big patch over the eye – and used paper tape to secure it! The instructions said I was to show up in the morning at the ophthalmologist's office to have the patch removed and get checked out.

The doctor took the bandages off, peered in my eye, made grunts of approval and put a bunch of drops in it. He applied paper tape to secure a new plastic eye protector, said I should

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take it off twice a day and put more drops in the eye to promote healing, reject pain and avoid infection, and he set up another appointment for three days. What I saw through the new lens was stunning during that short exam time and I couldn't wait to have the bandages taken off for good.

At the appointed time the patch and paper tape came off and the doctor checked everything, including the prescription. It was all just ducky! Except for one thing: I could only focus on stuff that was close up! I had asked for - and promptly forgotten - that I wanted to be able to do close-up work without benefit of glasses. He said we'd check for any changes in another week and gin up a prescription for blended lenses at that time.

Just then a new realization hit me like a ton of bricks: Everything was bright and the contrast between dark and light colors was stunning! I couldn't remember seeing light, dark and color anywhere close to that since before junior high school. The doctor explained that our eyes begin to change when we advance into puberty. Brightness, color and contrast soften somewhat as new hormones begin to affect our young bodies. I was seeing just like I did before becoming a man. Wow!

The new glasses put things at a distance in focus for eye number one. A couple of months later we did the right eye. The procedure and the results were much the same. After the prescribed recuperation, I got the right lens in the glasses replaced with the new prescription, and life was good.

Only someone who has had Intra-Ocular Implants, as they're called, can possibly appreciate the stunning new vision and new life that comes with cataract surgery. I'm so blessed to be one of the lucky ones!

Heel Spurs at Hole No. 3

As an avid golfer and fan of the PGA Tour, I had occasion to join a group of friends from work marshalling at the Tucson Open. In January of 1990 we were assigned to hole number three at the prestigious StarPass PGA golf course. The Tucson Conquistadores website reports, "*The former UA All-American Robert Gamez becomes the first golfer to post a victory in his initial tournament as a member of the PGA TOUR. The tournament uses two courses: StarPass and Randolph North.*" When we weren't working StarPass, we watched at Randolph.

January in the Arizona Desert can be very cold. Mornings at StarPass were very cool, close to freezing a couple of times. My duty was to control movement of the spectators, replenish my *compadres'* refreshments, and relay messages between the officials and the tournament control point. Initially, I was on shanks-mares, afoot on the sloping side of the fairway, sharing my time to relieve other volunteers. On the third day my feet got cold and it began to hurt just under my right heel. By mid-morning I had a hard time walking up and down the fairway. They got me a cart and I never walked after that. The sharp pain in the heel didn't subside all that much, though, so I was taking eight aspirins a day to cope. University of Arizona students were out in force supporting Robert Gamez who blew the doors off with an 18-under, taking his place among a slew of rising young stars as well as the great old names tied to the Tucson Open including Johnny Miller, Lee Trevino, Arnold Palmer and *the Walrus*, Craig Stadler. Although it was painful getting around, it was worth it watching history in the making.

I visited a foot doctor the Monday after the tournament and was told I had heel spurs. The podiatrist gave me two choices: surgery to remove the spur in the right heel, as well as one developing in the left, or cortisone shots to heal the damages and orthotics. He said the shots would probably work but

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insurance companies didn't like to pay for the orthotics. The option of surgery involved a scalpel, hammer and chisel for which he said the insurance would always pay. I told him I'd like to check with the insurance company first, which I did. I didn't want anybody cutting on me so I told the agent I wanted the shots and orthotics. "No way", he said. So I attacked the challenge with reason: Cortisone shots were inexpensive and worked a majority of the time. The orthotics were meant to enhance the healing process. Surgery always involves risk and substantial expenses. Why not take the least expensive, least risky option first and pay for the whole procedure? He got it! I was scheduled for cortisone shots – three in each heel – over a two week period. Walking was done quite gingerly during that time and there was no golf. At the end, I was measured for orthotics. They were worth the week they took to arrive. They felt wonderful and the pain was gone. The doctor made me wait another week before allowing me to golf again. The heel spur incident taught me that it is always advisable to get the insurance company's claims people involved early on ... at least to save the hassle later.

Autonomy and Problem-solving

A number of pages back we touched on the virtues of work with little or no supervision. Such employees are called autonomous. Workers who "have their own head" are usually great at solving complex problems and generally get to the roots of repetitive difficulties quickly.

My autonomy began in the 4th grade when Mrs. Clark put me to work on that bird project. I got to do a specific task exactly the way I wanted, solved the problems that came with it, and was richly rewarded for my labors. Autonomous problem-solving became a forte of sorts for me because it required finding root causes and then implementing workable solutions.

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I found this particularly great for dealing with government employees. Running into that bureaucratic stone wall, “I’m sorry sir, but you can’t do that” has always presented me with a challenge, usually minor. If my request is reasonable and doesn’t break the law or cross purposes with policy, I’ll more often than not end up doing that which “you can’t do ...”

Take my introduction to the Management job at the University of Arizona. The first day on the job, I asked the boss if there was anything he would like that he had not been able to accomplish through normal channels. He disclosed the deadbolts on the doors to his many research labs. The Facilities Management people told him those four magic words, “You can’t do that.” He said he had tried every trick in the book, but was unable to find a way to keep new lab equipment from walking off just after school started. It seems that the engineering students made it a project every year to create a set of master keys that would open any door on campus and that’s the black hole into which millions of dollars worth of equipment simply evaporated each fall. I told him that was right up my alley and that I’d try to have dead-bolts installed on all of the department’s lab doors before the end of the week. Oh, a double challenge – forbidden deadbolts in less than five days. Yesss!

I read the applicable parts of the UofA policy manual and then wrote work orders, one for each door, specifying that each share a common key, copies of which would go to the director, his assigns, the FM key desk, the University President and the campus Police Chief. The specifications also required a brand not presently used anywhere on the UofA campus. No sweat. All the bases were covered. Except one ... “You can’t do that.”

Government offices are notorious for clerks that make up rules based on rumor, innuendo or thin air. My girl had a firm grip on every reason on earth why deadbolts are not allowed

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anywhere on campus. She over-ruled every objection I came up with, so I finally pulled the rabbit out of the hat, “May I see your supervisor, please?” I guess nobody ever asked it quite like that, so she fluttered and flustered and disappeared down a hallway for a moment, returning with that other bureaucratic statement, “He’s not in right now, sir.” No problem. “Is his supervisor or manager in?” I asked. Paydirt! End-run! A few moments later I was ushered into the FM Director’s office.

We had a nice chat over coffee – all about how the physics building was a challenge for the Facilities Management folks because of the many pipes and cables and tunnels and all. He was quite a knowledgeable guy. When I explained the project to him, he asked how we planned to keep the keys available in accordance with University policy. I told him the specs called for key copies to the UofA President, the key box at Facilities management, and the Police Chief. He gave it thumbs up.

So ... I had read and understood University policy, created work orders with specifications, and obtained the go-ahead from the head dog. One final question, “Can we make this happen by Thursday?” The Director returned, “Overnight tomorrow, ok?” We had coffee a number of times after that.

I didn’t see the boss the rest of the day and avoided him all day Tuesday. Before lunch Wednesday he came into my office, sat down in the chair across from my desk and asked, “How the Hell did you do it?” I laughed, leaned toward him and whispered, “It’s a secret.”

Giving up the House - Again

I worked at Hughes Aircraft after leaving the UofA. It was a great run, but seniority prevailed. I was laid off when military contracts began to run out. That meant another look for work.

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For a while, I was the leader of a team selling Kirby vacuum cleaners door to door. It was fun but I couldn't stay current on the bills. I started looking into a return to broadcasting. Every day it was a scan of the Help Wanted ads in the newspaper. Finally, I came across an ad for a radio announcer/salesman at a station in Globe, a few hours north of Tucson. I phoned and spoke with a charming young lady. She said that the boss, Bill Taylor, was not in but that he would return the call. Oh, my! Bill Taylor! I explained to her that we had worked together at KDON in Salinas years earlier. More than a quarter-century! He did call back and Claudette and I drove to Globe to visit. Of course, we wanted to work together again. I was to do an air shift, sell commercial time and build a new control room.

I had landed the job with KQSS-FM on a Wednesday and agreed to start the next Tuesday, Claudette's birthday. That Thursday to sell the house, I ordered an ad to run in the paper Friday, Saturday and Sunday. We took a cash down-payment early Friday afternoon and opened escrow later in the day. We were to meet Monday morning at 8:00 o'clock at the title company to close escrow and pick up our check on the way out of town. We got just what we wanted, enough to pay off the mortgage and all the bills with sufficient cash left over for a clean start in Globe.

After cancellation of the remaining newspaper ads, the real work began. We had Friday night, Saturday and Sunday to pack what we didn't move into storage, put everything left but the beds and a couple of changes of clothes in the carport, and clean anything that didn't move by itself!

Moving is a trip, to coin a phrase, but cleaning a house is a nightmare, especially if you've been there a while. Around every bookshelf, picture, plant or knick-knack is an outline of dirt that has to be scrubbed off. There are cobwebs in places few can imagine and no matter how great the homemaker,

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there are gobs of goo and pieces from outer space stashed by children in the most incredibly hidden cracks and crevices!

Meanwhile, my brother made ready my inheritance, a 30-foot fifth-wheel trailer kept at the Thayer ranch near Sonoita. Mom was to drive it and the pick-up loaded with the beds, housewares and clothing to Globe via Oracle Junction, Florence and Superior. My mother didn't like the big grade up highway 70. I was to tag along in the Pinto wagon, with Claudette driving the Toyota loaded with knick-knacks and the Tiger kitty.

It was work, but we pulled it off and were ready to go Monday morning at day-break! It was an exhausting start to another beginning – adding to the Thayers' assortment of experiences.

Ductal Difficulties

The move was, without doubt, graced with the blessings of the great Architect of the Universe. But Himself didn't take so kindly to hanging out in a fifth-wheel in downtown Globe. The trailer park had no blacktop so it was dusty and the spot next door smelled from the dog poo the neighbor wouldn't clean up. Claudette wasn't that fond of it either.

From the time we moved to Globe until September of 1992 Claudette made a number of trips back and forth to Tucson for mammograms. Early in the year a reading had turned up a tiny white dot on one of her films that the radiologist labeled as "suspicious for malignancy" and he wanted to keep an eye on it. Mammograms were scheduled every couple of months to track the anomaly.

In September, Claudette's doctor said that a biopsy would be a good idea. The surgery was done at the mine hospital in Globe - Miami-Inspiration. The biopsy, which wasn't much

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different than a mastectomy, came back positive. She was diagnosed with Ductal Cell Carcinoma and the doctor said immediate surgery would be a good idea. Doctor Tahir was the cancer specialist and surgeon. He did a great job and the hospital staff were very supportive. Our family physician, Doctor McLaren Reusch, sat with her for hours in the recovery room with the nurse, who turned out to be the girl friend of a mechanic and race-car driver we knew. Ruesch had been in surgery with Doctor Tahir to observe and assist if he could. A sample of the excised tissue was sent out for lab assessment. The earlier biopsy had taken all the cancer! The mastectomy came back clean! Considering the alternatives, it was a blessing. Several days later Doctor Tahir had a talk with Claudette and me – one she scarcely remembers – in which he said the cancer was gone, and to keep it from returning she would need to take Tamoxifen for the rest of her life.

He knew his stuff! Almost a quarter-century later she's still kickin' and ornery as ever! That's probably thanks to Doctor Reusch, whose bedside manner Claudette hated until after the surgery. He was so kind and attentive, she just adored him from then on ... right up until the day he passed away.

Reusch made the mistake of trying to wean her from the Tamoxifen some five years after the surgery because she had exceeded the average survival rate for breast cancer. She remembered Doctor Tahir's admonition and made it clear that she intended to keep on living long past any piddly five years by following his orders. She said it was her lifeline. In response, Reusch said he'd never again suggest taking it away.

The cost of the drug was once so high that at one time we got financial assistance from Nolvadex, the manufacturer. Family members discovered that Barr was manufacturing generic Tamoxifen in Mexico and they began traveling to Nogales to have the prescriptions filled for us. When Barr began

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distributing it for US consumption our costs dropped like a rock! What was once eighty-some-odd bucks for a 30-day supply dropped to seven under Medicare. In the overall picture of life, the universe and everything, none of the costs and inconveniences matter much because she's still with us!

I Quit Smoking, by God!

Claudette had a pretty tough time getting ready for her surgery in the Fall of 1992. She confided that the night before the mastectomy she sat on the fifth-wheel's toilet seat smoking a cigarette and weeping. There was one of those full-length mirrors on the door right in front of her and she saw herself in it, crying. Then it dawned on her - she was going to undergo cancer surgery at six o'clock the next morning and there she sat, holding a major cause of the disease between the index and middle fingers of her right hand!

The result was an epiphany. She threw the cigarette in the toilet and in a brave move, quit cold turkey. Claudette hasn't had a cigarette since!

One of my best friends quit in the early summer of 1996. Like Claudette, he too went cold turkey. I remember how cranky and out-of-sorts he was for the longest time. It was hard to get a smile out of this normally gregarious guy. But he slowly returned to his normal self in about four weeks. Many of his friends, including my own self, made it a point to look in on him at work and call him at home every now and then to commiserate. He came through it relatively unscathed.

Both Danny and Claudette had set fine examples. I had tried so many times to quit, but never mustered the courage to go through with it. Even *The Great American Smoke-out* made no difference.

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One day, something important happened on the back porch at the Gila County Courthouse. A good friend, Cruz Salas, was the District Three Gila County Supervisor and I used to sit and visit with him at the back entrance on a pretty regular basis. He had been the victim of a heart attack, actually two of them, and had undergone heart by-pass surgery. As a new member of the “Zipper Club”, he had been hugging the ol’ pillow and doing a lot of walking. Supposedly, he had quit smoking at the behest of his physician. Cruz turned to me one morning, said he had left his smokes in his desk, and asked if he could mooch one. I opened a brand-new pack of cigarettes, pulled two out, gave one to him, and lit us both. With that, I tore the pack of smokes in half and threw the pieces and the lighter in the trash. I took my friend by the hand, looked him square in the eye and said, “That’s the last cigarette I will ever smoke, Compa. I refuse to be a party to my best friend’s early death.”

Oh, boy! That did it! The one thing more important to me than anything is my integrity. The Marine Corps and the Masonic fraternity reinforced in me the ideal that a man is only as good as his word. Pledging to never smoke again put my integrity squarely on the line. I left myself no outs. It was August 25th.

I was the news guy on KIKO radio after leaving KQSS and my old friend Bill Taylor. That was a blessing. I had an open mike all morning and both Danny and Claudette were on the ‘phone whenever I needed moral support. Claudette was great. She shouldered her new wifely duty with panache. Danny, on the other hand, became the most foul-mouthed drill instructor on the face of the earth. Whenever I called him he would berate me in the foulest of terms for being such a mamby-pamby whining little sissy-baby. That was always peppered with three- and four-letter nouns and adjectives. All I had to say was, “Danny, I could just die for a cigarette” and he would be in my business like a vulture on carrion! With support from my foul-mouthed friend Danny and my beautiful wife

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Claudette, I quit! For good! As a result, I felt healthier than I ever had in my whole life. What's more, by God, my integrity was fully intact!

Willard

KIKO's Willard Shoecraft was an iconic Arizona broadcaster. He was an inspiration to everyone he met. He was always a man's man. Everybody loved him. I used to sit with him in his office at the radio station and share stories. Being my senior of some twenty years, his stories always seemed better to me. He was also a real character.

One morning we were in his office chewing the fat. Sitting across his desk from him, I had my back to the door. He looked up over my shoulder and all of a sudden broke into a huge grin. It was Buddy Culpepper, an old friend and well-known icon in his own right who had just dropped in to say howdy. "I'll be damned," he exclaimed, "the last time I saw you, you were dead!"

The first time I met Willard was in a Mexican restaurant. My wife and I were sitting at a table just inside the main room from the hall entrance. We were enjoying some Dos Equis with chips and salsa when there came a deep, loud, "Howdy!" from right in front of us. But there was nobody there. I peered around and under the table and there was Willard, on the floor right in front of us! He was very short in a big sort of way. That's because he had no legs.

When he was seven years old he was a victim of an accident that so severely burned him that his legs had to be amputated. All he had of his lower extremities were the glutes (his butt) and he got around on his hands wearing gloves. At one time he had constructed a two-foot square seat of plywood with

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casters on it for getting around on pavement and sidewalk. He ditched the contraption when he discovered he could drive and park a vehicle close to just about any place he wanted to go.

So, there he was with his hand extended in friendship, on the floor right there in front of us. I shook his hand, said I was glad to meet him, and introduced him to Claudette. Willard was also a ladies' man ... and he just charmed the dickens out of my wife! Then he walked over to an adjacent table and literally threw himself from the floor onto a chair. (I tried to come up with a word to describe how Willard "walked" and was miserably unsuccessful. The man didn't shuffle; he didn't hobble; he didn't float or fling; he walked - on his hands.)

Mr. Shoecraft was an Aquarian, born in Kansas City in late January of 1921. He was an innovator. He created the first ever *Open Line* call-in talk radio program as well as the first *Trading Post* which encouraged folks to have their yard sales on the radio. After tens of decades, this interactive broadcasting is still on the air. Willard was inducted into the Arizona Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame in 1991.

He was sick when I went to work for him – but not so you could tell. Willard was, after all, a man's man and tough as an old' boot. I never heard him complain about anything, much less his infirmities. But his wife, a nurse, doted on him, making sure he took his meds and his special foods when it was time. He was like a puppy - putty in her hands. He never let on there was anything wrong until the last, when he just sort of went away next door. One day it was announced that he had passed away and the radio station switched into memories mode. What an occasion!

His funeral was more for the rest of the world than for him. More dignitaries gathered at the LDS church in Globe for

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Willard Shoecraft's last public appearance than I had ever seen in one spot. He sure was something.

Racing with the Moon

I had a flashback to the mid-50s the other night and it prompted me to scribble a quick note so I wouldn't forget to write about it. It's one of those experiences that happens only once in a lifetime.

As this scene fades in from the dim recesses of my mind, the Thayer family is speeding down Route 66 across the Mojave Desert, headed for Arizona. We had traveled south in the San Joaquin Valley, stopping along the way to Bakersfield to sample the goods at roadside fruit stands. Then it was up and over the Tehachapi Pass to Mojave, stopping to watch a train climb the grade up and around the Tehachapi Loop.



In those days there were long trains, some stretching as far as two miles, made up of mostly Pacific Fruit Express, Southern Pacific and Santa Fe refrigerator cars pulled by a powerful articulated 4-8-8-4 cab-forward steam engine.

When a train reached Bakersfield a second engine might be added, running in tandem. In deference to brother Bill and little sister Mandy, our dad called the giant machines *backwards-engine-runners*. There was a spur on the tracks between Tehachapi and Mojave where an engine could be decoupled for its return to Bakersfield. The Santa Fe and Southern Pacific railroads shared the tracks and monster

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engines, each hauling iced box cars filled with fresh fruit and vegetables from the Central Valleys of California for shoppers as far away as Chicago and New York.

We had stopped at Mojave for an early stay, pulling onto the gravel parking lot of a motel sometime after 7:00 that night. The plan was to have dinner out of the picnic basket and hit the sack by 8:00pm. We were on the road by 4:00am in an effort to avoid the Mojave's searing summer afternoon heat.

We were headed east in the pre-dawn dark on Route 66 with my head on my pillow – pressed against the window – looking out at the night. There were scattered desert summer clouds left over from the afternoon before and the moon was chasing along behind them, popping out now and then to light up the desert landscape. Billy and Mandy were asleep.

Up front, off in the distance, I spotted the red and amber markers on the back porch of a caboose and the dim glow from its cupola windows at the rear of a long train. We crept by a Southern Pacific PFE fast freight, also headed east. As we slowly passed the giant steam engine, light from its firebox lit up the track under it and made it look much bigger. My dad honked the car horn. The engineer driving the massive beast waived from the cab and his steam whistle moaned, answering in kind. It was such a thrill to hear those exhilarating sounds in the early morning hours before dawn came to the desert.

Once we had passed the train, I settled back down with my pillow to watch out the window at the clouds and the moon playing hide-and-seek behind them. Times like those happen just once in a lifetime. Like the words from Vaughn Monroe's classic 1941 theme song, those great moments in the desert darkness were etched indelibly into my memory.

Jail Door

And now ... we return from those exciting days of yesteryear! Shortly after I left KIKO, my good friend Cruz told me to go see the County Sheriff. There might be a job for me there.

After an extensive background check, a battery of complex aptitude tests, both electronic and auditory lie detector tests, mug shots, and dirty digits caused by finger-printing, I was told to report the next morning to Gila County Human Resources for indoctrination. Been there. Done that. Boring! Marine Corps. UofA. Hughes Aircraft. It was one of those government training sessions that lasts all day, teaches you the rules, signs you up for every program and benefit in the book, takes your photo, gives you an ID card and sends you on your way just in time for dinner. I had been hired to be a Detention Officer at the Gila County Jail!

I'll tell ya, the job at the Gila County Jail was one of the most memorable and most enjoyable parts of my life. Except for one occasion, I never felt in danger and never had any bad times with the inmates. Most of the other Detention Officers had problems with people who lived in the jail.

There are three kinds of people in jail. First, there are the folks who have been arrested and have not yet been before a judge. A second group are folks who have seen a judge and haven't been able to bail out for whatever reason. A third group are folks who have been sentenced to serve less than a year for doing something stupid and against the law.

Most of the third group are drunks, dopers or marginally mentally ill. Most make themselves right at home and do a good job of being peaceful members of the jail community. Of course, they are not given the choice to be anything else.

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Many of the second bunch are habitual law-breakers, in the slammer for too many speeding tickets, driving suspended, disturbing the peace, fighting, domestic violence, or probation violations. Most of that bunch can't make bail because they spend their money foolishly and have few friends who will lend them any. So, they wait for the next court hearing.

Most of the first group will be in the jail for less than a day, usually overnight. Most of them are released on their own recognizance (on their promise to return to court later.) Some must post a bond - bail. Those who can't make bail are given a second opportunity for release OR, generally if they're still in jail after 48 hours. A good number of those left after two days are released for time served for pleading *nolo contendere* (no contest) or guilty to a misdemeanor charge.

I mentioned that there was only one occasion at the jail when I felt threatened. A guy with whom I had an acquaintance was arrested and brought in for booking. I had "the duty" and it was my job to document his charges and get him ready for a night in jail. He'd been there on a number of occasions for drug offenses. His substance of choice was crack cocaine, which made him very aggressive and unpredictable. He had fought with the deputies that brought him in, so he was pretty upset – they had him hooked up like a big fish! He was angry but he recognized me and asked for help. With that, I asked the deputies to please take the cuffs off and allow him sit down on the bench in the hallway outside the booking office. No problem. He was almost instantly relaxed and cooperative.

After entering the appropriate information about him and his arrest into the computer system and ordering the required background checks, I asked him to come on over to the window and have a chat with me. Even though he was very high on crack, he was lucid enough to confirm his name, date of birth, residence address, phone and ID number.

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When I asked him, he confirmed that he had been arrested (again) for doing dope and creating a disturbance. He was not confessing, but rather confirming the reasons he had been picked up. The charges were already in the system and the formal paperwork backing up the allegations from the deputies had yet to be filed with the County Attorney's office.

In addition to recording an arrested person's name, date of birth, identification (Social Security Number) and fingerprints, the booking process involves the receipt and documentation of all property - including jewelry, credit cards, cash, wallet or purse and its contents, clothing and shoes as well as medical supplies, pills, prosthetics and the like.

When we got to the money part - after he had emptied his pockets, removed his shirt, shoes and socks, and surrendered his wallet - he balked. He said he had two hundred dollars in his pocket and he was not about to give it up. I asked why and he said we would steal it.

I walked quietly out of the booking office and around the corner into the hallway where my guy stood. I extended my hand in a greeting of friendship and he reciprocated, shaking it firmly. We shared small talk for a minute and he was comfortable with my presence. Then I reviewed the booking process with him, including the part about safeguarding his possessions and money. We'd count his cash and anything negotiable like checks or Money Orders. That collection would be sealed in an envelope with the name, date and ID number written on it and dropped into a secure cache for safe-keeping until morning. My guy nodded his understanding of the process every step of the way. So I said, "Ok, dude, it's time to get that cash accounted for and safe." Again, he stiffened and said he couldn't do that, "The cops will steal it."

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The Sergeant had happened by while I was chatting with the guy and stopped to listen. She liked the way I handled people and called me her “secret weapon” because I was able to diffuse all manner of tense situations. This time was different and she could tell. So could I. Using the friendliest, gentlest manner I could muster, I asked for the money again. This time he assumed a braced posture, ready to fight. I was in danger.

The Sergeant told me to step away with her for a second. Aside, quietly, she called detention officers and deputies to the booking area. She asked me to try again to get the money and said if he wouldn't give it up to step out of the way.

By this time the hallway was filling with officers and my man was stiff as a board, shaking. One more time, I approached him. I looked around at a wall of law enforcement, ready to pounce, and I said quietly, “My friend, if you can't trust me with your money, those people mean to take it. C'mon, man.” I extended my hand palm up. He backed away, declining. I stepped aside and the Sergeant took my place with a canister of pepper spray clutched in her fist. The guy lunged at her, feet first, and she pulled the trigger.

This prospective inmate was immediately grabbed from behind before he could complete his kick and about six guys had him on the floor in a flash! He continued to struggle so the Sergeant released the safety on the pepper spray and let fly right between his eyes.

Capsaicin is the main ingredient in pepper spray and it fills small areas very quickly, affecting the eyes, lips and nasal passages of anyone within about thirty feet. So, picture this: There was our boy on the floor screaming obscenities, writhing in pain, surrounded by this mob of sniffling, tear-stained two-hundred-fifty pound hulks - er - deputies and

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detention officers. And me? I had stepped around the corner into the booking office and closed the window. No problem!

There are always some unsavory characters housed in every jail. Some will attack a jail guard or detention officer with little or no provocation. One or two are always plotting ways and means of hurting other inmates without being detected. For this reason regular searches are conducted to find illicit goods or contraband, which can include the blades taken from disposable razors and items as innocuous as golf pencils sharpened to needle points. My ability to get along with the best and the worst of jail inmates provided a shield of sorts. The good-guys always had my back. Whenever one of the bad guys was up to no good, there were a few inmates forming a barrier between the ne'er-do-well and me, and someone would suggest that I check out the visitation list for the day. There was always somebody looking out for me: The good Lord, another detention officer or a couple of inmates.

A crazed inmate in the booking area had put me in mortal danger - once. I was a Gila County Detention Officer from November 8, 2000 through April 14, 2004, yet I was hurt only once – and not at the hands of a dangerous criminal. To my mind at least, it was a shameful occasion ...

Most adult detention facilities include the floors, roof and walls constructed of reinforced concrete. Housing cells are generally open on one side to a common area. Common areas are also open along one side and there are usually three common areas for males. Men outnumber females in jail settings by a large percentage so female housing is usually an area apart, enclosed and outside both hearing and visual contact with the opposite sex. The openings to cells, as well as the common areas, are secured with steel. These, as well as the doors, are constructed of quarter-inch by two-inch steel plate and one-inch steel rebar welded together to create open,

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un-passable barriers. According to Dictionary.com, the phrase “behind bars” originated around the year 1900 and referred to the iron rods used to confine prisoners. Doors to passages and cells are heavy, weighing easily over 150 pounds.

Other than intake holding cells, there are generally two other areas for jail prisoners: Segregation and the Trusty Dormitory. Unruly, dangerous, or threatened inmates are segregated from others and usually stay one to a cell. Trustys (not trustees, who are usually responsible for workings of estates) are low-risk people who are allowed to leave the confines of jail housing. These folks usually go out into the community to work and earn money to support their families or to pay restitution.

Detention officers are taught early-on to keep their extremities away from jail doors, especially when closing them. Fingers caught in a jail door are analogous to those caught in a car door except jail doors have no soft weather-stripping. Car doors bruise but seldom break fingers. Jail doors cause breaks, bruises, contusions and lacerations to itinerant fingers.

You can tell by now where I’m going with this. There was only one time when I was injured during the three years and six months that I worked at the Gila County Jail. It was horribly painful, both physically and mentally, but it required no hospitalization, just paperwork. When I crushed it in “BRD” (the Booking Room Door between the booking room hall and the main housing unit) the last joint on my right index finger was permanently bent to one side. But hey, it could have been worse ... I never lost the fingernail!

Polyps

Warning: This story is somewhat graphic and it deals with important bodily functions. Forgive me if you find it offensive.

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Globe-Miami Arizona is about two hours east of Phoenix, Arizona's Capitol, where summer temperatures can reach upwards of 120 degrees. These old mining towns sit at 3500 feet in the foothills of the Pinal Mountains. The canyons leading down from the mountains provide natural cooling so it's always about ten degrees cooler than Phoenix.

It was the summer of 1997. Nothing out of the ordinary. Just hot and sweaty outside as usual. Every evening, though, all summer and into the fall, I noticed that my underpants were soiled ever so slightly as I chucked them into the dirty clothes. I chalked it up to the heat and the resultant sweaty private parts guys get when it's hot out. When fall prepared to turn to winter and it began to cool, I still had those little tracks in my drawers, so I asked the doctor if there was something we should be doing. He referred me to a Doctor in the Radiology Department at Cobre Valley Community Hospital where I was to have what they called a Barium Enema.

"Go-lytely" is the name of the stuff they prescribe these days. It's been much too long ago to recall the name of the gallon container with the powder in it back then, but it reminded me of the main ingredient in anti-freeze. You added water to it, shook it, and watched as this light green-colored liquid was created out of nowhere. Then you had to drink it all, eight ounces at a time, every fifteen minutes until it was all gone.

By the end of the four hours it had begun. "It" being the trips to the john very few minutes. The green Go-lytely liquid is designed to cause a complete flushing of the gastro-intestinal system from the tummy to the "back-door" of the patient. The whole preparation takes about eight hours and requires that the patient have nothing but clear liquids after a light lunch and nothing to eat or drink for the eight hours before the medical procedure. By the morning of the hospital visit, the patient is

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thoroughly cleaned out but exhausted, famished and bone-dry. So it was with my own self.

A Barium Enema involves the insertion of a tube up the back-side and the injection of a chalky liquid infused with Barium, a radioactive element that makes it easy for radiology “see” the insides of the lower intestinal tract. X-rays are taken of the Lower G.I., as it’s called. The radiologist then “interprets” the resultant films to determine if there are any lesions or polyps.

In my case, the prognosis was colon polyps. A large one was located close to the internal exit of my back door, possibly causing leakage earlier thought to be sweaty privates. An appointment was made to visit a specialist in Phoenix to discuss what to do next.

After trading information with my physicians about the condition, the Phoenix doctor, an Internal Medicine specialist, set up a colonoscopy to look into (to coin a phrase) what was causing the distress.

The procedure involves inserting through the patient’s anus a long, narrow, flexible tube containing a bright light source, air tubes, and tiny electronic and mechanical surgical tools, all of which can be manipulated from the outside. The doctor maneuvers the six-foot tube through the full length of the colon, checking every inch, every nook and cranny, looking for problems. He can remove a polyp with a tiny wire snare, burn off its connection and cauterize the wound using the colonoscope’s tools – and while he works he can watch the whole thing on a big computer monitor in the operating room.

After an overnight stay in a Phoenix hotel while the green stuff worked its magic (again), I submitted to a sedated trip into the twilight zone. Seventeen polyps were removed from my colon before the doctor called a halt to the procedure.

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Later, after I had recovered from the sedative, he said that when he was near my appendix, he became worried that the work area was too confined and required a surgeon with better skills than he possessed. (I have the highest respect for a professional who has no qualms about admitting his shortcomings!) He said there were still at least four more polyps left in there. And this guy specialized in colonoscopies!

Two months later they knocked me out again and a highly skilled surgeon with a charming Indian name deftly removed the remaining polyps – ten of them! After a week of recuperation I had a follow-up visit with the family doctor. We discussed the two colonoscopies and the unusual quantity of material that had been removed. He said none of the doctors had ever seen a patient with so many polyps. He also reported that a couple had come back identified as pre-cancerous. They had been caught before mutating into the dreaded killer. With that, I reminded my doctor that my complaint about dirty drawers led to the two procedures that had born such fruit, but the problem with my shorts persisted. That resulted in a third trip to Phoenix and a stay in the hospital under the knife.

Rectal surgery removed an early-stage cancerous lesion just inside my little bunghole! The first week in March found my underwear without blemish and my body rid of a threat that could have lead to a painful death. After that, I was referred to a new Internal Medicine specialist closer to home, and every year since 1998 I've reported dutifully to him for an annual colonoscopy. The procedure has become almost routine, with at least one new polyp turning up each year. No sweat. It's a piece of cake - but that evil green stuff still sucks!

The Lamp

I've been admiring a lamp across the room my mom returned

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to me before she passed. It still fits comfortably in a modern western living room, even though it was created in 1954.

In the 8th grade there were a number of us, all boys, who took wood shop as an elective. Home Economics was not much of an option back then, before it became ok for guys to learn to cook and sew. It seemed like an easy class; one a kid like me could ace with little effort. The shop teacher was a cool guy, but he was insistent that we kept ourselves, our area, our tools and our equipment spotless. His contention was that dirt, oil, rust, dust and sawdust were safety hazards. He taught us that a clean and tidy shop is also a sure sign of quality workmanship.

We learned how to choose the right saw to cut a piece of wood and how to use it correctly. We learned the differences between drill bits and augers. We had to learn what grade of sandpaper is used on differing projects. We also did hands-on projects. You know ... the piece of wood sanded smooth, varnished and embellished with a picture and ribbons. Then there was the set of hang-on-the-wall shelves, using rabbet joints and wood glue to make it stable – no nails. We learned how to use a plethora of hammers. There really were a lot of them ranging from a little ball-peen to a sixteen-pound sledge. We had a number of lathes and we were taught how to safely use them and the assorted parting tools, scrapers, chisels and gouges associated with them. Our instructor also taught us how to use a bench press drill as well as the many accessories that come with it.

One of the last projects we were assigned was a free-hand lamp base and stand. Each student was allowed to design his piece, create it on a wood lathe, acquire the electrical parts, put it all together and then show it off as his final class project. Rather than just turn a two-by-four piece of wood into a stand and a four-by-four piece into a round base, as many of the kids did, I actually put pencil to paper and designed a piece of art.

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The teacher was skeptical. He said it would be very nice, but keeping it from coming apart or breaking while turning the wood could be very difficult and would also be dangerous if not done exactly right. I assured him that I would be very careful and would ask for his guidance if I ran into a problem.

First, I had to plane a pair of foot-long two-by-fours along one broad side then glue and tightly clamp them together to form one solid piece. I selected yellow wood glue for strength. That created a solid four-by-four. Next, two six-inch long two-by-fours were planed and glued along a narrow side to create the material for the base, which would finish with a five inch diameter. The critical operation was the preparation of the planed surfaces so that they would never separate. This had to be done without using screws, nails or other hardware because the final product was from wood turning, held together only by wood glue and its electrical nuts and bolts.

The day after the wood parts had been glued up, a Wednesday, the lathe was set up to do the base, kind of like setting up to turn a bowl. The base was turned down to one inch in height and five inches in diameter and then the design was carefully turned into it. Finishing came next going through six different grades of sandpaper and a fine grade of crocus cloth. The teacher questioned the use of the cloth, but I reassured him that the final finish would benefit a lot from the resulting extra-smooth surface. The following day, while it turned slowly, the newly finished base was painted with six separate coats of clear spar varnish, each of which was allowed to dry as the part turned under the hot lathe lights. Even with a shop fan blowing on it, it took the whole period. Friday, the dry finish was sanded again, lightly to create a perfect surface and a final coat of varnish was applied and dried as the lathe turned and the fan blew. With that, another period evaporated.

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The stand, or barrel, was created the second week using the same exacting procedures that created the base. By Friday, both pieces were ready for final finishing. I brought a can of Johnson's floor wax and an old tee shirt to class. The teacher asked what the wax was about and I told him if it worked so well on floors it should work doubly-well on a wood lamp.



Each piece was mounted on the lathe and three coats of wax were applied, each of which was polished to a gleaming finish.

The next day, I brought the light fixture, hardware and lampshade to class. The turned and polished pieces were each drilled to accommodate the hardware and then dusted clean.

After the hardware, wood, wire and lampshade had been assembled, I put my creation on the teacher's desk, sat down in my seat and gloated. It was perfect. Still is. Got an A+.

They Call It Service

When we lived in Tucson I was involved in all sorts of things.

The Rincon Optimist Club was fun. Each year we organized the Soapbox Derby for kids from the Old Pueblo.

My dear friend Jack, a Freemason, got me re-involved with DeMolay as an advisor for the Palo Verde Chapter. Son John became involved with DeMolay and Daughter Janet became a member of Job's Daughters. Both became quite entwined in the two Masonic youth organizations.

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Claudette joined Beta Sigma Phi, the same Sorority to which my mom had been a member years before.

Then there was membership in the Tucson Chamber of Commerce and service on the Transportation Committee.

Eventually, the DeMolay Chapter Dad, my friend Jack and my father, all Masons, encouraged me to petition for membership in Epes Randolph Lodge #32. (No man can be asked or invited to become a Freemason, but must apply of his own *free will and accord* without *any mental reservation* as the ancient tradition goes.) I *took* the first two degrees and like so many men before was *given* the third degree of Master Mason. My dad accompanied me into the Tucson Scottish Rite some years later and we both became 32nd degree Masons.

There was plenty of political activity, too. I registered as a Republican and became a Precinct Committeeman. This was back in the days after Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater had run for President.

Those were the days of Richard Nixon, Spiro Agnew and Gerald Ford. Agnew came to town and gave a pretty decent speech to the Trunk and Tusk Club. Members paid a hundred dollars a plate for that fund-raiser and were fed the usual fare of cold peas and chicken, with Cherries Jubilee for dessert. Somehow, I avoided having to pay to attend. I was on the Publicity Committee - maybe that was it.

At any rate, those were the days when Republicans were mostly conservative and Democrats were mostly liberal, but both parties got along well, unflappingly agreed to disagree, and made some great compromises that created historic law.

When the children were young, before their involvement in Boy Scouts, Brownies, DeMolay and Drama Club, they used to ask their mom, "Where's dad?" In retrospect, it was really

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rough on Claudette because she always had to come up with what to her must have been an excuse, like he's here or there, at this meeting or that, or something along that line. It never occurred to me back then how hard it must have been on her.

When we moved to Globe, I joined White Mountain Masonic Lodge #3. An acquaintance asked me to become a member of the Globe Rotary Club. I eventually became its President. The Cobre Valley Hospital Foundation asked me to join, and I did. There are plaques in public places with my name on them as a result of community service, one of which is in a gazebo at the top of Round Mountain! There is a Mural at the Hospital with Claudette's name on it as well as mine. And our living room is adorned with a number of awards for community service, including one for service on the Census 2000 Committee. I'm not trying to toot my own horn here, but rather am showing that community service has been a part of the Thayer family for a very long time. By now that should be clear.

When we moved to Globe it was an election year and I met a ton of politicians by virtue of my connections in the media. I was doing a DJ shift one morning when Edward G. "Bunch" Guerrero and Cruz Salas came to visit the radio station. Guerrero heard I was a Mason and we hit it off pretty well. He also was a member of White Mountain Lodge #3. Salas was a member of the Knights of Columbus, a catholic fraternal organization similar to the Freemasons. Both were good men. Both were hispanic. Both were running for Gila County Supervisor, Bunch for District Two and Cruz for District Three. Both knew I was registered as a Republican. They were pals and both apparently wanted me as a friend.

Having two out of three candidates for Gila County Supervisor as friends gave me incredible access to inside information. The fact that I was a Mason created a relationship for which

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every newsman in Gila County would have given an arm and a leg. Both men, by the way, were elected to office.

The Third County Supervisor, Ron Christensen, became a trusted friend after I was tasked with investigating him by the owner of the radio station. Christensen was suspected of using his position to profit from real estate deals with the County. After a long, in-depth investigation, which included a written questionnaire and several in-person interviews, I concluded unequivocally that he never contemplated any unlawful deeds and, in fact, had absolutely no connections to the real estate industry. We found a mutual bond in that investigation, and a lasting friendship as well.

So, the three Gila County Supervisors were my friends, they were excellent inside sources for news details, and they trusted me to keep a lot of information they shared in confidence. Few journalists, much less rural broadcasters, are privy to such great connections. These three trusted connections helped me cover the news better than any other journalist in Gila County. I had always made it policy to never air a story until all the details could be corroborated by at least two unimpeachable sources. These connections meant that I could have the truth on the air quickly and in depth. That made some journalists uncomfortable because if they rushed to air a story and got it wrong it made them look bad. My reputation as an accurate source of news soared.

One day I was invited to breakfast with Mr. Salas at Jerry's, a local restaurant. He said he needed a token Republican there to keep the other men honest. The breakfast bunch turned out to be a weekly gathering of the most politically and economically powerful people in Central Arizona. One-time Governor Rose Mofford once quipped that nothing important happened in Arizona that the boys in the breakfast club hadn't approved.

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Bill Hardt - one of the two longest-serving Arizona Legislators ever - was a regular, as was the independently wealthy former Mayor of Globe, Hank Williams. Also a regular was a real estate developer by the name of Mike Radanovich, who made his fortune after jumping ship in Portland, Oregon. He came to Globe at a young age from Montenegro and worked in construction. Tommy Long, the man who almost single-handedly developed the commercial strip in east Globe had breakfast with us each week. An old oriental man, owner of Globe's original Toastmaster Café and father of the County Assessor, Toy Hom often showed up for coffee. Jim Brockert, the guy who provided most of the plumbing supplies for the area for decades also attended. Ralph Bamario, a high-end accountant they called Bam, a couple of car dealers, and a well-known attorney attended many Saturday mornings, as did another guy who became a great friend, Danny Michels. He was a prominent businessman who had been a radio announcer and crack car salesman back in the day. All of this bunch were very well-known Democrats.

The breakfast bunch got together at 9:00 o'clock on Saturday mornings to bet on sports and play the lottery. Part of the deal was five bucks each into the pool every week. However, there was no doubt that these power-brokers were there to share stories and discuss local, state and national politics. Breakfast sometimes lasted into mid-afternoon. After the bets were placed and winnings distributed, a different subject would be originated from each participant clockwise around the table. Nothing was out of line. One week, Danny - he was responsible for the lottery tickets - showed up driving a brand-new pick-up truck. The former Mayor suggested that Danny must have hit the Lottery, to which Hardt blew his stack! After the dust settled, everybody got about eight bucks and agreed the remainder went to the kitty. After he settled down, Hardt realized that he had been the victim of one of Danny's pranks.

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Danny had been Cruz Salas' campaign manager for the 1992 election. They were close friends. It was natural that Danny,



Cruz, Mike Radanovich and I got together, aside from the Saturday breakfasts. The four of us enjoyed golf and we were members of the Cobre Valle Country Club. I had joined the club with help from my mom, who footed the initiation fee when Claudette and I moved to

Globe in 1992. This "Fearsome Foursome" played cow-pasture pool together for over two decades and there are plenty of golf stories to tell, but we'll go there later.

RINO

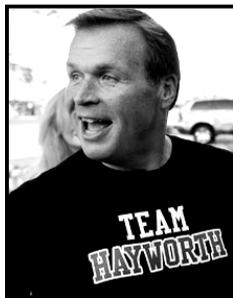
The 1994 election cycle found me doing mostly news. It was an interesting year because Arizona's congressional districts had been reapportioned and there was a heated contest over the new district one seat.



The incumbent from the former district six was Karan English, a Democrat from Flagstaff. She had been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1992. English had committed to obtain funding for the Globe Canyon Water Project. She had the ear of President Bill Clinton and his continuing support meant that the House and Senate most certainly would approve a substantial allocation should she be re-elected.

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The water project was a big deal because back in 1969 the U.S. Forest Service, in concert with the Salt River Project and Dow Chemical Company, had sprayed the mountainsides above Globe with defoliants as a way to capture greater runoff from rainfall. At the time, government agencies thought it was a good idea to use Agent Orange, but it eventually poisoned canyon dwellers' well water. A line of water spigots near the Globe Community Center was set up for canyon residents. Two men, Bob McKusic and Leon Lenox, worked together to form the Kellner Canyon water district in an effort to construct a pipeline to deliver potable water to people with homes in both Kellner and Icehouse canyons.



Prominent Phoenix TV sportscaster John David Hayworth, a Republican, became English's formidable opponent. J.D. Hayworth was one of America's best orators at the time, far and away a better speaker than Mrs. English. Many folks thought Hayworth was one of the most bombastic story tellers since Senator Beauregard Claghorn of Charleston, South Carolina who was a regular on the Fred Allen radio show in the late '40s. According to *Wikipedia*, when Allen went calling, Claghorn would typically answer the door with, "Somebody, ah say, somebody knocked! Claghorn's the name, Senator Claghorn, that is. I'm from the South. Suh." Hayworth's photo sometimes turned up as Warner Brothers' Loony Tunes cartoon figure, the famous Foghorn Leghorn. Well, ol' J.D. fit the part so perfectly, we in the Democrat political arena at the time referred to him as Claghorn Foghorn!



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Hayworth won the 1994 General Election walking away with a 13.1% margin, garnering 107,060 votes to English's 81,321. During the campaign he had promised to continue English's effort to secure funding for the Canyon Water project. He lied.

I tried on many occasions to get up-to-date reports from Hayworth's people, but never got a straight answer. Early in 1996, J.D. staged weekly radio reports during which news-people were encouraged to inquire about ongoing activities. (It's an old ploy that circumvents the requirement to report campaign expenses while blatantly electioneering.) During each of the reports, I made it a point to ask about progress with the Canyon Water project. J.D. finally slipped up in the early Summer. Each of the reports were recorded, start to finish, complete with the questions from News Directors across the middle of Arizona. So, I had the whole quote after I asked for the latest information. Right after the program aired the phone rang. It was Bob McCusick. I put the call on record and listened in astonishment as he refuted Hayworth's report. Hayworth told our radio audience that he had spoken with McCusick only days earlier and reported to him that funding for the project was imminent. McCusick said that was a blatant lie, that the two had not spoken in more than a month, and that Hayworth's people told him by phone just days earlier that the funding issue was stalled.

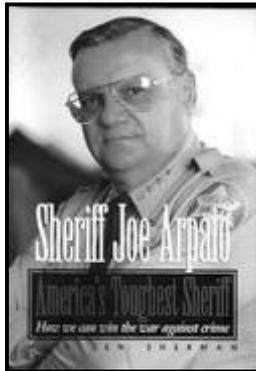
The Hayworth whopper happened on a Friday and it made me so angry that I went to the County Courthouse after work and re-registered as a Democrat. The boys at breakfast the next morning were delighted. I was no longer a token Republican.

Here's Your Sign

By the time the 1996 elections rolled around I had quit my job at KQSS-FM and signed on with Willard Shoecraft to do the

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news at KIKO-AM. I left KQSS on July first, called Willard and asked if he needed a news guy. Shoecraft said he'd been waiting for two years to get my call. The KIKO News Director's position began Independence Day.



Interviewing public figures was a great joy to me. I remember Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio from earlier in the year while still at KQSS. He was witty, personable, interesting. Arpaio had been out shopping his new book *America's Toughest Sheriff* and was in Globe to do a book-signing. I recall asking him what he thought about J.D. Hayworth. He said J.D. was a good sports announcer.

Most politicians and government executives knew me as Terrible Ted because of my probing questions while at KQSS. There were all kinds of connections including many in the Arizona Legislature, as well as key city, county and state officials both elected and appointed. The word about my abrupt change in party affiliation spread like wildfire. To my amazement, there were no repercussions. Republicans said they were sorry to hear about it and Dems were just tickled to death. Nothing changed when it came to the news. Everyone knew that I asked hard questions and expected honest, straightforward answers.

Doing live interviews at KIKO was a kick. There was a twenty minute program following the 9:30am news called the Open Line, a program originated decades before by Mr. Shoecraft. The program could be expanded to include the half-hour following the top-of-the-hour ABC News.

As a Democrat, it was neat to interview J.D. Hayworth again, although I remained completely apolitical with my approach.

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Off mike, we bandied about radio and TV broadcaster stuff and there was genuine camaraderie between us. On the air, it was as professional and straight-laced as anyone could have expected. To his credit, he never lied to me again ... and his indiscretion was never mentioned between us.

In 1998 Janet Napolitano was running for Arizona State Attorney General. She was a striking figure, quite attractive. She was a wonderful subject and she certainly knew her stuff. After the usual series of bruising questions, I stopped and asked her why a handsome woman such as herself wasn't married. She said, "The right guy just hasn't happened along."

Napolitano and I met again on a number of occasions over the years. I remember moving up the chain of command very quickly in the Gila County Democrat Party and becoming its Vice-chairman. (I wanted no part of the chairmanship because it involved actual work and the gal that had the seat was very good at it and very dedicated.) There was a short get-together at Guayo's on the Apache Trail one evening so Napolitano, then running for Governor, could stop and chat with fellow



Dems on her way through Globe. She and her entourage were pretty close to on time, unusual for political travel, which usually runs late. Janet made her way up the receiving line, shaking hands and trading small talk with the mucky-mucks until she got to the end, where Chairwoman Gayl Overgaard and I lay in wait. She and Gayl traded a few pleasantries and then Napolitano turned to me and said very matter-of-factly, "Terrible Ted. I'm so glad to see you again. I want you to know that the right man still hasn't come along."

I lost the job at KIKO after Willard died. The place wasn't the same and I was the Democrat in a Republican house. That's

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not to say that I left my political affiliation at the door. They all knew – after all, Globe is a very small municipality located in rural Arizona. So I made it a point to always cover both sides to a story and always have two unimpeachable sources. That was my demise. Shirley Dawson, a prominent Democrat running in the Primary against my good friend Cruz Salas, called incessantly with stories she expected would go right on the air. Shirley and Willard's widow, Ruth, were pals so there were expectations. I never allowed that pressure to affect the news. If a story had merit, it was aired after it had met the criteria - both sides and two sources.

One day Dawson called in a tizzy – she related that there had been an incident involving Gila County in Peridot on the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Graham County. The San Carlos Reservation straddles the River that runs between Gila and Graham counties. In the middle of the night someone had opened a fire hydrant in Lower Peridot and all of the water supplying Upper Peridot drained out into the San Carlos river. Great story! Mrs. Dawson claimed that Gila County was breaking the law by providing water to Upper Peridot. She said they were using Gila County equipment, Gila County employees and Gila County taxpayer funds to take care of people living in Graham County. Shirley wanted it on the air right away because it should be a bulletin, beating the other stations on the air. Her call had been recorded. It was a scoop, but it still needed corroboration. Gila County Emergency Services was contacted and my friend Mariano consented to be recorded to fill in the blanks. Meanwhile, Shirley was on the phone every few minutes bugging the staff, as well as Mrs. Shoecraft, demanding that the story air immediately. I just plodded along, routinely putting the thing together and preparing for the next newscast. Shirley was livid. The Office Manager was livid. Ruth didn't say a word, as I recall. The tale finally aired about an hour later. It follows - paraphrased:

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This morning a little after two a man was seen wielding a wrench on one of the fire hydrants in Lower Peridot. Witnesses in the neighborhood said he was drunk and they left him alone. This morning, the San Carlos Tribal Offices began receiving calls from people who said their toilets quit flushing, their swamp coolers weren't working and there was no water. Tribal officials found the problem and closed the valve on the errant fire hydrant. People still didn't have water because the pumps couldn't keep up – only one was in service. The Tribe contacted Graham County Emergency Services and asked them to bring a water truck. Graham County had their water truck at the prison across the county, where there was also an emergency, so they were unable to assist. Graham County officials contacted Gila County Emergency Services, who sent a tanker and a second water vehicle called a buffalo. The tanker provided non-potable water and the buffalo was for drinking water. There are reciprocal agreements between Emergency Services providers everywhere in America. Gila County will be reimbursed for its expenses helping Graham County residents. An agreement between the two counties means that thirsty people in Upper Peridot have water today.

It was quite a story and, unlike what is recreated above, much of the information broadcast was provided by actualities collected from audio tapes recorded during the corroboration process. So, the listeners got the straight dope from the horse's mouth, so to speak. But, Shirley worked her magic ... and I forfeited my job for doing it right. No problem. A lot of key people had my back in 2000.

The Best Food in Arizona

There was help after KIKO. After all, I had friends in the Gila County Supervisors - and the Sheriff was a Democrat - so it

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was suggested that I apply for work at the Gila County Jail. That I did, and my stay as a Detention Officer was memorable.

One of the big tourist attractions in Globe-Miami, Arizona is its Mexican food. Tourists lap it up, but the locals eat it every day. The Indian and the White Guy remarked in their stand-up comedy routine some years ago that there are more Mexican restaurants between Phoenix and the San Carlos Reservation than anywhere else in America. And they're all named El Rey! It's my contention that there may well be more Mexican restaurants *per-capita* in the Globe-Miami area than anywhere else in North-America!

The Gila County Jail serves Mexican food at least once a week. There is no doubt about the jail food's quality because inmates from many other jurisdictions ask specifically to do their time in Globe. The Detention staff, while shying away from most of the other jail food, make it a point to ask for a tray when the kitchen makes Mexican food. The recipes have been handed down through the years from talented Mexican cooks - some from out of state, some Arizona-born. Latino food created in the Gila County Jail can easily compete head-to-head with any Mexican restaurant in America. The tacos are terrific; the relleno is ridiculous; the burros are brazen; the enchiladas are extraordinary; the salsa is sublime; and forgive me Joan Rivers, but the chips are to die for!

Having served on the Cobre Valley Regional Medical Center Foundation Board and as Past President of the Globe Rotary Club, which used to meet at the hospital regularly, I can state unequivocally that CVRMC has the best hospital food anywhere. I've eaten it while attending meetings and I've partaken when my wife had to spend some time there as an inpatient. Patients and guests have nothing but kudos for the food service at Globe-Miami's main medical facility. And the portions are always huge! I can't say that their Mexican food

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is as good as that at the jail, but it's definitely in a class of its own. Unlike the jail, delicious coffee is always available, on the house, almost everywhere in the Cobre Valley Regional Medical Center.

When you stop to think about it, they might not be the places where many would care to take up residence, but you can always count on great food at the jail and the hospital in Globe-Miami, Arizona!

Election

I quit the job at the Gila County Jail on my wife's birthday, April 14th, 2004. A run for Gila County Supervisor was in the wind. My pal Cruz Salas had dealt with the stresses of high public office, a couple of serious heart problems, and served sufficient time to qualify for a tasty Arizona pension. Cruz wanted out. And he said I'd make a good candidate. Quitting in April gave me time to obtain the proper amount of petition signatures by the June 9th filing deadline.

Leaving the job was mandatory since Arizona has a resign-to-run law and I was a Gila County employee. I cashed out my four year old state retirement and took early Social Security retirement at age 63. The state retirement and accrued sick leave money gave me a tidy nest-egg for running a campaign. The vacation time I had earned gave me several weeks' of paid leave after my last day on the job. Claudette was already receiving Social Security, which combined with mine, meant there was a guaranteed income. Sweet!

Family members and a number of allies donated to the campaign so it was relatively easy to get things going. Letterhead, envelopes, business cards, fliers and campaign signs had to be designed and coordinated, at the same time I

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was canvassing the huge 3rd District of Gila County for petition signatures. District three covers roughly the same area as the state of Delaware – spanning about 100 miles from north to south and 105 or so from east to west, roughly half of the county's 4,796 square miles ... way big, but nowhere close to as densely populated as the east coast!

Getting petition signatures means dividing each area into little pieces using precinct boundaries as rough designators and walking every street in every neighborhood. One of the reasons they call it the stump is because all that's left of your legs after all is said and done are stumps!

One of my opponents pulled every trick in the book, including character assassination, blatant election law violations, and outright lies. I found out first-hand how rotten politics can be. But then, all is fair in love and war - and politicians, being public figures, are exempt from all the fair play demanded of commercial enterprises and enforced by state and federal laws. The option is to just suck it up and present a public persona much better than that painted by the opposition. Ultimately, the dirty tricks and lies, as well as my failure to work hard enough to counter the negativity, did me in. The final tally found me dead last ... by a monstrous margin!

I remember as a young teen being teased because of my big ears. Some of the kids called me *elephant ears*. One even said I looked like a taxi-cab with the doors open! Those were not my friends. True, it was humiliating. But, nowhere close to as humiliating as the Primary election of 2004.

Racism Rant

Since the time I was a kid in Monterey, California, racism has never been an issue. Maybe that's why it disgusts me so today.

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Fred Jackman, one of my classmates, was a short, wiry black kid who was great at track and football. He was a nice guy who was well-liked and I don't recall ever having a cross word with him. One of my "best friends" in high school was a bow-legged black kid named W D McKenny. He was very much aware of his skin color, but it didn't seem to bother him at all. W D (that was his whole name!) was fun to be around and everyone, especially the cheer squad, just loved him. I and all my honky friends thought he was one of the coolest guys on the face of the earth. We got in touch with him - and he used to come visit - after Claudette and I bought our first home in Aptos, California in the mid-60s.

During our Junior year, the president of our high school class of '58 was Don Clickard, a skip-of-the-generations mulatto. Both of his parents were white folks and very sensitive about their son's dark bronze skin and wiry hair. But, nobody I knew ever gave it a second thought. Don was a handsome guy. The girls worshiped him and he was always at the center any fun goings-on, a leader in every way.

There were a bunch of other colored kids at Monterey Union High School, almost all were the offspring of military folks stationed at Fort Ord, the Presidio or the Navy Line School. Maybe it was because we had lots of Italian and Japanese kids in our schools that race didn't seem to make much difference to anyone but the adults.

The Japanese kids had the worst of it, I think. Fred Nishiguchi and John Sanda were tight with everybody, but some of the parents didn't like us hanging out with "those crummy Japs." Sanda showed the jap-haters the quality of the school kids in Monterey - he was elected President of our Senior Class! By the same token, my mom didn't like it that some of my best friends were called pachucos by some - Italian "gangstas"

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from fishing families. We kids didn't pay any mind to such drivel from the older folks.

I remember Anna Monteleone, a Sicilian girl who joined us in the 7th grade mid-year at Walter Colton Jr. High School. She spoke no English. None. We taught her. She worked hard learning new words and phrases every day. The whole class took her under its wings, as did the other kids in the classroom next door. Someone was always by her side, helping her to communicate. She managed pretty well, as I recall, getting As and Bs on her first report card. We were all very proud of her.

We had a good number of Latino kids in Monterey, but we never thought anything of it because they were just like our Italian friends. As a matter of fact, many kids signed up for spanish class just so they could learn to speak more easily with the boys and girls who spoke only broken English.

Several decades after graduation it dawned on me that most of our black and hispanic friends lived in Seaside, pretty much segregated from the rest of the community. After high school I drove school buses for Monterey and one of my runs went out to Seaside. All the kids who rode the bus called it the "African Express" and I never gave it a second thought.

We didn't really think much one way or another about race or skin color until the marches and commotion in the south started showing up on the TV evening news. I remember watching one evening with some friends when there was a clip of Orville Faubus ranting about "those nigras" making trouble. We all just looked at each other and wondered out loud what planet that creep was from. We'd never really been exposed to racism until we saw it first-hand on CBS.

The language transitions from negro to colored to black to African-American were mind-blowing for many of the folks

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my age. And it was confusing to hear educated people actually expressing on television the same sick vernacular as those few misguided Monterey '50s parents.

In more modern times Claudette and I became good friends with Olian Underwood, a big ol' black kid that I met covering a Tucson barrio so-called "riot" for the radio station. (It turned out to be a very loud block party.) Olie introduced us to the gay community at the Black Door bar downtown, to regular members of the black community at a local night spot, and to several other folks in his neighborhood. We two white people came to know first-hand the discomfort that many blacks and hispanics feel out there in the rest of the world, yet we were made to feel at home with everyone.

I became acquainted with one of Tucson's pair of notorious mafia crime families when nightlife paper publisher "Little Joe" Bonanno introduced me to his dad, Papa Joe Bonanno. "Joe Bananas" introduced me to eldest son Bill the enforcer, the *Capo*. The Bonanno family and the Licavoli family were once bitter enemies. Even so, Kingpin Peter Licavoli talked to me by phone from the Grace Ranch one day. His grandson Teddy had written me a bad check for \$100 the day he got out of prison. Since his time was for passing bad paper, the word went out that if I ever ran into him again, I'd break his knees and throw him onto Speedway Blvd! Grandpa Pete had published a newspaper ad refuting his grandson's debts, yet on the phone he told me his family would owe me a favor the rest of my life if I didn't follow through with the threat! A hundred bucks for a lifetime favor from La Cosa Nostra? Umm. Ok ...

Black, Japanese, Mexican, Italian, Sicilian ... just as it was when I was young, ethnicity has never made a difference to me and mine or to the people we have come to know. Let me say this: The insertion of racism into the public arena by our elected leaders, who should be setting much better examples for our youth, I find personally vile and disgusting. Suffice it

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to say that without racism the worst crimes against mankind would never have happened.

Want a Ride, Kid?

After the 2004 Democratic Primary, some of my Rotary Club buddies recommended that I put in for a job with the Globe Unified School District. There were openings for school bus drivers. Although it was some four-and-a-half decades earlier, my post-high school experience seemed handy. Credentials as a Marine Corps mechanic and heavy vehicle driver also appeared helpful. It looked like a shoo-in, unlike the election!

Before driving school buses, one must have a Commercial Drivers License (CDL). The Globe School District not only provided the job, but also the CDL training for employees. Globe's Transportation Coordinator was Joe Mercer, a mechanic with management and driving credentials. He was also certified as an Arizona Classroom and Behind-the-wheel School Bus Driver Instructor.

Arizona requires a prospective driver to pass a written test after a minimum of 14 hours of classroom instruction before it will grant a temporary license or permit. Another 20 hours are required behind the wheel of the largest vehicle an employee will drive – followed by completion of a hands-on test that includes successful driving in town and highway traffic as well as successful parking in tight spaces. A prospective school bus driver must also pass an in-depth background check that includes fingerprinting by local law-enforcement, an extensive medical examination, and a routine physical performance test. Completion of more classroom instruction provides employees with First Aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Certification. All this training and testing takes about two weeks.

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The job was fun, much like I remembered from my days at Monterey some 45 years before. Kids hadn't changed much. They still were wound up like little springs, still wanted to play around, still did stupid stuff, and still pushed the envelope as far as possible every day. There was always a bully, always a nerd, always a flirt, and always a klutz. All of them liked to kibitz with their bus driver. Even the most shy wanted to chat with the guy who took them to and from school.

The kids were different in one way that disturbed me for a while – it took some adjustment on my part: They were dirty. Not dirty from playing on the ground – dirty in their ways. It seemed like they had never been introduced to trash cans. Inside the bus they threw trash on the floor, stuffed it into the seat cracks, pitched it out the windows, tossed it at friends, and generally made messes. And food fights were never out of the question! They especially liked sunflower seeds and Hot Cheetos because they were fun to eat and made great ammunition.

Away from the bus, I noticed that nobody would stop to dispose of an itinerant candy wrapper next to the sidewalk or stoop to pick up a plastic water bottle someone had discarded on the lawn. I watched children flip trash at passers-by, drop empty candy boxes and bags next to the curb, stuff half-eaten sandwiches into cracks in walls, and smear peanut butter on parked cars. It was universal. Everybody did it, even some of the teachers!

Sometime during the almost five decades since I had been a student, kids had lost all respect for their surroundings. It appeared that trash was just an easy way to create graffiti without expending any imaginative energy. It was heart-breaking because there was no way to control it, except in the school bus. There, I could control trashy children with friendly discipline. There was always someone getting caught doing

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something dumb, someone who could take the can and carry it around inside the bus to collect the trash. That seemed like fun and a way a miscreant could be made to feel special. Every now and then, there would be a bus-wide hunt to see who could find the most trash-in-hiding.

Trash turned out to be a great way to keep from writing reports about the trouble-makers – and there were always plenty of them. That’s their job, right? Instead of a trip to the Principal’s office - which was usually some kind of guarantee for Lunch Suspension or worse - I would offer clean-up as an option. The kids ate it up! And as a direct result, mine was one of the cleanest buses in the fleet. My kids were some of the best-behaved in school history – at least in what was left of my mind at the time.

Speaking of behavior ... I drove several times a day between Globe and the San Carlos Apache Reservation – the Rez as the locals called it. It was a long trip each way and it included all of the major neighborhoods as well as the downtown area of the Rez. There was a stop six miles from Globe at the Apache Gold Casino’s convenience store fondly called the C-store by the natives. Just down the road was a turn off of state highway 70 that took us onto Indian Six, a twelve mile stretch of narrow, winding, beat-up blacktop with worn yellow center-lines and intermittent white fog lines along the sides. We’ll get to the behavior part in a minute.

Closest to the casino was a place they called Cutter. Apaches are very smart and stoic with a knack for humor and practical jokes. The reason this place was called Cutter was because that’s where the sawmill was located. Cutter. Sawmill. Get it? That’s not the only interesting name.

There is a bridge over the San Carlos river in Peridot, a neighborhood and postal address named for the bright yellow

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gems mined only by tribal members. The Apaches pronounce the place and the stones Peri-dot, unlike the French who call the gems Peri-dough. Nobody but very haughty gemologists cares what they call it. To San Carlos Apaches the two areas where they live and the gems they mine are called Peri-dot.

At any rate, the bridge between Lower Peridot (on the west side of the river in Gila County) and Upper Peridot (on the other side in Graham County) was built several decades ago. Not long after it was completed there were heavy rains that caused the river to flood. That washed out the approaches, which had to be rebuilt. A couple of decades later, heavy summer rains again washed out the approaches, much to the chagrin of the engineers, builders and the San Carlos Tribal Council. They did a better job rebuilding the approaches the second time and the resultant structure was renamed by the folks living along Peridot siding. They call it *Again Bridge*.

We were on our way down Indian Six, right? Nope. They call it Cutter Road! Alright now, hang on. This is quite a ride. After Cutter, we pass through an area called Gilson Wash which runs the twelve miles to downtown San Carlos. About two miles from town the left side of the road is called Frontline. After passing Tarzan Valley (also on the left) one goes by Sam's Crossing on the right, which is the way to get to Belvado Park. In San Carlos the bus route goes through Seven-Mile and then up past Three Tanks to Airport-79. These are all neighborhoods with names unique to their locations. On the way to Peridot, the bus will go through Chinatown – don't ask - I don't know! You can tell by the names they've given the places where they make their homes that Apaches are a very pragmatic, imaginative people.

Like all children, Apache kids will misbehave if given the opportunity, but if they know their parents are in the loop with the bus driver they are the most polite, best-behaved kids on

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the face of the earth. Mine were so good I wrote a letter to the editor of the local paper touting their behavioral prowess as bus riders compared to the kids in Globe and Miami!

Take this job and ...

Spring came to Globe, Miami and San Carlos in 2006, along with pending contract offers for Globe Unified School District employees.

I was offered a 35 hour bus driver contract for the 2005 school year – meaning that I was to drive seven hours per day. I was given the green light for up to five additional hours doing light repairs and maintenance to the District's fleet of school buses, bringing my total hours to 40 per week. It was a good deal.

The 2006 contract offer was for 30 hours per week behind the wheel and specified another ten hours of work as a mechanic. The deal in 2005 was that I could work more than that 35 hour contract specified, up to a total of 40 hours. But there was a problem with the 2006 offer: The contract was for 30 hours at \$8.64/hr as a bus driver, which was fine with me. But it also *specified*, not allowed, ten additional hours as a mechanic, not light mechanic, paid the same as a driver. I balked and noted that mechanics were routinely paid almost double that of drivers and that in 2005 I had the *option* to work *up to* a total of 40 hours.

I counter-offered thirty hours a week as driver, ten hours as a light mechanic and a stipend of two-thousand dollars to make up some of the mechanic's pay differential. There was no reply. I asked about the counter-offer a week later but nobody had an answer. I was being stone-walled.

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A demand letter arrived at my home one day late in May stating that I must sign the contract offered by June 8th or I wouldn't be rehired. If this had been a union job, the letter would have been evidence of bad-faith bargaining. There is no bargaining unit at Globe Unified School District Number One so I was stuck. It was sign the contract or else.

David Allen Coe wrote a song that Johnny Paycheck recorded back in the summer of 1977. That song was a hit country music single and the album went pretty much viral. Both men made a ton of money off the song, which also inspired a movie by the same name 1981. David Allen Coe's memorable lyrics pretty adequately tell the tale of what I decided to do with that Globe Unified School District No.1 contract:

You better not try to stand in my way

As I'm walking out the door.

Take this job and shove it.

I ain't working here no more!

It's Destiny

Since it was the beginning of summer break there were plenty of jobs available in education. It's a true fact that just about anywhere you go there are jobs for detention officers and bus drivers available almost all the time. It was no different in Globe/Miami. The grapevine had it that Destiny School was looking for bus drivers, so I kicked around for a month and finally applied for the job. Naturally, I passed the background checks and already had the needed training and credentials, so they hired me beginning August 14th at a little over eleven dollars an hour, which was just fine with me.

Since I was already retired and getting Social Security payments each month, we worked out a deal where I wouldn't work more than an average of 20 hours a week. This made it

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so I didn't have to pay into the state retirement system and the school didn't have to make the matching payments. On top of that, I wouldn't be making enough to have to pay income taxes, so there were no state or federal income taxes withheld, just Social Security and Medicare taxes.

It wasn't long before I began doing light mechanical repairs to the school bus fleet. To avoid the twenty hour limitation we agreed that I could contract repair and maintenance services as an independent contractor. We both saved money on taxes and my take-home pay soared! Between Destiny bus driving, contract maintenance, Social Security and my pension from Hughes Aircraft, I was making more money than ever before in my whole life, and much of it wasn't taxable. Sweet!

I was at Destiny for eight years. But through no fault of my own, I had to retire in 2012. But, that story can wait for now.

Reciprocity

When we moved to Globe-Miami Claudette wasn't working. Before that, however, she was a cosmetologist (hairdresser) and a darned good one, at that!

When we moved to Tucson she had her license to practice in California and had worked when we were living in Monterey. She needed to obtain her Arizona license to get a job in Tucson and she went looking for work. It turned out that she would have to go to school to make up the difference between California and Arizona's requirements. California trained for 1600 hours and Arizona required 1800 at the time. Claudette said she would like to freshen up on some of the newer hair techniques and processes anyway, so she went to school.

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She did well and finished at the top of her class. When the certificates of completion were issued by the school, she immediately filled out the forms, wrote the check and filed to take her Arizona State Board of Cosmetology exam.

About a week later a big envelope showed up in the mail. It was from the Arizona Department of Cosmetology. Inside was a letter stating that she had missed the filing deadline. The filing deadline, unbeknownst to all of the graduates, occurred the last day of school - and nobody was told about it. Bad deal.

I wrote a ways back about dealing with employees of the government who make up rules on the fly and somehow - no matter how reasonable the request - always find a way to reply, "You can't do that." Well, here we had the situation where a published deadline had been missed and the request to take the State Board exam was met with ... "You can't do that." How do you fix that one? Piece o' cake! You call 'em!

So I got on the phone long distance to Phoenix and the offices of the Arizona State Board of Cosmetology. I was about as nice and polite as I had ever been in my life - I mean, after all, we were talking about my lovely wife's means of creating wages and tips! I asked the person who answered what I had to do to get a waiver of some sort so that Claudette could take the State Board exam, and I told her about the application and the letter of denial. She said there was no such thing as a waiver and that Claudette would have to wait the three months until the next exams were conducted. I pleaded with her to make an exception, but she said, "Sorry, we can't do that."

Needless to say, that was the red flag! I asked if the Chairman of the Board was in and she said she (oops - the Chairwoman) was not. That was followed with a query about when the Chairwoman could be expected. "Sometime after lunch", was the answer, "but it won't do you any good. Your wife missed

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the filing deadline.” Sly dog that I was at the time, I thanked the lady for her help and made plans to call back.

Few executives are back from lunch by 1:00pm, so I waited until 2:30 before calling back. The same receptionist answered the phone as before so she was prepared when I asked to speak with the Chairwoman. She asked if I still wanted to talk about an exception. I said, “Yes, thank you.” She said she’d ask if the Chairwoman would speak with me about the subject and then put me on hold. When she came back on the line she said the boss was very busy but would be happy to call back when she was finished. Well, that was a positive development so I gave her the phone number.

About a half-an-hour later the phone rang. The receptionist asked if I could hold for a minute and said, “The Chairwoman would like to speak with you.” “Sure,” I said. The head gal was on the phone only seconds later asking why I was asking for an exception to the deadline for filing. (This is where instinct kicks in and experience with bureaucrats comes in helpful.) “Thanks for taking the time to call back,” I said, “I can’t tell you how many times I’ve waited for return calls that never happened ... I really appreciate it.”

“My assistant says your wife filed to take the State Board Exam but missed the deadline, so the application and check were returned with a cover letter. Is that right, sir?”

“Yes, ma’am, it is ... and that’s why I’m calling. Mrs. Thayer filed as soon as she had her paperwork from the school showing that she had completed the two-hundred hours she needed to compliment her California training. She has been a practicing California Cometologist since 1957 and has a job as soon as she has her Arizona license.”

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“I can appreciate that, sir, but she didn’t file in time to take the tests,” she said. “They are next week, as you know.”

I replied, “I know, ma’am. That’s why were talking. I know that deadlines are set to maintain some semblance of order and allow for adequate planning. But, I also understand that this deadline is a matter of policy, not law. The Arizona Board of Cosmetology approved the policy and, as Chairwoman, you probably signed off on it. Is that right, ma’am?”

“That’s right, Mr. Thayer,” she said. “So how can I help you?”

“I called to ask you to make an exception to the policy. Now, if I understand it correctly, as Chairwoman of the Arizona State Board of Cosmetology, you are the one person on the face of the earth empowered to make an exception to this State Board policy. I don’t think it’s too far out of line to let a qualified California Cosmetologist take the Arizona Exam so she can go to work. You’ll have to agree, ma’am, making her wait another three months just isn’t fair.”

“Mr. Thayer, I have never heard a case made so well for making an exception to State policy. I understand exactly how you feel and I’m inclined to make the exception.”

I gasped. And whispered, “Thank you, so much.”

“If you will send the application and check back, to my attention, I’ll see that Mrs. Thayer will take the test next week. She will need to bring a model along. Please have her include the name of her model with the application, ok?”

“Yes, ma’am,” I said. “I’ll make it happen. Thank you so very much for your help.”

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I went looking on the internet to see if that trip is still available after all these years. Sure is!

East-bound Sunset Limited Number Two still leaves Tucson at 9:15am on Thursdays and it will stop to disembark passengers in Lordsburg at 12:15pm. Sunset Limited Number One will stop at Lordsburg the same day to pick up West-bound folks at 4:13pm and it will arrive in Tucson at 7:45pm.

It's great rail-fan trip and the town of Lordsburg, New Mexico will roll out the red carpet if they know you're coming!

Another Election

There was another election season in 2008. I fell for it. First was the trip to the Gila County Registrar's Office to change my party affiliation. I didn't want to run again against Shirley Dawson, the Democrat incumbent. David Cook was planning a run as the lone Republican. I wanted all the time possible for campaigning because of the lousy showing in 2004, so I re-registered as a voter with no party affiliation. I didn't want to join the Independent party. The Green and Libertarian parties were not my cup of tea, so to speak and the Tea Party hadn't made enough headway to become a state-recognized organization. So I registered as PND - Party Not Determined.



I was the first customer at Gila County Elections on the first day campaign packets became available. It was important to get an early start if I was to have any chance of becoming the next District Three Supervisor. After filling out the proper forms, I was given a packet containing all the stuff a candidate needs with the exception of

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personalized nomination papers. I already had several dozen nominating petitions ready to go and the plan was to amass more signatures than any County Supervisor candidate in the history of Gila County.

Stumping for petition signatures was a daunting task that I remembered well from the 2004 campaign. This time, though, I wanted to visit every residence in District Three, a huge task involving the same huge area. The goal was to make history. Well, I pulled it off. By myself, with little help other than the company of my beautiful wife, I knocked on every door in Gila County District Three. The people were great, throwing open their doors to the long, tall stranger with the levis and white shirt! Even the dogs, many of which were aggressive guardians of their homes, welcomed me with lots of barking and wagging of tails. Although I feared I might be bitten on one occasion by a pack of dogs in front of a home in Belvado Park, I was always able to stay calm and make a connection. The result was the largest collection of petition signatures ever gathered by a candidate for Gila County Supervisor!

Later in the campaign I met my demise. There was a forum in Payson where the participants were the candidates for Sheriff and Districts Two and Three Supervisor. According to my wife Claudette, Shirley Dawson and I got our clocks cleaned by David Cook! He was very impressive, had a greater command of the room, and made the most convincing arguments on the issues. Claudette told me sometime later that the campaign went downhill from there. I turned from a contender to the spoiler the moment Dave took the podium.

As it turned out, I actually was the spoiler. Dawson would not have won a second term had I backed away after the Payson forum. Instead she won by the margin that I took from Cook.

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I still participate in the political rough and tumble that makes Gila County such a great and historical place. But there will not be another run for office from the Thayer camp. Claudette simply wouldn't stand for it. And besides ... we're too old!

Friday Golf

The thing about golf is that most folks don't understand that it is a game one plays alone. The only real competition is with one's self ... to be better than last time. Sure, people have tournaments and money flows to the benefit of winning players and many good causes. But the fact remains that golf is a game played by individuals against themselves. That fact makes for great camaraderie and lasting friendships.

For the uninitiated, golf is a game in which the winner has the lowest score. But there are rules that make it fair for all players by awarding deductions from their scores by virtue of their skills which are documented over twenty games. This is called handicapping and it is a system that allows a novice golfer to play heads-up with a professional and still have an equal chance to win with the lowest score. It's the USGA handicap system that makes friends out of acquaintances while at the same time allowing the good, the bad and the ugly to play together without fear of humiliation. The system works so well that men and women actually play peacefully together!

Every Friday a group of guys from the Globe-Miami area get together to play a great game of golf. Each player uses his full handicap. Between ten and fourteen guys form groups of four or five and go play eighteen holes. Each player's score is kept and handicap points are awarded accordingly.

When everyone has finished they all gather at the Nineteenth Hole (The Bar) to banter and tell stories while teams are

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picked and scoring is totaled. After everyone has pungled up a five-dollar entry fee, players' names are drawn from a hat in what is called a blind draw. Two man teams are chosen at random this way. The lowest handicapped (net) team score for each hole is recorded on a separate sheet. The two teams with the lowest net scores win – first place usually pays two-thirds of the entry money and the second place takes the remainder.

After all the net scores are posted, there is a skins game yet to go. The player with the lowest net (handicapped) score on each hole is awarded a skin - worth a quarter from all the other players. If nobody wins a skin on a hole the money carries forward to the next hole. It is possible for skins to carry as many as eight or ten holes before someone has the best net score – worth a quarter per hole per player! A dozen players and eighteen holes can turn into some serious money. Just do the math: $12 \times 18 \times 25¢ = \$54.00!$ With the skins awarded, each player collects or pays the skins due or owed.

When all the scoring is complete and the winners declared, the two participants who earned the most money get to buy the first two rounds of drinks! Sometimes it doesn't pay to win because the drinks may take it all, and sometimes even more!

It's called a two-man, blind-draw, best-ball skins game. And it's a wonderful way to spend a fun five or six hours with good friends and acquaintances.

Detached Retina

Over the weekend of December 7th, 2012 I lost vision in the upper left half of my right eye. I didn't notice it at first and Claudette and I traveled to Phoenix Saturday to play poker at the Wild Horse Pass Casino and to stop for some highly-desired Arby's Roast Beef sandwiches. On the way home that

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evening the lines on the right side of the highway looked to me like they curved inward. It was very strange and disconcerting. By Monday I couldn't drive my school bus safely because I had no useable vision in my right eye. A visit to my Optometrist, Dr. Russell Woods, confirmed that it was a retinal detachment. Neither he, nor I, had any idea what caused it but plans were laid to repair the injury.

On December 21st I underwent "Scleral Buckle" surgery on the eye to squeeze the detached retina so that some of it could re-attach over a period of several weeks. The surgery was done in Show Low, Arizona by Dr. Jack Sipperley, a world-renowned Ophthalmologist and retinal surgeon. The surgery was done in Show Low when a day and time became available, mostly because I wouldn't consent to sedation at the Phoenix operating theatre, preferring general anesthesia.

Why on earth, you ask, would you want to drive all the way to Show Low and a rural hospital, when world-class surgical facilities are available just two hours away in Phoenix? Glad you asked. The difference in elevation between Phoenix and Globe is only about 1500 feet, but the trip goes over a 5000 foot pass at Top-of-the-World, a small community west of Globe-Miami. Show Low is a mile-high city north of Globe, and it's mostly downhill all the way home. The retinal procedure included the insertion of a nitrogen gas bubble, the purpose of which was to exert pressure on the retina to hold it to the back of the eye. Had the surgery been done in Phoenix it would have required something like four hours to get home to Globe instead of the usual two. This option required two stops on the way home: an hour at Gonzales Pass to allow the eye to adjust to the added pressure caused by the increase in elevation; and another hour at Oak Flats for the same reason. Remember, there were tiny slits in the eye which extra pressure could force open, creating a problem.

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On March 13th, 2013 the scleral buckle (kind of like a rubber band squeezing the back of the eye beneath the muscles) was removed, scar tissue was resected, and the retina was reattached using a laser - a procedure known as Vitrectomy. This second surgery was also done by Dr. Sipperley at Summit Healthcare (Hospital) in Show Low - for the same reasons as the Scleral Buckle.

On Wednesday April 10th my visual acuity was checked by Dr. Woods in Globe. We managed 20/50, a major increase in vision from the 20/400 following the December surgery. Unfortunately, I needed 20/40 to maintain my Commercial Drivers License so it was necessary to "downgrade" from Class B to Class D the next day. I had not driven school buses since the December detachment.

I woke up at 3:00am Thursday April 11th to do my business in the middle of the night (as old guys are wont to do) and noticed that the alarm clock numbers were an orange blob instead of the usual fuzzy three characters. When I got up at 7:00am the upper left half of the vision in my right eye was gone again, just as it was in early December. Oh, good grief!

The doctor had said the day before that I was less than a month out of surgery and that in a month it was likely that I could make the 20/40 DOT minimum to be able to keep my CDL in force. Drat! I contacted Dr. Woods in Globe who did a quick check and confirmed that my retina was detached again.

I was set for emergency surgery in Phoenix first thing Friday morning using sedation rather than general anesthesia. Claudette and I stayed overnight Thursday at the Hampton Inn Phoenix-Biltmore about four blocks from Barnett Dulaney Perkins Eye Center in North Phoenix, where the surgery had been scheduled.

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A second, more complex Vitrectomy was done Friday morning and we stayed a second night at the Hampton Inn (a VERY nice spot) so I could have a post-op exam Saturday morning for clearance to go home to Globe. Everything was ok and I was cleared to go.

By the way ... I had driven us to Phoenix and Claudette was the chauffeur after the procedure. After the post-op exam I was allowed to drive. I'm so proud of Claudette. She was terrified of Phoenix traffic and did a heroic job getting us back to the hotel as well as to and from the Wal Mart pharmacy some five miles away - twice!

I saw Dr. Sipperley in Show Low on May 1st for a check-up. He said everything was great and that the laser did the job.

The second Vitrectomy (the emergency surgery on April 12th) had replaced the fluid in my eye with oil, thicker than the usual fluid and nitrogen bubble, to apply more pressure to keep the retina better attached while it healed. At Show Low, Dr. Sipperley made another appointment for June 20th to take a follow-up look. Everything was good to go at that time, so he scheduled "an oil-change" in Phoenix for July 18th.

The July surgery – under local anesthesia and sedation, by the way – went off without a hitch. The oil was drained and replaced with the saline solution normally found in the human eye. Nothing seemed to have changed that I could tell, though. It still felt like I had been poked in the eye with a sharp stick! Thank God for Hydrocodone ...

It's been a long time since that last surgery. But, I keep praying – probably in vain - for full sight in my right eye again. I have no clue how long it might take – there's no guarantee. Meanwhile, it's all good. I can drive my car and I can work and I can play golf. So, I'm fine as frog's fur.

Losing Mama

My mom passed away April 4th of 2013 after a fall that broke her hip. The story that goes with that sad adventure includes an admonition to never allow an old person to be admitted to a rehab unit, however well-intentioned. The extended Thayer family believes it's much better to rehab at home using hospice rather than in-patient services. Suffice it to say that Ruth Thayer did not out-live our aunt Mary, who long ago made it just a few days shy of one-hundred. Mom was 97 and her goal was to make the century mark, if for no other reason than to beat aunt Mary!

My mother doted on me from the day of my birth. I was a preemie, born a month early with barely-formed finger- and toe-nails, and weighing in at just seven pounds, nine ounces. Not a big kid by any stretch of the imagination. Mom told my sister, who wrote a paper about me for a college assignment, that she had to thump the bottom of my little feet to get me to stay awake long enough to nurse. At a year and four months, the paper states, I contracted the measles, ran a fever as high as 104 degrees, and ended up with ankle and foot problems that eventually required special shoes. Mom was right there beside me all the way! In my youth I was very sensitive and insecure, even though I had a happy home and was well cared for. Even so, there were events that caused me to mistrust both my mom and dad.

Our relations when I was a teen were tenuous. I remember in a fit of rage throwing a plate of spaghetti from my seat at the dinner table across the room because of something my mom said - something so trivial I can't recall these many years later. There was a time when she ragged on me over some menial infraction for so long that I finally blew my stack, yelled the

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F-word at her and stormed out of the kitchen. My dad and I ended up in a fist-fight over that – he insisted that nobody could be allowed speak to his wife like that without dire consequences. Mom broke up the fight by whacking me on the head with a frying pan! Needless to say, I managed to work up an appropriate apology for my indiscretion. Still, insecurity and hyper-sensitivity plagued me much of the rest of my life.

Mom was undaunted and continued to dote on me long after we were both old and tired. Whenever I visited, she would sit uncomfortably close, like some star-struck teen, hold my hand and pat my arm. It made me crazy! I wanted so badly to withdraw from her clutches, which I felt were crushing the life out of me. Of course, she was just doting on her eldest son, the little boy she loved so dearly from the day he was born.



This tenuous relationship changed one day when I decided that we needed to discuss it. I took a bottle of champagne to the ranch and poured a glass of the bubbly wine for each of us. At first she didn't want any. But I finally convinced her that we needed to be able to relax and talk freely and frankly. We held hands and shared kleenex as we aired long-held hurts as well as unspoken joys. When we had finished the wine, we had come to an agreement: We would never, ever be friends because we had nothing in common but family. By the same token, neither would ever forgo that unbreakable bond of filial love shared so tenderly between a mother and her son.

The last time I saw my mother, she was on her death-bed, highly sedated, being cared for by my sister Mandy and niece

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Courtney. They had to wake her from the fog of her last days so she could at least see her little boy.

I entered the room, stood by her bed, stooped down and touched her hand. She saw me through barely open eyes. I bent over kissed her right cheek and whispered, “I love you, mom” into her right ear. I know she heard me clearly through the haze because she scrunched up her face and squinted her eyes as if to cry out, “I love you, too, baby boy. I just want to crush you with hugs and smother you with kisses for coming here to visit. Thank you so much.” Heavy in the air was the feeling that she was sorry our last minutes together had to be so touching and so sad.

It was a time I’ll never, ever, ever forget.

We all grow old and for most of us, our elders show us the way to the joys of heaven. Be that as it may, I miss my mom. Maybe in much the same way she missed my dad over so many years. Life just isn’t the same without her.

The Navy Line School

Having access to special privileges comes with belonging to the family of retired military officers. Dad was a retired Navy Lieutenant Commander who earned his scrambled eggs during World War II. One of the perks for us kids was access to the swimming pool at the Navy Line School (now called the Naval Postgraduate School) located between Monterey and Del Monte, California.

According to Wikipedia, “A postwar review team, which had examined 25 sites nationwide, had recommended the old Hotel Del Monte in Monterey as a new home for the Postgraduate School. During WWII, the Navy had leased the facilities, first

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for a pre-flight training school, then for part of the Electronics Training Program. Negotiations with the Del Monte Properties Company led to the purchase of the hotel and 627 acres of surrounding land for \$2.13 million. In December 1951, the Postgraduate School moved to Monterey.”

We kids were not the least bit impressed by all the muckety-mucks and big-wigs that frequented the area in the 50s. We were in it for the sun, the fun and the vast expanse of clear blue water, beckoning us to come and bask in its beauty.

The Navy Line School pool was huge - an Olympic size pool measuring 164 feet by 82 feet (50 meters long - 54.6 yards compared favorably to a standard competition swimming pool measuring 25 yards. The NLS pool was some 12 feet deep at the diving pool end and, rather than the Olympic standard six feet, it was three feet deep at the shallow end.

That’s all good, but us guys were also in it for the babes! High school girls back in the 50s didn’t wear bikinis. That two piece wonder had not yet been produced commercially for 50s teens. In fact, the first Miss World Beauty Pageant in 1951 banned the bikini. A shot of Bridget Bardot that turned up during the 1953 Cannes Film Festival raised eyebrows across the world! Even so, the 1953 Playboy Magazine’s small distribution had yet to envelop the psyche of America’s young men with that iconic Marilyn Monroe centerfold. So bikinis were off limits when we splashed around at the NLS pool back then. Too bad. Still, the babes in the 50s were cool. And great at the pool!

My first venture off a high dive board was at the NLS pool. Somehow, I was goaded into climbing the ladder to the three meter board. No teenager has sweaty palms, but I can tell you I came close. Looking down from the end of that diving board was daunting, at least. Scary is the right word! The thing was easy on its face ... walk up to the edge of the board, look over

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to make sure nobody was in the way, and then jump off feet first. Nutin' to it, right? Ohhhh, mama! Well, I did it.

That's when my good friend Fred Mitchell introduced us to "the can-opener" dive from the high board. Woo hoo! This one is also feet first, but you tuck one leg up under your butt and hold it close with both arms. When the other foot hits the water it creates a "can-opener" twist that forces the leg and butt into the water with added velocity, making a huge splash. This is different from the old-fashioned "cannon-ball" in which both legs are tucked up under the butt. The resultant splash is worth writing home about!

Back then, they had a six meter platform at the Navy Line School. Oh, ho ho ho! There were very few of us that managed to develop the intestinal fortitude to climb that high, much less jump off. Fred did it. So I did it. From that height, there is something terrible that happens when you go feet first. It's very much like an instant enema! The second time, how you say, the cheeks were pinched! What mindless fun!

According to personnel at the Naval Postgraduate School, urban legend has it that a while back someone drowned in the huge pool, causing its closure. It was subsequently filled with sand and turned into volleyball courts. That didn't last long. Some of the sand was removed not that long ago and it was transformed into a "water garden", a lovely place inhabited these days by ducks and swans.

Maybe so, but according to the Naval Postgraduate School's website, the Roman Plunge, which had become "the crown jewel of the luxurious grounds and an alluring destination point for the rich and famous" after 92-some-odd years had become an eyesore and needed a transformation. The resulting 18-inch deep Roman Reflecting Pool has become the crown jewel of the NPS campus.

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Wikipedia tells us that "Today, the school has over 40 programs of study including highly regarded M.S and PhD programs in electrical and computer engineering, mechanical and astronautical engineering, systems engineering, space systems and satellite engineering, physics, oceanography, meteorology, applied mathematics, computer science, operations research, business and public policy, international relations, and other disciplines, all with an emphasis on military applications. The Space Systems Academic Group of the school has graduated thirty-three astronauts, more than any other graduate school in the country. The school is home to the Center for Information Systems Security Studies and Research, and the Center for Homeland Defense and Security. CISR is America's foremost center for defense-related research and education in Information Assurance (IA), Inherently Trustworthy Systems (ITC), and defensive information warfare and CHDS provides the first homeland security master's degree in the United States."

Unfortunately, there is no great swimming pool there anymore for Navy brats to enjoy with their friends. Too bad ... it really was one of the crown jewels of the Monterey Peninsula.

Selling the Pinto

With the advent of unacceptable sight from my right eye came a necessary reduction in work. Coupled with my refusal to work for an administration that would look the other way while an employee flaunted disregard for state regulation, it became obvious that I needed to cut back some.

While I was driving school buses and keeping the fleet working, I also did engineering for a local FM radio station. Between Social Security, my Hughes pension and the other

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work, I had never made so much money. But all good things must to come to an end, as they say.

The owner of the radio station kept messing with my work, making it necessary to do it over, so I doubled my rate to \$100 per hour. I figured he was already paying double; so why not charge him up front? Well, he was enraged. He quit asking for my help, even though I'm supposedly the best engineer of my type in this part of the country. With that, a large amount of regular cash went the way of the dinosaurs!

Then my right eye fell apart – a detached retina ruined my job with school buses. This meant I could no longer qualify for a Commercial Drivers License. Without the CDL, I couldn't drive big machines and no longer qualified for the passenger and school bus endorsements. Without the endorsements and subsequent certification, I couldn't qualify as an Instructor. Couple that with my demand that the school enforce state rules against an offending driver or I would curtail my fleet services and the stage was set for disaster! That completely eliminated my revenue stream from the public trough. Every now and then, I look back and ask myself if there could have been a better way to bring about compliance with the rules without turning a reasonable demand into a preemptory requirement. Maybe. Quite possibly. But then, that's why they call me Terrible Ted!

So, there I was ... no longer swimming in disposable income. While some cash flowed from my duties as webmaster for the Sanitary District and the Country Club, the engineering money was sorely missed. And the regular icing on the cake from the school bus gig was gone forever. That left regular retirement income and trimming excess spending as viable options to balance creature comforts and spending habits.

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First things first: Reduce power consumption. A year earlier we purchased black-out curtains to help cut the power bill. Sun screens were installed and they helped. So, now there were two more investments needed. First, I turned the sun screens over and installed screen material on their opposite sides. This effectively double-insulated them and further reduced heat introduced by the sun. Next, window film was installed – first on the south side of the house and then on the west. While the screening made a difference, you could really feel it after the window film was installed.

Number two: Reduce vehicle insurance and upkeep costs. That took a trip to the State Farm office and some consulting with the agent. We cut liability and medical back to the minimums and increased the collision deductables on two of our cars. The insurance for the Pinto Wagon was eliminated because I rarely used the little car. I had wanted to do another complete restoration of the Pinto because it was a one-of-a-kind special-order Ford factory original, but that project had to be shelved. That also meant that somebody else needed to take on that job.

With heavy heart, I put the Pinto up for adoption on the internet via Facebook. A vintage 1975 Pinto Squire Station Wagon in primo condition was valued at its original MSRP - about \$3200. Low vintage book in poor condition came in around \$1500. My baby was somewhere in the middle. I got quite a few offers, but settled on one from a good friend who owned a restaurant in Globe. George finalized the deal with an offer of food – Mexican food – red mix burros to be exact!



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Globe-Miami has always had a reputation for its delicious Mexican food and George Rodriguez was notorious for his red mix burros. And the salsa he whipped up to go with it? A culinary delight! George gave me \$1200 cash and another \$100 worth of red mix burros on a credit account at the restaurant. Although it was sad to let my baby go, at least I knew the buyer. And it really was a smokin' deal!

45 Year Reunion

First, I want you to meet two men who have had homes on the Monterey Peninsula, the home of my high school alma mater.

Leon Panetta graduated from Monterey Union High School two years ahead of us in 1956. Our fellow MUHS grad had been a member of the United States House of Representatives from 1977 to 1993, served as Director of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget from 1993 to 1994 and as President Bill Clinton's White House Chief of Staff from 1994 to 1997, but he was in between government jobs when we saw him with actor Clint Eastwood in 2003. Panetta would later serve the Barack Obama administration as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency and Secretary of Defense.

In 1986 Dirty Harry was fighting bureaucracy, waging a war on bylaws in his adopted hometown of Carmel. On April 8th, with twice the usual turn out, Clint Eastwood got a whopping 72½% of the vote for Mayor. While the mainstream media was busy having a field day, President Ronald Reagan called him with congratulations. During his two year term, Eastwood met his campaign promises which included making it easier to build or renovate property, the construction of a tourist parking lot, and the remodeling of Mission Ranch as well as its landscape, which was slated to be demolished in favor of condominiums. He also opened the Carmel library annex and

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had it dedicated to the use of the local children. Eastwood enjoyed his term as Mayor of Carmel-by-the-Sea and after two years he opted not to run for a second term.

Eastwood and Panetta became good friends and had numerous occasions to go out on the town together. The evening of the Monterey High School 45 Year Class Reunion they were looking to have dinner out. Little did they know when they pulled up at the entrance to their favorite restaurant that Fred Mitchell's wife was lurking inside ...

When Claudette and I drove from Arizona to Monterey for the class reunion in 2003, we stopped overnight in both Las Vegas, Nevada and Bakersfield, California. We played poker in both places and pretty much broke even. Then it was off to Aptos on the Monterey Bay just south of Santa Cruz.

We bought our first house in Aptos after rental apartments hit \$100 a month. There was a big sign near the entrance to Seacliff Beach touting new homes for sale. So, we stopped and took a look. The agent on site said that the builder had contracted with an independent broker to sell the homes but went bankrupt after the broker took down-payments on half of them and then left the country. He said the bank completed the construction and then put the remainder up for sale direct. We toured a 1600 square foot home with a two-car enclosed garage and just fell in love with it. The bank agreed to provide window screens, rain gutters and down-spouts, and to replace the missing glass shelves in the guest bathroom medicine cabinet. We put \$100 cash down at the bank and signed the mortgage papers for \$11,390.00 with a 3.2% interest rate. The payments were \$97.00 a month!

We arranged a lease-purchase agreement with a tenant when we moved to Arizona and after a year signed the papers selling the home for \$26,000. Not bad after five years of ownership.

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We had arranged to stay overnight at a motel in Aptos the night before the get-together in Monterey. And then we went visiting our old stomping grounds. Of course we visited the house near Seacliff Beach. To repeat, we bought 101 Poplar Court in 1965 for \$11,390 and sold it five years later for \$26,000. It had changed hands a couple of times since then. The eldest son of the owner – a college student who called it home - met us at the door and showed us around. It was a treat to see the old digs. The yard was beautiful and the redwood tree we had planted out by the driveway so long ago was some twenty feet tall! When we asked when they bought the 39-year-old home, he said that a few of years earlier his dad had paid \$500,000 for it! But we detour from the Eastwood story.

We were met with a crowd of old friends when we arrived at the happy hour get-together at the Sardine Factory, a very high-end restaurant on Monterey's Canary Row. After things settled down a little, a number of us found seats and talked. I joined three friends who were sitting beneath an old framed portrait of the one-time TV star Rowdy Yates!



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Fred Mitchell is the guy on the right, John Sanda is under the Eastwood portrait, and Fred Nishiguchi is seated on my left. The bartender said that Eastwood was a regular there. We got Fred's wife, Alison to take that infamous photograph.

Just circulating, I must have taken two or three rolls of photos with a little 127 micro-camera we'd picked up at a Walgreen store earlier that day. Catching up on each others' adventures over the years was a wonderful experience.

There was a commotion toward the front entrance and somebody whispered that Clint Eastwood had arrived outside. He and Leon Panetta were taking their ladies out on the town of a Friday evening. Clint walked into the bar area, peered around for a couple seconds, squinting that famous Eastwood squint, and then walked into an adjacent room to see if there were any available tables. This guy doesn't need to call ahead, but there was just no place to seat his entourage. Just as he was getting ready to leave, Panetta walked into the foyer. The two whispered for a second and then headed for the door.

That's when it happened. There was a shriek near the middle of the bar room and Alison Mitchell went storming through the crowd yelling, "Clint! Clint Eastwood! Oh, my God! It's Clint Eastwood!"

Alison was an Airline Stewardess who met Fred in Las Vegas.



Alison flew all over the world and Fred was a principal in a group that developed hotel/casino computer software that is still in use in casino developments across the world. They probably hit it off because he had plenty to do when she was off gallivanting around the world. Ladies need a reason to trust their men when they're away, so this worked very well. This was an ideal couple. Good fun friends.

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Eastwood had just headed out the front door when Alison scrambled past Panetta and accosted him in the parking lot. A small crowd of reunion on-lookers followed as Mitchell swarmed Eastwood like a goat on a tin-can! If there are any questions a fan could ask of a movie star, she let 'em fly at the top of her lungs. He finally took her hand and things settled down some. Claudette asked the guy standing next to her on the steps, "Is that really Clint Eastwood?" He laughed and said, "Sure is. If you want to meet him, now's your chance." Claudette is not one for public displays so she demurred.

Well, Clint Eastwood and Leon Panetta finally made the great escape and Alison, a little out of breath, rejoined her husband in the bar. Somebody asked Claudette if she knew the guy she was talking with outside ... the one that got in the car with Clint Eastwood.

She said, "No, I really don't."

"That was Leon Panetta," came the answer.

"Who ...?"

The 34 Handicap

To pretty much any male golfer, a 34 handicap is almost as bad as the "*Shame of Psoriasis*[®]." The handicap system was developed by the USGA so that golfers of differing abilities could compete fairly with one another, making it possible for a rank amateur to compete head-to-head with a professional.

Before I was named the Worst Golfer in Tucson, I had no idea what my handicap was, but according to my golfing buddies it must have been around 30-something. (To establish a

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handicap a golfer must pay an annual fee, usually around \$25 a year, and submit his or her ten latest scores. From that point forward, the best ten are used from up to twenty of the latest scores submitted.

The handicap rule seems to matter little to many competitors. Players came up with the term *sand-bagger* to mean someone who pads his handicap to provide an advantage over others. Padding is done by players who purposely exaggerate their reported scores, thereby creating handicaps higher than they would otherwise be without this egregious form of cheating. Some players don't fudge their scores - instead, they just don't turn in their best scores. Any player caught sand-bagging for real can be banned from competition and there are golf courses that have banned such players from their facilities.

The lessons provided by the Pro at Ventana Canyon included the rules of golf using the USGA publication of the same name as the textbook. How handicapping works and how players' handicaps are developed was part of the curricula. With his help, I developed a handicap over several weeks, playing at least three times a week. It started out at something like a 29.5 – leaving plenty of room for improvement. My eighteen-hole scores ranged from about 95 to 105 at the time.

I had two lessons per week, followed by 30 minutes of practice and nine holes on the links on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. I practiced for fifteen minutes and did 18 holes on Wednesdays, Fridays, and most Saturdays. If a tournament was set up with friends I'd play in that instead.

Over about a six month period, my handicap had worked its way down to an 18, meaning my scores were ranging between about 85 and 95 – not bad for a middle-aged hacker!

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I didn't practice very much after we moved to Globe, but (as was noted earlier) we became country club members with help from my mom. I developed a habit of taking a seven-iron every day after work and walking nine holes. Unfortunately, it didn't help my handicap at all.

After about ten years, it got to where I couldn't hit my driver, so I started using my four-iron off the tee. My game began to fall apart ever so slowly. The handicap had reached 24 when a good friend suggested I try his driver off the tee. Drivers had gotten larger and their shafts longer over the years, but this thing looked like a combat-boot-on-a-stick! At his urging, I gave it a try. As Cubbies announcer Harry Caray used to say, "Holeey Cow! It might be. It could be. It is! A hooome run!" That monster driver got me back in the game. Too bad it didn't improve the rest of my game. I bought a custom-fitted driver that matched the clubs they gave me in Tucson. Didn't help. Got a custom fairway wood. Got worse. Over a period of about eighteen months my handicap rose to 34.1. That's BAD.

It didn't take long before my golf buddies began calling me a sand-bagger! The shame of it all! "Hey, TT you sandbagger!" Because of my handicap, there were two strokes subtracted from all but one hole in competition. Supposedly, it gave me an advantage. Yeah, well, that's just wishful thinking! Sand-bagger! Head-banger! Good grief, Charlie Brown!

Only one thing could cure my lousy play: Lessons. A friend who plays pretty well gave me a tip that straightened out my fairway wood and my scores began to drop. From average game of 106, scores began to drop below 100 every now and then. Finally, I caved in and got a lesson from the club Pro.



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It helped some, and fifteen minutes of practice every-other day helped, too. My buddies didn't stop ragging on me until my handicap had dropped to 26. Now, I figure 21 is a good goal for a guy of my advanced experience. At least I don't have that shameful moniker any more! Well ... mostly.

I'm Hont de Moose ...

Back toward the front of this book, I made veiled allegations as to how my dad got the nick-name Duke. They called him "Dook" when he played football in high school. As near as I have been able to determine, it became pretty much permanent after an exhibition water polo game between the Los Angeles City lifeguards, of which he was a member, and a group of Olympic swimming stars which included the world-class athlete Duke Kahanamuko. My dad's football moniker and Kahanamuko's name clashed when the officials couldn't call fouls properly. Which Duke was supposed to take the ball because of a foul? Instead of Duke, the officials elected to call him Del - because of his middle name, Adelbert.

My dad's nick-name was pretty much etched in stone in 1926, the day he became a member of a college fraternity at Buena Vista College in Storm Lake, Iowa. The lads fancied themselves as valiant and chivalrous knights – as in round-table. Each was required to adopt a nom de plume befitting a knight of good standing. My dear ol' dad took the moniker Duke John Adelbert Montmorenci Cuthbert Basil Thayer.

When he was inducted into the Delta Phi Rho fraternity, he and several others had to address a gathering of the members. In an email, my sister related the story told to her by our dad:

"... several young men were being inducted into this group and all had given sincere and heartfelt recitations. Finally, and last,

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it was Dad's turn to say his piece. The way he recited it to me the very first time was classic.

“He stood with his feet together and at rigid attention. He was the epitome of serious. As he began to recite the poem, I began to wonder at the strange French Canadian trapper accent but he held the serious vein throughout. When he got to the punch line, I very nearly wet my pants I was laughing so hard.

“He told me that the guys had all jumped to their feet and applauded and laughed so hard as to make the building bounce. I knew on that day that he was every bit as popular and endearing to others as he had always been to me.”

Here then, dear friends - for posterity - is the rendition of *I Hont de Bear* from *Captain Willie's Wizbang* with which dad Duke brought down the house that day so many years ago.

*I'm hont de moose, ah hont de bear, an' some tam hont de rat;
Las' week I take ma hax an' go for hunt de skonk polecat.*

*Ma fran' Beel say he's ver' fine fur, an' some tam good to heat;
I tell ma wife I get fur coat, same tam I get some meat.*

*I walk 'bout three, five, six mile, an' den I feel strong smell.
Tink mebbe that dam skonk she die an' fur coat gone to hell.*

*Purrsoon bime-by I see that skonk close up by one beeg tree;
I sneek up ver' close behin' ... I tink he no see me.*

*Bime-by I'm ver', ver' close. I raise ma hax up high.
Dat goddam skonk he up an' plunk t'row something in my eye!*

*Oh, Sacre Bleu! I tink I blin'; Jee Chrise! I cannot see!
I run roun' an' roun' an' roun' - 'til I bump in goddam tree.*

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*Bime-by I drop ma hax away - an' light out for de shack,
I tink 'bout million skonk he clim' up on ma back.*

*Ma wife she meet me at de door, she sic on me de dog;
She say, "You no sleep here tonight go out an' sleep with hog."*

*I try to get in dat pig-pen. Jee Chrise! Now what you tink?
Dat goddam hog no stan' for dat on 'count of awful stink.*

*No more I go for hunt de skonk to get his fur an' meat;
For if his peese he smell so bad, Jee Chrise, what if he sheet?*

My friends, about all that's left after that is ... **Caca pasa!**

Thanks ...

In my humble estimation, no book is really complete without some sort of recognition of those who have contributed to its contents. In the front of this work there are photo credits for those who lent their faces and places, copyrighted or not.

The above said, I'd like to give credit to my wife Claudette, who listened patiently to every story I read out loud to her. She was a great source of knowledgeable feedback, accurately reflecting unremembered facts, figures, names and places. All writers should have such a fantastic sounding board. Few have a dedicated life partner who would so unselfishly commit the time required to complete such a task. Kudos to Claudette!

The second beneficiary of my thanks is my sister Mandy, who read every word of this thing and suggested positive changes. Mandy is a retired, award-winning teacher. She knows her way around the thesaurus! It took some explaining on my part, but she finally understood why I can get away with starting a sentence with the word *And*. You go, Teach!

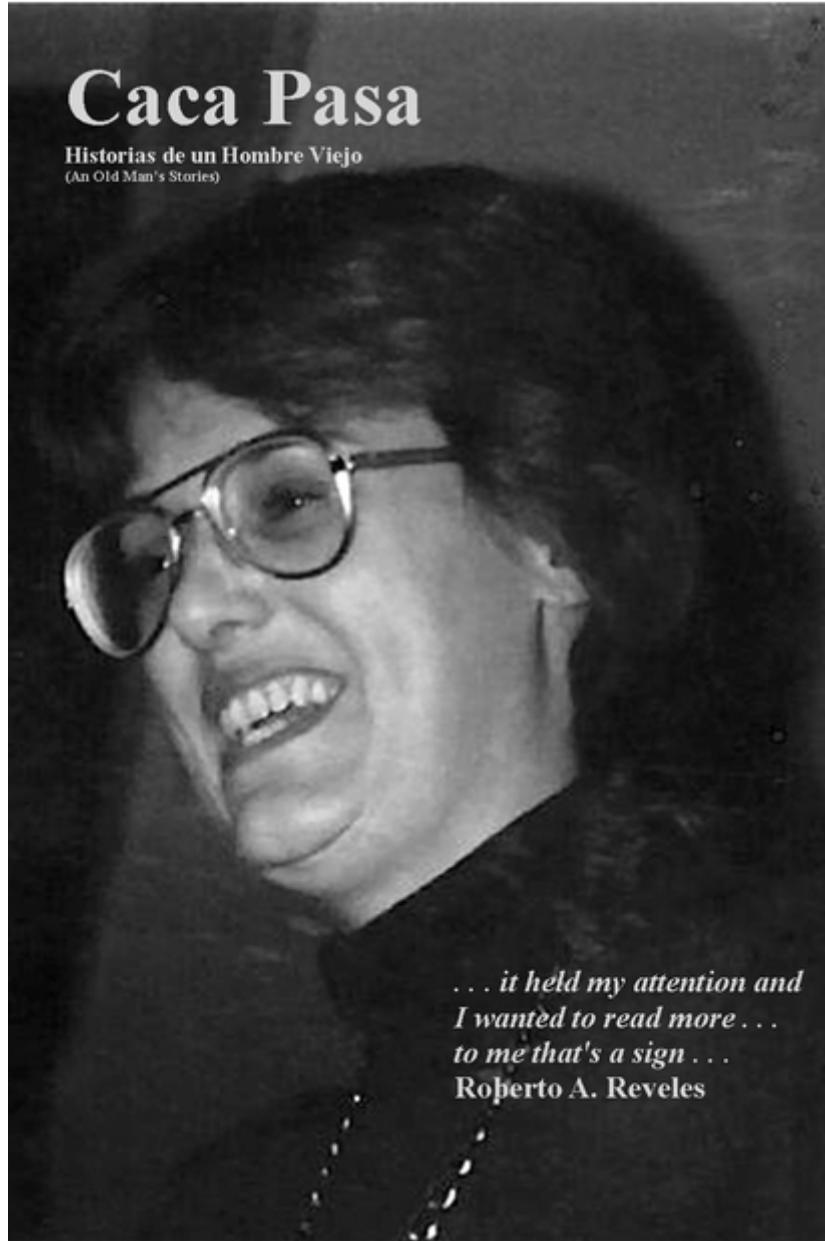
Janet, my daughter, also needs a few strokes here. She took to proofreading when I posted to jetedthayer.com so others could participate and offer constructive comments and criticism. She also made some crucial observations about the accuracy of a few of my tales. Old folks forget stuff, right? Way to be, Kid!

My brother Bill also deserves mention here. He possesses a photographic memory, read Adolf Hitler's *Mien Kampf* while in grade school, and is a never-ending source of insult to the lay person's unedified ears! He squared me away on a number of occasions, thus deserving these thanks.

What else can I say about the thoughtful considerations of my many friends? Thanks, troops - and God bless you!

Caca Pasa

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Historias de un Hombre Viejo
(An Old Man's Stories)



*... it held my attention and
I wanted to read more ...
to me that's a sign ...*
Roberto A. Reveles