

BOOTS FULL OF FISH

21 Vignettes About a Life

By

Phares Glyn O'Daffer

December, 2004

THOUGHTS ABOUT A LIFE

By Phares O'Daffer

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Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge some expert help I received from my family in reading, reacting to, and editing these vignettes.

My daughters, Sara Marberry and Sue Thornquist made excellent editorial comments, and suggested grammatical and content corrections. Their professional experience as a magazine editor and marketing consultant (Sara) and as a high school English teacher (Sue) enabled them to make superb and unique contributions to the correctness and quality of this book.

My son, Eric, read the complete manuscript, and gave many excellent suggestions for structural changes. His English background in college, and his daily work involving communication as a CEO of a corporation made his contribution very helpful.

Finally, my wife Harriet read and reacted to all the vignettes. She made suggestions for grammatical changes, and corrected any errors in facts. Her expertise in English grammar, and her extraordinary recollection of dates and events enabled her to make a significant contribution to this book.

So thank you for all your help-- Harriet, Sue, Sara, and Eric --I love you all very much.

Phares O'Daffer, December, 2004

1

Introduction-Pass it On

This booklet contains, pure and simple, 21 vignettes. In my dictionary, the fifth meaning of "vignette" is "a short, graceful literary sketch." I can assure you that most of the vignettes are short, and I can only hope that a few of them, at least, are just a little bit graceful. The two questions that are probably on your mind are "What are the vignettes about?" and " Why did you write them?" Let me try to answer these questions.

First, each vignette focuses on a key idea, espouses a tiny bit of my philosophy that relates to the idea, and illustrates the philosophy using events from my life experiences.

Second, I wrote these vignettes because I feel that my life and the philosophy I have developed while living it are somewhat interesting, and they just might be of interest to my children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and future generations. I have always felt that each generation should "pass it on" to the next, but that most of us simply do not take the time or expend the energy to do it. I wanted to avoid this pitfall, and help my descendants know how their father, grandfather, etc., born on a small farm near Weldon, Illinois, grew to experience the challenges, joys, and sorrows of life. And also, I thought that maybe they might like to sift from my experiences a little of my

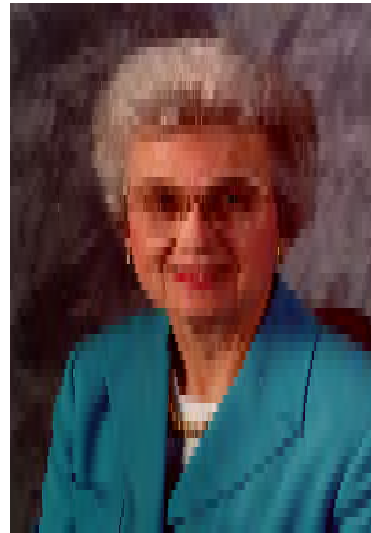
philosophy of life, ponder on it, and maybe profit from it... even if just a little bit. Also, I wrote these vignettes because writing is probably my most effective way of communicating the personal aspects of my life, and I love the writing challenge. Finally, I wrote these vignettes, selfishly, because it was very therapeutic and it is very instructive for me to look back and think about how my life has unfolded.

It is not intended that this booklet be considered an autobiography of my life. I started to write a sequential, detailed autobiography, but felt a bit egotistical and couldn't convince myself that all the details I was writing would be of interest to anyone. To be sure, these vignettes have strong autobiographical overtones, and you might well feel that they still provide for the ego needs of the author, but that notwithstanding, I hope they will have some other redeeming value. They *are* shorter than a full-blown autobiography, and if all other rationalization fails, just understand that I was simply compelled to do it.

In order to give an idea who is writing the stuff in this booklet, and who he lives with, I show the following photos of my wife Harriet and I, taken a few years ago. It's always better to use a photo taken earlier, since it supposedly makes you look a little younger than you are! In my case, it doesn't seem to help, and Harriet doesn't need such help, but here we are.



Phares Glyn O'Daffer
2000



Harriet Joan Gove O'Daffer
1996

I am currently 70 years old, and live with Harriet at 25698 Arrowhead Lane, Lake Bloomington, near Hudson, Illinois. Harriet and I have three children, Sue, Sara, and Eric who are now adults with families. Their spouses, respectively, are Bruce Thornquist, Richard Marberry, and Stacy Chuchro. We have seven grandchildren: Jordan, Dana, and Lee (children of daughter Sue and Bruce Thornquist); Wesley (child of daughter Sara and Richard Marberry); and Alison, Will, and Henry (children of son Eric and Stacy Chuchro O'Daffer). We are a close-knit family and enjoy several get-togethers with each other during the year.

Having retired from a position as Professor of Mathematics at Illinois State University, and retired from my activities as an author of mathematics textbooks published by Addison Wesley Publishing Company (Pearson Education). I am currently involved in several volunteer tasks in our community. I am also playing some

tennis and golf, and involved in genealogy. Harriet and I greatly enjoy our travels and various activities with family and friends.

So now that you know who I am, who I am close to, and why I am writing these vignettes, please enjoy this little booklet. Then, after you have read it, give some serious thought about your life, and what you can do to "Pass it On".

2

God's Handiwork or Lucky Chance?

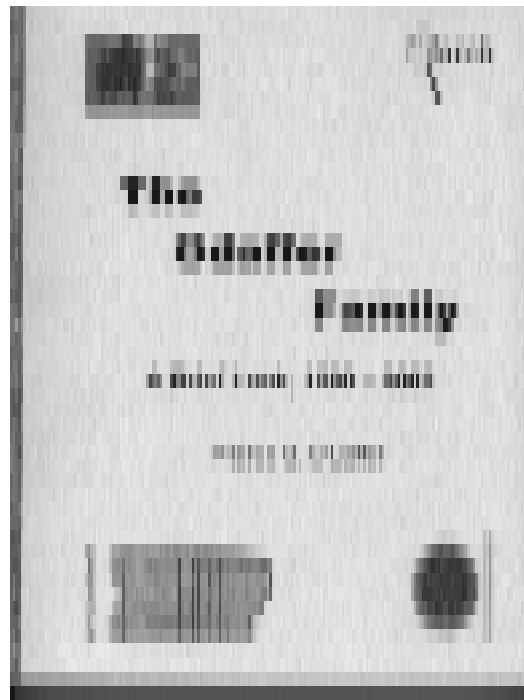
My faith was reinforced when I read the book When Bad Things Happen to Good People, by Rabbi Harold Kushner. His description of how his view of God changed when he was struggling with the death of his son from a rare disease, made me think, "That's my view exactly!" Kushner related that, upon the death of his son, Archibald McLeish said, "God was the first to cry." Kushner came to the belief that God does not control everything. He is not a puppeteer who pulls the strings and causes destructive tornados or fatal accidents. He doesn't even ordinarily reach out to save someone who has fallen into a cascading river, and is drowning. And God probably is not directly responsible for the chain of events that lead to one's birth.

Rather, God has created a wonderful universe, with natural laws and creative people. He very rarely interferes directly with the daily playing out of these natural laws, things that work to inflict harm, or the things that contribute to physical well-being. I think God can be the source of miracles, but ones involving the physical world or events are very, very rare. The good news is that God is just as sad as you and I when things go awry, and does give us untiring help in coping with the problems and disasters we face, and gives us tremendous spiritual strength to

carry on. And it well could be God working in the lives of persons that enables them to have the courage and strength needed to help facilitate, improve, or even save the lives of others.

As I look back on my life, my thoughts come back to the role of the natural laws of the universe, to how the very course of our lives seem to be affected by chance natural events, or events affected by other peoples decisions or actions. And the above paragraph not withstanding, perhaps there is often luck, as well as God's work through people, in all of this. At any rate, I do consider the fact that my ancestors were born and have survived, and that I was born and have so far survived some accidents that could have been fatal at various stages in my life, as very fortunate indeed.

As I study genealogy (see my booklet, "The Odaffer Family, A Brief Look, 1560-2002" shown on the next page), I am in awe of the events that paved the way for my life.



The Odaffer Family Genealogy Book

Disregarding the tenuous thread of ancestors from the beginning of human existence that led to my more immediate ancestors, I mention a couple of examples. First, my great, great, great, great, great grandfather, Marcus Odoerfer (1714), was the last of 13 children in his family. Almost miraculously, given those times, his mother was able to go through childbirth 12 times, and still survive to give birth to Marcus. Second, and even more amazing are the events that could have taken the life of Marcus' son, Johann Wolfgang Odoerfer (1747), and broken the chain leading to my birth. Johann was conscripted to serve as a Hessian soldier, to fight for the British in the Revolutionary War. On his long ocean voyage to the American Colonies, and on several occasions during his time as a soldier, hundreds of fellow Hessians became ill and died, or were bombarded by cannon balls and killed in battle. In the major battle of the war, at Yorktown,

Virginia, British General Cornwallis attempted to escape by sea, leaving Johann Wolfgang's regiment as a rear guard to stave off the French and American pursuers. It was only because stormy weather caused Cornwallis to return that Johann and his regiment weren't totally annihilated.

I'm sure that all of my more immediate ancestors, including Johann's descendants Henry, David, Edmon, and my father Ray have had some life-threatening things happen in the course of their lives before their male heirs were born, and this has caused me to look at those types of events in my own life. I mention some of these events in the following paragraphs to make my point.

My mother recalls that when I was three or four months old, she felt that I almost died from suffocation. Upon hearing me making a noise, she ran into the bedroom to find me with a pillow over my face, holding tight to it, blue in the face, and about to suffocate. She grabbed me and ran outdoors. Grandpa Ed, who was just driving in the gate, examined me and pronounced that I would be okay and that Ruby had done the right thing to get me into the fresh air as quickly as she did. On a lighter note, about that same time, a neighbor girl had stopped by the house and had laid her coat on my crib. When she left, my mother found the crib full of bedbugs. She took the crib out into the yard and washed it with kerosene. It's a wonder I didn't

expire from the continuing fumes, but this makeshift disinfectant worked, and everything turned out satisfactorily.

During my crawling stage, a potential major fire and explosion, which I describe in more detail in a later vignette, could have ended my life. My mother had started a fire on our large garden to burn some leaves and dried plants and weeds. A huge wind came up and my mother left me "secured" in the kitchen, and rushed outside to try to put out a fire before it reached the large gasoline tank on the outside of the garden fence, and not far from our farmhouse. Fortunately, my mother found a way to contain the fire before it reached the gasoline, and caught me as I was crawling outside toward the fire, so all turned out okay.

When I was about two, I had an accident that could have been fatal. I was playing with my sisters Wanda and Jane and decided to look over a piece of farm machinery, a disc, that was parked near the corncrib. I fell against the blade of the disc and cut myself under the chin. The disc blades were sharp, and the cut came pretty close to an artery in my neck. My oldest sister, Wanda, rushed me to the house with blood running down the front of my little white romper suit. A little carbolic salve and some rag bandages and the bleeding was finally contained. Mother used carbolic salve for about everything, but it did seem to help heal. This incident is the earliest experience that I actually recall. I definitely remember this happening, and have a

recollection in my mind that goes well beyond what I would have learned from my mother telling me about it. Clearly this was a brush with death that was somehow avoided.

My mother also tells about when I was about three and, with my dad in the town of Weldon, narrowly avoided what could have been a serious accident. I somehow broke loose from my father's grasp, and ran out in front of a car on the main street of Weldon, Illinois. Ray grabbed me at the last minute, and as the car came to a screeching halt, I was inches from the front bumper. My parents talked about this brush with death, and kept a closer watch on me in subsequent visits to the big city of Weldon.

And then there was the time that my life was threatened when I was hit by a train! I was about 14 years old and employed by Don and Hubert Lisenby, who owned the Shell gasoline station in Weldon, Illinois. On one hot summer day, Don asked me to take the whirligig mower to his bulk gasoline storage plant near the railway station about a block from downtown Weldon and mow the weeds near the plant and along the railroad track. The whirligig mower was gasoline motor powered and had a large, unprotected propeller like blade that did a great job cutting tall weeds, and I loved to use it. With the birds singing and the bees buzzing, I began pushing the noisy mower along the side of the railroad track. I moved away from the track and stopped to watch an old train with an engine, a caboose, and six or eight box cars slowly leave the station, traveling west toward Clinton. After it passed,

I resumed my mowing along the track, going east back toward the station. Unbeknown to me, however, the old train stopped and began backing up, back toward the station. With me going east, oblivious to the train because of the noisy mower, and the train backing up east at a faster pace than me, it was inevitable that a collision would ensue. All I recall is that, all of a sudden, I was struck from behind and went tumbling down the inclined bank of the railroad track, accompanied by the mower with the blade still whirling. Luckily, or by the *Grace of God*, I missed the mower and the mower missed me. Great concern ensued from the train station operator and the conductor. Bruised, but basically unhurt, I was treated even more kindly than I deserved, and the great train incident was over.

Throughout the subsequent years of my life, there have been many other occasions, such as close calls in an automobile, barely avoided accidents with tools, and abortive take offs and landings with airplanes, that could have been life threatening. The question remains, Was I spared because of *God's* divine guidance, or because of just plain old luck? I don't know, but I rather suspect it was an elegant touch of both. It's hard for me to believe that *God* actually steps in and diverts the path of a whirligig mower to save a person's life. But is a firm belief of mine that when people are involved, *God* works through them to give them the insight and courage needed to do things like saving a suffocating baby. So *Good Luck*, and *Thanks be to God!*

3

You Can't Put a Price on Parents

It's for sure that we should never underestimate the influence of parents on their children. In this age where there is a lot more talk about DNA, and the influence of our genes on our personality and behavior, I believe it is still important to recognize the value of nurture-- that is, the way you were cared for and treated by your parents and others. I was blessed with a couple of pretty good parents, and have often wondered how my life would have been different if they had been a couple of bums. But that was not the case. Sure, they weren't perfect. But somehow, even with their faults I felt secure and loved, and I simply accepted my parents for who they were. The following photograph shows what they looked like when I was a teenager.



Ray and Ruby Odaffer

When I began to write this vignette, I thought mostly about writing about my mother. I knew her as an adult, and her strength and influence was so obvious. I had written a heartfelt tribute to her upon her death, and it seemed natural to expand on that. But then I began thinking about my father and realized that even though he died when I was 15 years old, I had not given him enough credit. So I begin with some thoughts on the influence my father had on me.

My Father

I remember doing a lot of things with my father. He took me to the field with him when I was quite young, five or so, and I rode with him behind the two really big horses as we pulled a harrow over the newly plowed field. I remember smelling the sweat of the horses, and being amazed at their strength. When we brought them back to the barn after a hard day's work, my dad showed me how to take off their harness, lead them to the watering trough, and give them plenty of feed and bedding. I felt that my dad really liked me, and I remember being really proud when he bought a used Mack truck and had "Ray Odaffer and Son" painted on each front door.

I remember my father as always being kind to me. I actually don't remember a really harsh word from him, but I'm sure there must have been some. I remember he always took me with him when he went to town, and I could be sure that there would be a bottle of orange pop and a snickers bar, or an ice

cream cone to eat on the way home. Also, when I was a teenager, my dad was very quick to give me money (even though he didn't have very much) and let me use the car when I appeared to need it. I also remember him making me go out in the pasture and cut all the thistles to pay for hitting a baseball through the front window of our truck. I always claimed that my friend Terry Glynn had a hand in it, since his pitch was too easy for Ted Williams (me) to hit. But even in this situation where I had not used good judgment, my dad had no harsh words for me, and seemed to mete out my punishment fairly. I definitely learned something about kindness from my father.

My dad seemed to have my interests at heart. While he wasn't the least bit interested in basketball, or skilled at it either, he knew that I loved the game and worked hard to put up a good quality basketball rim on the side of our barn. In later years, after he had died, I wondered where he had found such a good, solid rim. When I was 10 or 11, kids from ages eight to 18 from all around the community would come to our barn on Sunday afternoons to play basketball. I could tell that my dad was really happy to have created that setting.

I always wanted my dad to be more interested in my sports, but he just couldn't get all that excited about playing basketball or baseball. My mother related that he had played baseball as a teenager, but he never played baseball with me. He did pitch a pretty mean game of horseshoes, and liked to pitch with my

uncles, Bill and Andy, but he and I just didn't connect here because I could never really develop any skill in pitching horseshoes. I was also too young to smoke the cigars those guys occasionally smoked! One other sport that we did both play, when I was 13 or 14, was court croquet. My dad helped me get a good quality croquet mallet and ball, and while he played mostly with adults in the community, we did talk about croquet and played some games together.

When I was 13 and 14, my dad asked me if I would like to run a trap line with him. We would get up about 5:30 every morning during January and February, and go along the dredge ditch to check our traps. I would carry the old 22 Remington rifle and trudge through the snow and cold. I think he sometimes carried a shotgun. We would set about 20 traps, and would often catch muskrat, skunk, or mink. We would get quite excited when we caught a mink, because the pelt was worth \$35 or so. When we caught an animal, we would skin it and place the pelt on a thin board, pre-cut to just the right size. When the pelts dried, we would ship them off someplace and get some money for them. I remember hating to get up, but really enjoying running the trap line. Neither my dad nor I enjoyed it when we trapped a skunk, especially if it was still alive, because the smell was something to be reckoned with. I always liked doing this with my dad, and remember him being quite accepting of some of my young kid mistakes. Many years after his death, I asked my mother what

characteristic she would use to describe my dad. She said he was "accommodating," and I really think she was right.

My dad had a good sense of humor, and often joked. Once, when I, as a nine year old, needed to urinate in the barn (which was quite common in those days- the cows and horses did it all the time), he admonished me to be careful not to "get hold of a raveling by mistake and pee my pants."

I also remember my dad as being pretty flexible, and understanding of the needs and foibles of an early teenager. One cold winter morning I was driving our 1936 Plymouth to Deland to go to high school with Buddy Clow. I decided to open it up, to see how fast it would go. Pretty quickly, smoke started bellowing up through the horn button and inside the car. I brought that Plymouth to a screeching halt, and raised up one side of the hood. Everything was on fire! I took off my only winter coat, and Buddy and I finally put the fire out-- But not until it was a disaster area under the hood. I remember calling my father, with great apprehension, to explain (spin) the situation. He quietly asked where the car was, had it towed in to the Weldon garage while I was in school, and had all the wiring, etc., replaced under the hood. The freeze-out plug had burst; spewing anti-freeze over the motor, and it had ignited. It didn't take a genius to know that high speed played a major role in this event, but my dad never said a word.

Some of my dad's faults had an influence on me well beyond what he might have envisioned. He was certainly not a person who uttered swear words with impunity. In fact, I don't recall him swearing very often at all-- unless he was very angry or frustrated. And trying to fix that old Allis Chalmers combine could, as he would say, "make a preacher cuss." When he got stymied in the middle of a repair job on that combine, the whole barnyard sky was blue with a horrendous string of swearwords. I thought I had learned the words at school, but my swear word vocabulary was infantile compared to what he could produce. I not only learned a lot of swear words, but I also remember thinking, "If that kind of frustration is part of being a farmer, I want no part of it!" I truly think that my father's reaction to farm frustrations played a part in my ultimate decision to leave the farm behind.

My dad was respected in the community, and served on the school board of our country one-room school for several years. He supplemented his farm income by selling seed corn for a period of time, and was well received by the local farmers. He had considerable carpentry talent, and actually had an old country house moved to Weldon, which he completely rebuilt and remodeled. I remember thinking that he was willing to do something different, to take a risk, and seeing that influenced my approach to life.

My father was killed in a farm accident when he was 49 years old and I was 15. He was building a fence along a field,

aided by a hired hand. He had bought a mechanical posthole digger that was attached to the drive shaft of our small Allis Chalmers tractor. In the process of using this mechanical post-hole digger, part of his overalls got caught in the turning auger, and he was literally pulled in and wrapped around the auger. At the time of the accident, I was in a carload of vocational agriculture students driven by our teacher, Ernie Harper. We were on a short field trip to a local farm, not too far from our farm, when the news of an accident reached the owner of the farm. We raced to the scene of the accident, and I had the devastating experience of seeing my father, dead, wrapped around that auger. It was a crushing blow, and something that I learned over time to deal with, but never to forget.

I treasure the time I had with my father, and regret that, as an adult, I did not have the pleasure of knowing him. I think he would have been an interesting person to know and relate to, and an exceptional grandfather to our children.

My Mother

Even though my mother didn't let me get by with any shenanigans, I remember her as loving, supporting, and kind. Sure, she made me, as a preschooler, take naps even when I resisted. I remember her telling me that I was tired, that I needed a nap, and placing me fairly forcibly in the bedroom. I would squall loudly, thinking if I really made her hear me, it

would have an effect. But it never did. I would feel a lot less grumpy when I awoke, and things would be okay again. And sure, I remember her making me eat all that gooey fat that surrounds a great big steak. She said it was good for me, but even at the tender age of five, I, like the low-fat proponents today, knew better. And yes, I remember her switching my legs with a peach sprout (soft branch from a young peach tree) the time I hit my sister Jane with my toy gun. And I remember her throwing the gun down the hole of the outdoor toilet. But with a few memories like these comes a whole bunch of great memories about a good mother.

My mother took care of me when I got sick as a young child, and helped me get over my many earaches. She was a good nurse, putting her stock in carbolic salve, Vicks, and even castor oil, if really necessary. She made a lot of scalded-off toast (toast with hot milk poured over it and some sugar and nutmeg sprinkled on it) for me when I was sick and couldn't eat much, and she once put an onion poultice around my neck at night. She even emptied the chamber pot for me if I was too sick to do it.

Ruby Edith Gray Odaffer had been valedictorian of her high school class, and was a knowledgeable and excellent teacher. I recall coming home one day from school, very early in the first grade, being frustrated almost to tears, and telling her that I was having trouble with reading. She quit everything she was doing, sat me down on her lap, and proceeded to teach me

phonics. In about a half an hour, I had learned how to sound out syllables in words, and I never had trouble with reading again. I also recall her teaching my sister Jane, in the third grade, to tell time. Her instruction was so clear that as a four year old, I learned too. In my years growing up, and in later years, I learned many valuable things from my mother.

My mother was also a good food provider, and an excellent cook. She had learned from her mother, Alice, and from my father's mother, Mattie. Mattie cooked like the Pennsylvania Dutch, and my mother learned how to cook good, old-fashioned German dishes from her. I recall really liking the bread, butter, and onion or bread, butter, and radish sandwiches she used to make for me when I came home from school. I also liked her homemade cottage cheese, dumplings, homemade donuts, caramel popcorn, and popovers. Also her fried potatoes, hominy, Swiss steak, and mush were somehow head and shoulders above any other such foods I have ever eaten. She often cooked for large groups of workers who came to our house to butcher a hog, or to put up hay. These were large meals, the kind traditionally made for men who came to farms and thrashed the wheat, and were ample and very good.

When I went to college at Illinois State University, I had a khaki colored, cloth, mailing box that I would stuff with dirty clothes and send home to my mother to wash. I can't believe I did this, since any college student should have sense and skill

enough to do their own washing, but at that time sending washing home was the order of the day, and was thought of as the thing to do. My mother never complained, and often there would be a care package of cookies, or other goodies, that would be returned with the clean clothes.

My mother was always interested in what I was doing, but she very rarely attended any of my high school sports or other activities. The only event I remember her attending was when I gave the valedictory speech when graduating from high school. But she would ask me about what I was doing, and vicariously enjoyed the events. It didn't bother me that she chose to deal with it that way-- I always just accepted her for who she was, a woman who had always been poor while some of her relatives had been rich, and who felt that she "didn't have good enough clothes" to venture out to public events. She was sort of a hermit housewife, but she always asked me what I was doing.

I will give additional perspective on my mother's characteristics in this and later vignettes, but I can't fail to mention that she had athletic prowess- and a definite athletic claim to fame. She could stand on the floor, and kick the top of the door opening into the next room. Granted, it probably wasn't six feet high, but when my mother would step up and kick the top of that door facing, I was duly impressed. I think she had latent athletic talent, and I was always sorry that she had not had the

opportunity to participate in women's sports in high school and beyond.

My mother was also very intent on ingraining into her children, at least in her son, the importance of being honest, a good person, and not being a smoker or a drinker. She had a way of sitting me on her lap, and talking to me in a way that made her case for these virtues airtight and compelling. With all that convincing talent, she probably should have been public relations expert or a politician.

There are a lot more things I could say about my mother, but I think the information I wrote about her in *The Odaffer Family* genealogy booklet, and the following eulogy I wrote when she died expresses the essence of this very good mother.

RUBY GRAY O'DAFFER ATTEBERRY

April 1, 1902- January 4, 2000

Ruby -- mother, mother-in-law, grandmother, relative, neighbor, and good friend. She was so special to many of us- a unique lady who we greatly enjoyed, and who will always have a strong, positive influence on our lives. Maybe, somehow, we will find a way to tell her story to future generations, and impart some of her character and values to them.

A common comment from people of all ages, who visited Ruby, was "I really enjoyed talking to her." What was there about this lady, who was born near Lane, Illinois, grew up in Weldon, Illinois, and lived near her home territory all of her life, that caused people to make this comment?

Ruby, always true to the lack of material possessions in her early life, never had very many extra wants or needs. She always had great respect for her family heritage, and continued to remember them through her poems, her interest in her ancestors, and her untiring support of the annual Gray Reunion.

As a woman who was valedictorian of her high school class, clerk in her uncle's store, a country school teacher, a hard working farmer's wife and mother, a superb cook, and an egg candler and chicken dresser, Ruby believed in working hard and doing a quality job.

Her memory was phenomenal... She could remember extraordinary details of what happened from when she was two or three years old on, as well as almost anything she had ever read. On nights when she couldn't sleep, she would recite poetry or famous speeches she had memorized. She once said that she had recited for over two and one half hours.

She also loved to write poetry. When there was a plan to remove the statue of Abe Lincoln from the Clinton, Illinois Square, it was Ruby's letter to the editor with a poem that helped save the statue for posterity. Her poems were always positive- and gave simple affirmation of family and spiritual values. We will never be able to read the poems the way Ruby did, but we will always read them with her special way in our memory.

Ruby was a very special mother. Her children vividly remember the love and teaching she gave, and her support through their growing years. I remember, as a first grader having trouble learning to read, her sitting me on her lap and teaching me phonics in one evening. I never had trouble with reading again! She taught her daughters and daughter-in-law the techniques of taking care of babies, and her simple, but effective, principles for raising children.

Ruby was always deeply interested in what her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren were doing, and dearly loved them all. To them, she was the "world's greatest grandmother."

She was loved not only by her grandchildren, but also by the many neighbor children who also stopped by to talk with her, play Chinese checkers, Dominoes, or Aggravation, and sample some cookies. She had a special way with children, and they loved being around her.

Current affairs and "the state of the world and its people" always were of great interest to Ruby. She loved to talk about how things are, and compare them with how they used to be. Her simple, straightforward approach to life was inspiring and contagious.

In her later years at Meadows Home, Ruby was always mentally alert. She adapted admirably to her many physical problems, and when asked how she was feeling, she either said "tolerable" or "with my fingers." Her sense of humor was always in evidence. When I fixed her clock and told her "That will be \$10, please," She came back with "Charge it!" Or when I cut her hair and said, "You look like a million dollars!" her quick response was "Without the zeros." Not long before she died, I told her that her situation was Y2K incompatible because her gravestone read 19 - - , and that if she lived to the year 2000, she would have a problem. Ruby gave that little smile, and told me "I've got worse problems than that, and anyway, I think that is more your problem than mine."

As a young child, Ruby had perfect attendance for a long period of time in Sunday school and church. In later years, she had a perception that her simplicity didn't fit in, and didn't attend church much, but seemed to always live according to Christian principles, and approached life with a deep faith that just seemed to be a part of her. To the end of her life, she seemed to always be thinking of others, and was amazingly generous with her caregivers. She rarely complained when we went to see her, and when we would leave for a week or two on vacation; she never gave us a guilt trip, but always simply said, "You have a good time."

Ruby once said that an uncle had told her as a child that she was made out of "rags, tags, and old paper bags," and, in a very real sense, she never pretended to be made of anything much more fancy.

She never put on airs. What you saw was what you got. She was Ruby. But she had a special way, a depth of character, a simplicity about her, and a way of relating to us that we will never forget.

We all know that she was made from very high quality stuff, and we love her very much.

Phares Glyn O'Daffer, January 4, 2000

I guess the influence of one's parents can be measured by at least two things. First, the kind of person one turns out to be, and second, the quality and impact of what an adult child says or writes about his or her parents after they are gone. I certainly hope that my two sisters and I have reflected well on our parents. And I sincerely hope this vignette adequately expresses my feeling that our parents' influence was of the first magnitude, and that they were high quality people.

4

The Value of Storytelling and Storytellers

There has been a lot written about the value of storytelling. It is an important way to pass on traditions and values from generation to generation. When we tell our children a story about what happened to us as we were growing up, we are not only giving them a perspective on our life, but we are bound to be imparting to them some of the values and beliefs of our generation. This, in essence, gives them a basis for testing their own developing beliefs and values. We can take a lesson from groups of people who have had more disruptive histories, such as the African Americans and the Native Americans, and observe how they have relied on storytelling to keep their basic traditions alive.

I think we all know some good storytellers, and have appreciated and gained from their stories. Some people have an inborn ability to tell their story, and that's what I want to talk about in this vignette. A couple of the best storytellers I have ever known were my mother Ruby Gray Odaffer Atteberry, and my stepfather, William Edgar (Willie) Atteberry. They each had a very different style of storytelling, but each was amazingly interesting and effective. But before I say more about Willie and Ruby's storytelling, I need to tell you a story about them, and how they came together.

Ruby and Willie

Willie used to come up to Barney Schroeder's store in Weldon, Illinois, where my mother worked after my father died. One day he asked my mother to go to a movie in Clinton with him. She was really surprised, stewed about it for a day or two, and then said "yes." Willie asked her to marry him on the second date, because his wife, Gertie, had died several months before, and since harvest time was coming, he "needed a cook!" My mother was shocked, but Willie had been very convincing, knew what he wanted, and, for the reasons described, couldn't let any grass grow under his feet. She stewed quite a lot more, but because Willie was Willie, she finally agreed. So when she was 52 and Willie was 59, they tied the knot.



Willie and Ruby- Wedding Day, 1954

They lived together for almost 40 years, and had wonderful companionship. I include this poem my mother wrote, thirty years afterward, to tell the story of how she met Willie and got married.

Willie and Ruby

*It's more than thirty years since Willie & I were wed.
"I need someone to stay with me" is what he said.*

*"I am wondering if you would be my wife
And stay with me all my life."*

*I could not answer him outright
Since deep within me I felt a little fright.*

*To change my life and start anew
Seemed an enormous thing for me to do.*

*But he explained these things to me.
He told me how happy our life could be
If together we could live
And to each other our happiness give.*

*Then, I began to know that he was right.
And somehow I lost my fright.*

*There was logic in those words he spoke to me.
And that logic I began to see.*

*And when the harvest time drew near.
Willie said that combining time was here.*

*He said, "I need you to cook for me."
So oft to the preacher's house we went
No wedding invitations were sent.*

*Soon, we were pronounced man & wife
And we were married then for life.*

*Those thirty years have hurried past
The youthful years do not last.*

*While we were working each day
The clocks were ticking the hours away.*

*And now as octogenarians we are
We can't believe we have come this far.*

*Since the time when Willie said
"Can't you see? I need someone to cook for me."*

--Ruby Atteberry, 1983

Grandpa Willie was the only grandfather on my side of the family that my children ever knew. He loved them all, was gentle and kind, and treated them like his own grandchildren. They all love him dearly. He and Ruby had a good forty years of marriage, and gave each other great support. He was also totally supportive of me and my sisters, loaning me money for a car, helping me buy my first farmland. Both Ruby and Willie taught me an awful lot about living.

Willie's Stories

When Willie told a story, he did it in a way that you wanted to listen. But with Willie, it wasn't just the story that had the impact; it was the *repetition* of the story. He would tell his key stories again and again, and even though you almost knew them by heart, there was always something intriguing and interesting each time the story was told. The stories, in a sense, defined Willie. They defined his personality and his character. And they always seemed to contain a message about living, and dealing with others.

And threaded throughout Willie's stories were basic principles that ended up having a lifetime influence on those who listened.

From Willie's stories you learned that he had a tough time and did a lot of climbing up awfully steep hills, but he never gave up. His mother died when he was three. By the age of seven, he had been taken care of, sometimes not very well, in at least five different homes. In central Illinois, he ran away from an uncaring relatives home just before he was seven, carrying everything he owned in a flour sack, and was picked up and taken in by an area farmer, Ira Emory, whose farm he then worked on until he was around 18. He always had great admiration and appreciation for the Emorys, and I'm sure some of their values rubbed off on Willie. Since he was needed to work on the farm, he was taken out of school around the third or fourth grade, and never had any further formal education. He drove horses at such a young age that they had to cut a hole in the front of the wagon so he could see to drive. At age 13, instead of going to school, he was shucking and scooping over 100 bushel of corn a day. When he was 18, he returned to Wynoose in southeastern Illinois to help his father who was ill. As a 37 year old, he returned to central Illinois in 1932 with 35¢ in his pocket and started to farm in this area. He was married to his first wife, Gertie, for 38 years and gave an extra measure of care for her when she was seriously ill with heart trouble. After Gertie died, Willie married my mother, as I described earlier.

Willie was very special- Even when you just tell the facts about him, it seems as if you are exaggerating just to make it sound good. And yet, maybe that is because his stories presented the facts in such a way that they took on a higher level of meaning and importance.

Threaded throughout Willie's stories were sayings that seemed to have their roots in his southeastern Illinois upbringing. They always gave spice to his stories, and in themselves often carried a message. Some examples are:

- My taxes were higher than a cat's back, and him out of humor.
- I learned that you can get married at 40 and have trouble enough.
- She was trying to marry a rich old man with a bad cough.
- He was so lucky that if he'd fall in the lake he'd come out with his boots full of fish.
- If I'm not here when you get back, the old mule is yours.
- It was great to have you visit - glad to see you come and glad to see you go.
- I didn't have no more chance than a one-legged man in a rump kicking contest.
- When I came up here I was so poor that I had to get a tin bill and pick with the chickens.
- If you can't help someone in life, what good are you?
- I know there'll always be a need for good, black, dirt.

One major thing you learned from Willie's stories was that his word was good as gold, and that you didn't need a written

contract with Willie. For years he took egg and cream money every week to the bank to pay back a little bit whenever he could on his farm loan. Why? Because, without it being requested by the banker, he told him he would do it. To be true to his word was a way of life with Willie, and he lived it every day.

Another thread through Willie's stories was that he was tough, strong-minded, and a hard worker. He didn't quit. This was illustrated not only in his stories, but it was how he actually lived life. When Willie was around 80, he fell and broke his hip. I visited him in the hospital on the day of his operation. He was hardly out from under the anesthetic and he was planning how he could devise a block and tackle to help himself on and off the toilet. He was tough and giving up was not a part of him. When my sister Jane was dealing with abuse and a divorce, Willie stuck by her, thick and thin. He knew how and when to call a lawyer, and he did it. Without this "never quit" attitude, he wouldn't have been able to persevere through a lot of hard work and doing without a lot of things to pay for 160 acres of farmland after the age of 37.

Willie told stories of belonging to the church when he lived in Wynoose, Illinois, and singing at a lot of weddings and funerals. He loved to sing hymns all his life- even in the shower or on the tractor. His biggest disappointment in me was that I didn't know or couldn't sing the old hymns very well. I couldn't keep up with him when he sang, "When the role is called up yonder, I'll be there."

Willie's stories always carried a thread of standing up for what you think is right, no matter what the odds. One story he told was about when he was a teenager and a local bully, quite a bit bigger than Willie, who always seemed to be out to get him. One day the aggressive young tormentor caught Willie alone as he was walking home. The bully approached Willie and declared that he was going to "beat the stuffing out of him." Willie took off his jacket, stood as tall as he could at 5'4", and said, with the confidence of Napoleon, "Have at it. You may get dinner, but I'll get a pretty good lunch!"

Another common thread in Willie's stories was the idea of protecting and enhancing the environment. He told of always planning to grow alfalfa periodically on his land to build the soil, and he got great satisfaction from tiling the land well so water could run off and crops grow. He'd order an eight-inch tree from the catalog, plant it and carefully nurture it as it grew. He would always talk about the fact that someone planted a tree for us, so we should plant trees so others can enjoy them, long after we're no longer here. Some of his trees now provide wonderful shade on his farm or at the house where he lived in Weldon.

As I look back and remember Willie's stories, I am impressed with the solid values that were always interwoven through them. These values were not just talk- they were ingrained in his life. Together, they sometimes seemed to be the basis of a "practical religion." The following come to mind.

- Treat others as you want to be treated.
- Always be honest and keep your word.
- Take care of the world you live in- plant trees, respect the good black dirt.
- Mind your own business. Taking care of your own affairs is concern enough, so don't get nose-y or gossip about others.
- Don't complain too much, and like the old song, "Keep Sweet."
- If you have enough to eat, a roof over your head, a bed to sleep in, and a good wife and family, what else could you want?
- If you earn a nickel, save four cents of it.
- Don't let anyone push you around. Stand up for what's right.
- If you tell someone you'll be someplace, be there, at least 10 minutes early.
- If you can't help someone who needs help, what good are you?
- Be generous with your gifts to others. That's what you're here for.

As now must be pretty obvious, Willie was not only a great storyteller, but he was also, as his stories reaffirmed, a great person. On his 94th birthday, he said to me, "I can't see at all, I can't hear, the arthritis in my knee keeps me from getting around a lot, but outside of that, I feel really good! That kind of positive attitude defined Willie Atteberry. When he died, I wrote the following eulogy, which I share with you to give you the best characterization I can of this accomplished storyteller.

William Edgar Atteberry
1895-1992

William Atteberry -- a husband, a father, a father-in-law, a stepfather, a grandfather, a relative, a friend. What was it that made him so special- a genuine article- a one of a kind? And how do you measure the influence a man like this has had on others in his lifetime, and the nature of his lasting influence?

In years, decades, even centuries to come a little girl or boy- descendants of Willie Atteberry or others who knew him well- will sit on their mother's or father's lap and hear about how important it is to be honest, to tell the truth, make your word good, to treat others as you want to be treated, and to pay your debts on time. They will be told that on a job, you should always get there early and give an honest days work. They will hear about the value of good black soil, the good things about farming, and how a young man who came to central Illinois with 35¢ in his pocket went on to become a successful farmer. They will hear how important it is to conserve resources- to tile and plant fields well so the soil won't wash away, and to plant trees so future generations can enjoy them. And yes, they will hear the philosophy that if you earn a nickel you should save at least 4¢. They will hear about the importance of minding your own business, treating others fairly, but not letting anyone push you around. They will learn the virtues of good country food, horses, and cow's milk. They will hear that a good life is being generous, and helping those in need. They may even hear a simple, inspiring story about how a small boy, with no mother and limited support from his father, ran away from an uncaring relative's home at the age of 7 years and made it on his own by being honest, living a clean life, and by putting in a lifetime of hard work.

William Atteberry- educated, but with no formal education beyond the early grades. A man who claimed that without education a person "doesn't have any more chance than a one-legged man in a rump kicking contest" - but a man who had a PhD degree, with highest honors, in common sense.

William Atteberry- a model of simple everyday application of religious principles, an inspiration to those around him, and a solid person you could always count on.

William Atteberry- independent, strong minded, but one who knew who he was, what he stood for, and who was successful in the finest sense of the word. He often said that, living on the "poor farm," he might have to "get a tin bill and pick with the chickens." You never had to, Willie, and you never will.

Phares O'Daffer, October, 1992

And now to return for a moment to Ruby Atteberry, my mother and my other fine storyteller. Since I have written extensively about her in vignette three, *You Can't Put a Price on Parents*, I will now focus primarily on her story-telling expertise.

Ruby's Stories

I think it may surprise some who knew her for me to identify my mother Ruby as one of the best storytellers I have known. Ruby did her storytelling not only by writing pages about days gone by, but also through her poems! These poems were not the epitome of great poetry, and they were always better when Ruby read them aloud, but they were simple and from the heart. Everyone seemed to love them, and she was in demand to write a poem about a special person, as well as a poem to be read at one of her favorite occasions- the annual Gray reunion. Ruby's poems were able to tell a story about the people, issue, or event that she was writing about. They not only presented information, but they seemed to bring out the emotions involved, and engender some deep feelings in the reader or listener. I have copies of

the poems she has written, and they not only tell some really interesting stories, but are emotionally moving as well.

Ruby loved to tell about her family through her poems. She had lived in and around Weldon, Illinois all of her life, and her poems often tell about her early life with her parents, her sister Leita, and her four brothers, Jess, Bill, Virg, and CC. But she also wrote poems and stories about the years of the Gray reunion, and the town of Weldon in which it was held. She also wrote poems about the lives and characteristics of members of her family or relatives. Ruby's stories and poems always contained a bit of nostalgia about the "good old days," while at the same time carrying on the traditions and values that she held dear. They, in effect, kept all who listened in touch with a time and a place that affected their history.

To illustrate this, I include her poem about her father and my grandfather, Emmett Gray, appearing on the following page.

A Common Man

*To be great was not his plan.
For superiority he had no claim.
He wanted only to be a common man.
To work with honor was his aim.*

*No prestige was he looking for.
Just to do each day his daily work.
Not wish to above his fellow workers soar.
Or ever any of his duties shirk.*

*He trod along his own pathway.
And learned with an open mind.
New lessons were proven each day.
As he mingled with the rest of mankind.*

*He spent his lifetime of years.
A common laborer he.
A man who lived without the fears.
From which a common man is free.
Our father was a common man.
But he was great beyond compare.
No one but a common man.
Can have these qualities rare.*

Ruby Atteberry, 1975

And I can't help including this little poem she wrote about her great granddaughter, Jordan Thornquist, when she had dressed up as a lion on Halloween.



Little Jordan, the Lion

*Halloween time was here
And 17 month-old Jordan filled us with fear.*

*Like a lion she was dressed
And to sound like one she did her best.*

*With a pumpkin held in place
and lion whiskers on her face,
all the pictures that were taken
did not look like she was fakin.*

*She acted as if all was real,
That's how she wanted us to feel.*

*We will be watching as she grows.
What she will do no one knows.*

Ruby Atteberry, November, 1990.

So that's the essence of it -- my mother Ruby, and her second husband, Willie Atteberry, were storytellers extraordinaire. Perhaps the best tribute to their storytelling skills is the fact that many years after their deaths, the impact of their stories is still with me, and I was motivated again to express my thoughts about these unusual people, and what I learned from their stories. And, also, that their telling of stories has motivated me to tell my story through these vignettes. So, may the tradition of story-telling live on!

5

Growing Up With Sisters

There is a lot written about siblings, or lack of them-- all the way from the "only child" to whether the oldest, youngest, or middle gets the best deal. Also at issue is the effect of having only brothers on a girl or, as in my case, the effect of having only sisters on a boy.

It is interesting to talk about this, and it does make a difference, but the difference it makes may not be of great magnitude. Growing up as a boy with only sisters, I learned to relate to females in a comfortable way, and I have always found it easy to talk to and work with women. However, to the extent that personality is genetic, having only sisters might not have had as great an influence as I think on how I relate to women.

Also, since I had no brothers, I had to find other ways to toughen myself up for some of the "roughhouse" types of activities that males often engage in, and for the tough, intense competition that often comes in some male oriented sports. To do this was difficult for me, and I believe affected my ability to compete at high levels for several years. Again, however, the fact that my mother's relatives, the Grays, generally had more docile personalities, may have had a significant influence on this

situation. Of course, I will never know the true reasons, but it's fun to speculate.

My sisters were Wanda Louise and Dolora Jane, who were eight and four years older than me respectively. The following photo, probably taken in the summer of 1934, shows of how we all looked at that time.



Wanda, Phares, Jane

Wanda

My oldest sister, Wanda Louise, claims to have taken care of me quite a bit when I was a child, and I'm sure it is true. She was eight years older than me, and I'm sure she changed many of my diapers. Also, I remember that she rode me to school on the back of her bicycle when I visited school a few times during her eighth grade year. When I was about three years old, I liked to put kittens in the baby buggy and push them around. I have

always wondered whether I would have had such a kitten mothering instinct if I had two rough and tumble brothers as siblings. But, perhaps because of Wanda's influence, I sure liked those kittens, as this photo can attest.



Phares and Kittens, 1936

Wanda was always supportive of me as I was growing up, and even as an older sister, gave me the "time of day," as indicated in this brother-sister photo.



Wanda and Phares, 1946

Wanda continued to have a helpful influence on my life as I got older. Being of independent nature, Wanda did not always do what my parents expected when she was emerging into teenage years. One time, she and a neighbor, Sharon Pearl, were passing notes to some older boys at a spot about a half-mile down the road west of our house. This created quite a row at our house, as did Wanda's occasional disregard of the designated time to return home after an outing. I listened to Wanda's confrontation with my parents, and learned quite a lot about how to deal with these types of situations. When I was about nine, she was quite a beauty, and caught the attention of Ken McDaniel.

She soon began dating Ken on a fairly regular basis. When Ken would come over to visit Wanda, or take her out on a date, he would spend quite a bit of time playing baseball or basketball with me. I often wondered if Wanda was bothered by or resented this, but she never indicated that she was, and always seemed supportive of her boyfriend playing with her little brother. Perhaps this was the method fate has of compensating for the predicament of a boy growing up with two sisters! I must say that Ken taught me a lot about baseball, basketball, and later, tennis-- perhaps at Wanda's expense.

Here is a photo of Wanda and Ken, after Ken was in the Navy and they were married. Wanda was 18 years old at the time.



Wanda and Ken McDaniel, 1945

Wanda and Ken were like my surrogate parents after my father died when I was 15. They loaned me money, as a college student, to buy my first car, and invited me to stay with them in Peoria during my sophomore and junior college summer years. This was real support, since I was dating my future wife, Harriet, who lived in Creve Coeur near Peoria at the time. They even allowed me to use their car on several of these dates.

I recall setting up living quarters in their basement. It was a fine place to live for the summer, except for the fact that it was over-run by crickets. I dealt with this small inconvenience by putting up a large sign that read "Ike's Cricket Haven," and by partially covering my face when I slept. I have retained some of this habit, even to this day, since I tend to sleep with the covers fairly tight around my neck!

After Harriet and I were married, Wanda and Ken continued to be our good friends, attested by the fact that both couples and our families have gone to Coons Franklin Lodge in northern Wisconsin every summer for 33 years!

Whenever we visit Wanda and Ken, whether in Champaign, Illinois, or Naples, Florida, they are the gracious hosts, and I always feel mothered and fathered just a tiny bit-- sort of the way I felt about my sister and her husband in earlier years. So maybe the big benefit of being a boy growing up with an older sister is that you get two mothers for the price of one, and an extra father thrown in, and that it lasts a lifetime!

Jane

As I indicated, my sister Jane was four years older than me. We were more contemporaries, and had a different relationship than Wanda and me. When I was four and Jane was eight, my mother was helping Jane learn how to tell time. I recall listening and learning to tell time too. That may have repeated itself in more ways than I recall, and I probably need to thank Jane for being a part of my early education. We communicated well, did several things together and had a good relationship, as indicated by these brother-sister photos.



Jane and Phares in the Haymow



Phares and Jane, 1946

Jane and I went to Prairie View School together for four years. We walked a mile and a half to school in the morning and back in the afternoon, whenever the weather permitted. At other times, our father, Ray, would take us in the 1936 Plymouth, or if the weather was really bad, in an old storm buggy pulled by horses or a tractor. We played our popular school game, Dogcatcher, together at school, and talked some on our way there, but I don't recall any eventful things about our school relationship.

As we grew up, Jane and I both had a pretty good sense of humor, and I recall that we got pretty silly at times. We always had a lot of fun. I recall being in the car with our parents, who were driving to Clinton, and getting the giggles about "conjuring up a vision." This, of course, was what Mammy Yocum did in the "Little Abner" comic strip that was in the Decatur newspaper that we were getting at the time.

During her high school years, Jane was very pretty, and thus popular with the boys. This high school senior photo explains why.



Jane O'Daffer, 1948

I used to kid her about having one boyfriend coming in the back door as another was going out the front. This actually happened once, with Dale Meyer and someone else, and it caused a lot of commotion at the Odaffer farmhouse.

But Jane didn't date all the time. I remember that a group of us, including Jane and I, often went places with a neighbor, Jimmy Jiles, who had regular access to a car. These adventures included going to George's Shack in Clinton, to Monticello, and to a restaurant on route 10 that we called "Temptation." We joked a lot, and just had a good time.

It is interesting to note that I don't remember ever fighting or arguing much with Jane. I'm sure we did, but it must have been minimal. I do recall hitting Jane with a small toy

poppun when I was around nine or ten. A friend of hers, Nellorene Grammar, was visiting, and they were ignoring me. Instead of getting me into their select group, my hitting act got me in hot water with my mother, who cut a branch off of a peach tree and switched my legs with that "peach sprout" all the way to our old outdoor privy, where she made me throw the culprit gun into the depths. Later I tried to retrieve it with a long fishing pole, but to no avail. I initially blamed Jane for making me lose that favorite gun, but eventually forgave her.

After Jane graduated from Nixon Township High School, and enrolled in nurses training in Peoria, Illinois, she attended the Methodist Church in downtown Peoria. There, she became acquainted with Ellen Gove and Bob Greeley, my wife Harriet's sister, and her boyfriend, Elwin Fehr, who would become her husband. I always wondered just how accidental my meeting Harriet at Illinois State University was. I had suspicions that my chance meeting with Harriet was carefully crafted by Ellen and Jane. They have never really admitted such blatant complicity, but if there was even just a little bit, I owe Jane for her matchmaking assistance.

As we have become adults, I have had a close relationship with my sister Jane. We are both interested in genealogy, and have shared quite a lot of family data. She has collected a number of old mathematics texts for me, which I have always appreciated. I have been available to help her and her family,

and she has done the same for me. We get together not only at holiday time, but other times as well. And we still get a little silly now and then.

After Jane completed nurses training, she married Elwin Fehr, and lived for several years on a farm near Eureka, Illinois. I shared several good times with "Al" before he and Jane were divorced, and enjoyed visiting them and their family on the farm. Jane later married Arkie McCraw, and lived in Monticello, where she still resides. We had many pleasant holiday visits at their house, and enjoyed getting together. Arkie was an interesting person, and, since he was a banker, we had many talks about investments,

Conclusion- So growing up with sisters is a pretty good deal. Being a little brother of two sisters provided experiences that were quite a lot different than they would have been if my siblings were male. For example, as I moved toward adolescence, I do recall noticing the female aspects of my sisters and their friends-- the first manifestations of the natural upcoming interest in the opposite sex. Perhaps, with brothers, this interest might have developed more slowly, or differently. Also, as I suggested earlier, perhaps I relate to women just a tad better because of my interaction with sisters.

And it may be the case that I enjoy the mothering type of support a younger brother receives from his sisters. For sure I have learned a lot from them. Also, I have had some especially

good times with the men in their lives, and this is an extra bonus. The bottom line is that I have always enjoyed my sisters, and they seem to have had an interest in me. Does it get any better than that?

6

Growing up on a Farm-Upsides and Downsides

I have often thought about the cultural disadvantage I might have endured growing up in the country near Weldon, Illinois as compared to someone like Franklin Roosevelt who grew up in Hyde Park. While Roosevelt was on the family yacht, getting attention from diplomats and world renowned personalities, or traveling to Europe with his family, I was fishing in the dredge ditch, slopping the hogs, hunting rabbits, and maybe going to Weldon on Wednesday nights.

However, as I look back and really analyze my childhood, the one thing that stands out in stark relief was the value of my experience growing up on a farm. It's difficult to put my finger on the reason my farm experience was so valuable. Perhaps it was the richness of a safe, simple, hard-working environment that developed a certain positive approach to life. Or perhaps it was living in a climate where you have to provide almost everything for yourself, with help from the soil and its plants and the animals. And maybe the fact that there was a lot of work to be done on the farm contributes to what has been dubbed "the Midwest work ethic." Or in my case, it may be that if you are very poor and have almost nothing, you develop the ability to live a bit more simply and aren't as preoccupied with the need for things. A part of the reason might be that in such a simple environment, a child

has a great deal of time to exercise his or her imagination, and creative juices begin to flow. Whatever the reason, I think growing up on the farm has painted the heavens for me, and has been a very good influence on my life. So I take this opportunity to elaborate on my farm life a little.

Working on the Farm

First, I'd like to explain what "hard work" meant for me on the farm. Beginning when I was six or seven years old, I had to do chores every day. My chores included carrying in buckets of cobs and coal for the stoves we used to cook on and heat the house, gathering eggs, shelling corn, feeding the chickens, carrying big buckets of slop to the hogs, holding a bucket of milk with a nipple on it to feed the young calves, milking cows, feeding cows, and turning the separator. Later, as I got older, I did things like plant, hoe, and harvest the garden; clean out the barn, the hog house, and the chicken house; spread the manure, cut corn for fodder; drive the tractor to plow, disc, or harrow; mow hay and mow the fence rows; put up hay; and help when we castrated or butchered the hogs. It's not that I was a slave, working all the time, but there was work to do, and we all helped do it. I can even remember getting some satisfaction out of completing some of these tasks.

Being Poor and Not Knowing It

As to the issue of being poor and living a simple life, you must understand that all the time I was living on the farm, the only toilet facilities we had were the outdoor privy and the chamber pot we used in the wintertime. We had no running water, and carried in water from an outdoor well. Our water for washing came from a cistern that collected rainwater. It was right outside the back door of our house, and was covered by a platform that we called the "well porch." Up until I was about six years old, we took baths by pouring hot and cold water in a circular washtub that was about a yard in diameter. I was the only one in the family who could sit in it. You would have thought that we were royalty the day my dad came home with an old, used bathtub. I don't have any idea where he got it, but it had obviously been used in someone's house. We couldn't hook it up to running water, but at least we could lay in it and cover ourselves with the water we poured in. Given these conditions, it's no wonder that my mother, Ruby, always thought that six inches of water in the tub was enough.

We had two stoves in our house, a cook stove in which we primarily burned corn cobs (those not used along with the Sears catalog in lieu of toilet paper in the outdoor privy) and a heating stove in which we burned coal. We used kerosene lamps for lighting, since we had no electricity. I recall the day my father brought home an Aladdin lamp, which had a special mantle, that produced much brighter light. It was major excitement! We all

sat around the table with the new lamp in the middle, and thought we had suddenly "seen the light." That lamp got a lot of use.

For most of the time I was growing up, we did not have a telephone, but we did have an old battery radio. We listened to "Lum and Abner", "The Green Hornet", "Amos and Andy", "The Shadow", "The Jack Benny Show", news with Gabriel Heater, and the Saturday Night Barn Dance." We didn't listen to many other programs, since the batteries cost money, and we didn't have much of that. We provided most of our own food, from butchering animals, eating eggs and chickens, and planting a large garden. My sisters wore feed-sack dresses, and a pair of overalls seemed to last me a long time. For several years, my parents were trying to pay for 40 acres of land, and, as they say in Weldon, we "scrimped and saved" to do it. We had a car, but we didn't go very many places, because gas cost money. We frequently drove two miles to Weldon, and on occasion 14 miles to Clinton or 25 miles to Decatur. And yet, with all this evidence of being poor, I never felt deprived. It was just the way it was, and we enjoyed it.

Creative Opportunities on the Farm

One wonderful advantage of living on a farm was the many opportunities to use imagination and be creative. A few illustrations of this are in order. As a small child, I remember playing cowboys and Indians. I liked to be an Indian, and would go to the chicken house and find the best feather available for my

hair. Then I would cut the appropriate size branches from a tree, to make a bow and arrow. I even remember looking a long time for the right shaped and sized stone head to tie on the arrow. Finally, I swiped a small kitchen towel from a cupboard, and tied it around my waist. We had all kinds of berry bushes on the farm, and I recall rubbing different colors of berries on my skin so I would look just right. When I wasn't an Indian, I was a cowboy. I recall carving/making toy guns out of wood, and trying real hard to make them look as realistic as those made by my second cousins, the Carr kids. A great deal of imagination came into play as we acted out the Cowboy and Indian scenario.

Also, there were many opportunities for pretending on the farm. I recall cutting cornstalks, imagining that they were swords, and that King Arthur's knights were fighting with them. Or sometimes the cornstalk was Beowulf's weapon, or Robin Hood's quarterstaff. I literally spent hours pretending I was one of these heroes of history. The dredge ditch that went through our farm was another great source of imaginative play. I would hit rocks into it with a broomstick as far as I could, and pretend I was Ted Williams hitting a home run. I had a BB gun, and had battles with all kinds of enemies, including dragons (who were really snakes sunning themselves on a rock in the water) and also pirates. In retrospect, it's clear that a lot of the work I did on the farm was imagined to be something else-- a part of an exciting adventure. An example of this was when I had to take a corn knife to the field and cut off stalks of corn for feed for the

cows. It wasn't just cutting off a cornstalk; it was battling my way on an expedition along the Amazon River, or battling an army of German soldiers (World War II was going on then.). There were many places on the farm that were interesting for a youngster-- the haymow, corncrib, machine shed, barn with animals, cornfields, garden and orchard-- and I played for hours in every one of them, always role-playing and using my imagination.

The Five Big Farm Fears

Perhaps a discussion of the value of growing up on the farm would not be complete without talking about the "Five Big Fears" that I experienced on our farm, and which must have, as they say, "developed my character."

The first fear, without a doubt, was of SNAKES! Whenever a brave snake made its way into our yard and was spotted by my mother, Ruby, it can only be described by the phrase, "all hell broke loose!" "GET THE HOE! GET THE HOE!" my mother would shout, in her loudest and most authoritative voice. All the troops (children, and whoever else was there) mobilized immediately, and rapidly delivered the weapon of choice to my mother. It was as if the President of the United States had learned via the red phone that the enemy was within our gates! We must defend ourselves against the attackers! With approximately 50 quick and vigorous chops, the snake had met its demise, if not its total dismemberment. As quickly as it had started, calm reigned again, and it inevitably became my task to dispose of what was left of the snake. I hope

you will understand that a fear of snakes quickly developed, and has stayed with me to the present day. Yet, the snake experience helped me develop resourcefulness, because as I grew older, I would "get my mom's goat" by shooting a snake down by the dredge ditch with my BB gun and using the hoe to bring it up to the house. I would plant the snake in the most appropriate place, and wait in anticipation until my mother spied it. At that age, it was a source of great fun, and many a dead snake almost got totally demolished.

The second big fear was definitely of the WINDMILL! It may seem strange that the windmill would create a fear factor, but you should understand that it was a very important item on the farm. We relied on the windmill for a lot of our needs, and really couldn't do without it. It pumped all the water for the horses and cattle, and some of the water for us.

The windmill had a turn on/shut off device, which was essentially a smooth stick handle fastened to the tower that supported the propeller. The handle was tied to a wire that went up to the propeller on top. When you wanted to turn the windmill on, you released the stick and it went up, loosening the wire and allowing the propeller blades to be turned by the wind. When you wanted to shut the windmill off, you pulled the stick down against the tower piece, thus tightening the wire and putting the brake on the propeller to stop it. The problem came, however, when the windmill was turned on and the wind suddenly came up. A very high wind could turn the propeller so fast that it would

either break the pump or go flying off the windmill. If the windmill was turning during a high wind, it took "three men and a boy" to pull that stick down, and often that wasn't enough. Now comes the fear. If the windmill was on and the wind came up, calmness did not abound. My mother got pretty bothered by this, and would again mobilize the troops. Every time it was approached as impending disaster. "Go turn off the windmill! Hurry!", she would shout, as if the lives of all of us entirely depended on completing this task in at least one millisecond. It was as if this windmill situation was directly tied to the physical and spiritual well being of all of us, and failure to solve it would bring human destruction to this farm family. The intensity of it all put the fear of the Lord in me, especially since I, being a very fast runner, had gotten the call before and had been unable to shut it off. I can still feel the relief that ensued when a couple of us were able to pull that stick down and literally bring the propeller to a screeching halt. I think the windmill experience must have helped me learn to deal with stress and pressure, because there was plenty of it when the wind began to blow.

The third great fear on the farm was LIGHTNING! Our house was built okay, but it was all wood, and just a little porous. The next house was three quarters of a mile away. When a severe thunderstorm came upon us, you really felt that the lightning was going to tear that house asunder. To add insult to injury, Bill Odaffer's farm was about two miles away from ours, east of Prairie View School, and Bill's barn was struck by lightning not once, but

twice during the time I lived on our farm. I remember getting out of bed during a storm and driving to Bill Odaffer's farm with my parents to see if we could be of some help the first time it happened. All of the neighbors were there, and it was a roaring fire that could not be put out. The second time, in my mind, was a rerun of the first. There was talk in the neighborhood that Bill might want to consider putting lightning rods on his next barn, but as I recall, for reasons beyond everyone's comprehension, he never did. Anyway, witnessing the barn burning greatly heightened the conviction in my mind that this could happen to us! I'm not sure what this taught me. Maybe it was "a stitch in time saves nine," or some other practical lesson.

The fourth farm fear was *GARDEN FIRE!* Every year, after everything from our large garden was harvested, it behooved us to burn off the old grass and vines that covered the garden. Everything was fine with this procedure on a quiet day, but if the wind suddenly came up, as it often did, a garden fire could get out of hand. This was exacerbated by the fact that the large tank containing the gasoline for our tractors was just east of our garden. And, if you know anything about the Midwest, you know that high winds almost always blow from west to east. This sets the stage for the first garden fire incident. I was just over two years old, and, as I mentioned briefly in an earlier vignette, one quiet day my mother set out to burn off a small southwest corner of the garden. Out of the blue, the wind came up, and my mother once again mobilized her forces. She ran in the house, placed me in the kitchen, and shut all

the doors. Then she ran to the garden to try to stop the blazing fire before it got to that tank and, in her mind, blew us all to kingdom come. Using superhuman force, she did finally contain the fire before having to deal with a scorched earth aftershock, and wearily returned to the house to find her two year old.

While she was gone, I had somehow knocked over a box in the kitchen that was the dwelling place of a baby gosling, who decided, or seemed to have decided, to approach me. Gosling fear took over, and I evidently began to scream bloody murder, and continued to do so until saved by the firefighter hero of 1936! This not only engendered a fear of garden fire, but of goslings, that continued for several years. The geese and ganders on the farm, as well as the roosters, had this dreadfully sneaky habit of chasing little kids. This went on unmercifully until one day when I was five years old and in the barnyard being chased by a rooster. For defensive reasons unknown, I picked up a rock, threw it at the rooster, and hit him in the neck. As the rooster writhed on the ground, I came of age, and realized that what was good for the rooster was good for the goose and gander. So the fear of goslings and their adult counterparts was a fear no more. As for the garden fire, it happened again during my growing up years, but we were again saved, and the goslings didn't play a role that time.

The fifth, and final major fear on our farm was the DREDGE DITCH! My mother, with all her good traits mentioned earlier, was deathly afraid of the dredge ditch. Part of the fear probably came

from her experience of very nearly drowning as a teenager. But I think she must have thought that the ditch would take a couple of gulps and completely swallow all of her children! I will admit that when the spring rains came the ditch would suddenly turn into a raging torrent, and go out of its banks. It certainly could become a major threat at that time if you weren't careful. Maybe my mother transferred the image of the spring rain ditch to the lazy summer ditch, but for whatever reason, it was like pulling teeth to get her to let us "go down to the ditch." She was always afraid we would drown, and took precautions well beyond those that would have been taken, even in the direst of circumstance, by normal mortals. In the end, I was able to gain freedom to explore and enjoy the dredge ditch in both summer and winter, but my mother's fear of water, in a small degree, transferred to me. It must also be said that the dredge ditch surely also engendered great fear in the feline community, because in the summer it was not at all unusual for someone to drive by in a car and throw a gunny sack full of unwanted kittens in the ditch.

Another reason my mother was apprehensive of the dredge ditch was that a land area under the bridge often served as a camping place for Gypsies that came through the area. Since the bridge wasn't far from our house, and Gypsies had a penchant for coming to a nearby house to beg or "borrow" things, my mother was in a dither when the Gypsies arrived. When they came to the house, she would often have us all hide, and not answer the door. At other times, she would send my sister Jane or I to the door to tell the

Gypsies something like "my mother is busy and the workers will be here any minute for dinner," that might encourage them to leave. The dredge ditch, in some strange way, got associated with the Gypsies, giving it an even more ominous character.

Suffice it to say that finding a way to not totally take on my mother's fear of the ditch may have been an experience in developing courage for me.

So the question of why growing up on a farm has so much value has only been partially answered. But the value is real, and I have always been thankful for having grown on the "home place."

7

That Good Ole One-Room Schoolhouse

There is much talk these days about what type of schooling is best. Many children in the United States spend their time in public schools, in classrooms with about 28 children each and enthusiastic teachers with lots of modern ideas for teaching. The children have many interesting projects, take field trips, and probably have computers in their classrooms. In spite of this, some parents think that the public schools "dumb down" their children, and for this and other reasons, they send their children to private or parochial schools. Still others are dissatisfied with all these options, and have decided that home schooling, where often a pedagogically untrained parent teaches her or his own children, is best. There is considerable talk about each child having his or her own mode of learning, and how important it is to find out through which medium Johnny or Jenny learns. Also, there is emphasis on things such as cooperative learning, multicultural education, experience oriented studies, and integrated curricula.

When I think about all these things, I remember good old Prairie View School, a mile and a half south and two miles east of Weldon, Illinois. Alas, the following photo of it in its current state doesn't do it justice, but still brings back memories of a clean white building, with kids playing outside.



Prairie View School, as it looked many years after it was closed.

It was a school I attended faithfully for eight years, and it may just be that it embodied many of the modern approaches to education. Children in all eight grades were in a one-room building, and one teacher taught all of them. Certainly there was a small student to teacher ratio, often about 15 to 1. There was also a good deal of cooperative learning, since many groups worked together when the teacher was "teaching" the others. There was plenty of opportunity for some students to help other students learn. My role as a helper provided experience that paid off years later when I became a teacher. Also, it was a learning experience to help the teacher carry in cobs and coal, and stoke the heating stove that kept the building warm in the winter.

My first experience with Prairie View School was when I went there as a "preschooler" to see my older sisters in the Christmas program. I also visited once with my sisters, and had to take a nap. When the teacher held up a coconut and asked if anyone knew

what it was, I shouted out, "I do. It's a kitten ball!" This was good for laughs, but it didn't prove that I was very savvy about things of the world.

When September came during the year when I had turned five years old in February, I found out that my neighbor friends, Buddy Clow and Louella Ford, were going into the first grade, but I was too young to go. I can remember being mad as hops, and giving my mother an earful on our old well porch (a platform that covered the cistern) about why it wasn't fair that I couldn't go to school. I allowed, in a loud voice, that I was just as smart as they were, and that I was ready, able, and desirous.

So much for testing and messing around with the scientific ways of determining readiness for school. After a little more of my fuming and ranting, my mother forthwith drove me over to the Prairie View schoolhouse, and we went in to talk with Mrs. Ball. She looked me over, talked to my mother, and said, "Okay, we'll have a trial period." The first day just about ended it all, because as I walked onto the school-grounds, proud to be there, Buddy Clow grabbed my cap and climbed up the slide. As I took off after him, a group of older boys said "Why don't you and Buddy Clow have a chicken fight." In the absence of an alternative, that's exactly what happened. Mrs. Ball broke it up, and, needless to say, Buddy and I, 10 minutes into the start of school, were called in for a student-teacher conference. About three weeks later, after this short burst of my being a potential

discipline problem subsided, she reported to my mother, "He's a smart little devil," and I was in.

As the year progressed, even though I had to have a few extra nap times, things went really well. I walked, or rode a bicycle, one and one-half miles from my home to school. I was proud of my new overalls, and my new dinner bucket. I liked school, and spent a lot of time listening to Mrs. Ball tell things to the older kids. The 15 students in the school were like a family. In a way they were, because eight of the 15 were the Carr kids, all from one family, and my second cousins. At recess, we played games like "Andy-Over-The-Coal-Shed," "Dog-Catcher," and, of course, basketball and softball. In the winter we had snowball fights. And the boys always wrestled, and then wrestled some more. We even had a full-fledged track meet.

One day, not long after I started school, all the boys hightailed it to the outdoor boys toilet at recess. There, in close proximity to the smelly latrine, I had my first introduction to sex education. There would be many sessions to follow, and I can truly say, looking back, that what I learned about the birds and bees from the boys at Prairie View School was pretty accurate, and sufficed until I read more about it in the library books at Illinois State University.

As the years progressed, I had new teachers at Prairie View. Mrs. Ball had a difficult time teaching Louella Ford to

read. She got so frustrated one day that she whacked Louella with a yardstick and immediately drove her home, leaving an eighth grader in charge. I think that experience may have been her demise, as she left after that year. After Mrs. Ball was Mrs. Wene, my favorite, followed by Mrs. O'Connor. The following photographs show some of these teachers, and the students in the school in those years.



Mrs. Wene and her Prairie View students, 1943



Mrs. O'Connor and her Prairie View students, 1946

I thought the teachers I had at Prairie View school were generally devoted to their work, and conscientious. I was pleased that my father, along with Charles Baker and Rice Whiteside, was on the Prairie View School Board while I was there.

We also had projects at Prairie View School. For example, during the war, we had a scrap metal drive. We formed teams, chose leaders, and competed in collecting scrap metal for the war effort. The teams were the "Dive Bombers" and the Submarines. I collected the most scrap for the Dive Bombers, the winning team, and in retrospect considered it my first successful project experience.



The Dive Bomber's Scrap Drive, October, 1942

Believe it or not, there were also extra-curricular activities at Prairie View School, including music and theatre. For example, we put on a Christmas program each year for the people in the neighborhood. I remember being in sort of a "hillbilly romantic" skit with my second cousin, Sharon Carr. I was the principal male, and received raves from the oldsters in the community for my performance. A budding actor was what I thought I was, but later was to find that I had another calling.

There were also field trips at Prairie View School. When I was in the seventh grade, we did a lot of ciphering. All I knew was that the teacher would have us go up to the blackboard and give us long multiplication or division problems. There seemed to be some recognition for whoever finished the calculation first, and I was hands-down the fastest calculator in the school. One fateful day the teacher announced that on Thursday we would visit the "town school" in Weldon. Being in my own world and pretty naïve, I, of course, was totally unaware of the fact that we were really going there for a ciphering contest.

When we got there, before I knew it, we were at the blackboard faced with long multiplication and division. No sweat, I thought, "I always finish first." Lo and behold, there was a slight girl named Ada Katherine Pearl who simply "cleaned my clock." I was still calculating away when she was already sitting down, smiling, and resting on her laurels. Needless to say, I learned humility that day, and that there is always someone in this world who can do something better than you can.

Many years later, when I was a Professor of Mathematics at Illinois State University, a very attractive lady knocked on my office door. When I recognized her as none other than Ada Katherine Pearl, I was very quick to make it clear that, under the circumstances, there would be no ciphering contests in the department that day. Ada Katherine had become a successful Executive Secretary for a CEO of a large corporation in New York City, and I was sure that she was still "good with figures."

I know that there are some good, workable ideas in modern education, and that many really good things happen in our schools. But I can't help but think back to my little one-room country school and marvel at all that happened in that simple setting. I learned the basic ideas of language, mathematics, science, geography, and history. I also remember the Weekly Reader and its attention to current events, as well as listening to the old battery radio when important things were reported. In addition, I had leadership experiences, opportunities to develop my skills in sports and speaking before a group. Not only that, but I learned to work cooperatively

with others in learning situations, and on projects. And finally, because I could listen in on the instruction at all grade levels, remediation and enrichment were available to me at all times. Because I was able to become involved in "teaching" those at lower grade levels, I learned a lot by trying to explain it to others.

I also know that things weren't perfect at Prairie View School, and compared to school experiences of many children today, my classmates and I probably missed a lot. But the graduates of Prairie View school were able to be successful in high school and some in college. And all of them turned out to be good citizens in their communities.

So I think that there are many ways to effectively give children a good education. Because children are so adaptable and can learn sometimes in spite of the educational environment or the approach used, our worries about the educational situations our children are in may often be "much ado about nothing." Perhaps all the "innovative approaches" we fuss about in education today aren't as important as providing a loving, family setting like Prairie View School, in which a conscientious teacher cares about the students and, like my third grade teacher, Mrs. Wene, does her very best.

8

Give Me That Small Town Religion

I've always wondered how a person's early religious experiences affect his or her acceptance of religion, if at all, as an adult. And related to this is the puzzling question of how early religious experiences affect the nature of the religion, if any, that the person finally chooses to believe in.

I've known people who grew up in a very devout home where religion was central, who attended church with their family every Sunday and other church events throughout the week, and who, as adults, completely avoided any kind of organized religion. On the other hand, I have known people who grew up in the absence of religion, and who, as adults, made religion a central part of their lives. And, of course, there are many people whose early religious experiences formed the basis of their adult religious behavior. Phil Jackson, the coach of the Chicago Bulls team that won six world championships, grew up in a fairly strict Methodist background. As an adult, his religion appeared to be an amalgamation of Zen, Indian Lore, and Liberal Methodism. So there seem to be exceptions to any rule you might want to make about the effect of one's early experiences on their adult religion.

Regardless of the variations and exceptions to the rule, I believe a person's early religious experiences ultimately come to play an important role in his or her adult religious experience. This role may not be obvious, but I believe that it is operational. In the following sections, I recall my own early religious experiences to see if I can communicate the effects they had on my adult life.

Early Church Experiences

When I was about eight or nine years old, my father took my sister Jane and I to the Weldon Methodist Church, left us there to go to Sunday school, and picked us up afterward. This pattern continued, perhaps not regularly every Sunday, but quite often, for several years. During that time, I never recall either my father or mother attending church. I understood later that, as a child, my mother went to that same church regularly -- and had perfect attendance. And my mother told me, later in her life, that during one year my father read the whole Bible. Perhaps it was the one I now have with my father's name in it. Even though it seems quite unusual that my parents never attended church with us, I don't recall being overly concerned about it at the time. Much like their pattern of not attending my sports events, I had come to understand that it was just the way they were, simple as that. My mother was uncomfortable with her clothes, the way she perceived being compared to her "well churched" sister, and, pure and simple, just had a hermit streak in her. My father may have had some of the same feelings, but I rather think that he just decided that if she wouldn't go, he didn't want to go without her.

So it was left for others to give me the first taste of religion. My Sunday school teacher, for all the time I remember going to the Weldon Church as a youngster, was Ernest Dickey, the high school principal. Mr. Dickey was a studious and kind

looking man, relatively short, wore round wire-rimmed glasses, and, as far as I can tell from my current vantage point, he was a darn good Sunday school teacher. We always had "opening exercises," where it seemed that we always sang, "What a Friend we Have in Jesus," or "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know," and then went to our respective classes. I recall that Mr. Dickey dealt with Bible verses and stories, but he also dealt with life. I can't document it, but I think I must have learned quite a bit about moral living from good old Ernest. As an adult, I was negligent in writing Mr. Dickey when he was alive, but I wrote a heartfelt eulogy, from a Sunday school student and high school student perspective, to his family when he died.

Religious Experiences as a Teenager

Another cog in my religious wheel was Florence Shinneman. "Aunt Florence," as she wanted us to call her, was a banker's wife in Weldon, Illinois. She had two daughters, Simone, who was older than me, and Gretchen, who was my age. Aunt Florence and her husband, Vern, were staunch members of the Weldon Methodist Church, and she was a friend of every child, from age 11 to 18, who darkened its door. She would have Easter Day parties at her house, and invite all the near-teenagers and teenagers in the church. There was good food, games, and a touch of religious education. Aunt Florence was that extra mother for many kids, and was a friendly, enthusiastic, supporter of every kid, near and far. During my high school years, I went to several events at the Shinneman's house, and felt that I knew

Aunt Florence pretty well. I had many pretty ample hugs from Aunt Florence. She served her church by serving teenage kids.

Now it wouldn't be a complete picture of Aunt Florence unless I mentioned one of the most important things in her life, outside of her family. It was the Women's Christian Temperance Union, known by all as the WCTU, which was headquartered in Evanston, Illinois. Aunt Florence lived and breathed the WCTU. She preached the evils of alcohol (in a pleasant way, I might add) and made it her cause in life to keep young people away from it. She gave programs, brought it up in conversations with kids, and put the full force of her bubbly personality behind it. And of course, there was the pledge card! We all knew that if we didn't sign the card proffered by Aunt Florence, where we pledged that we would stay away from drinking alcohol (and smoking too, as I recall), we would incur the full disapproval of Aunt Florence, as well as 96 percent of the rest of the community.

And so I signed the card, along with about everyone else in the community except Buddy Clow, who had already learned to like wine pretty well by the age of 12. With the strong influence of my mother, and the signing of THE CARD in front of Aunt Florence, I was pretty well on my way to be a teetotaler and non-smoker. But just as I had understood the logic of avoiding racial prejudice without very many role models in my community, I think as a youngster I would have understood the logic of not drinking alcohol or smoking even if I hadn't had the help of mother Ruby and Aunt Florence. Anyway, for what I felt were good reasons, I

did not take a drink with alcohol in it until I was over 50 years old. Also, I have never smoked any type of tobacco product.

Even though she got sidetracked a little with the WCTU input, there is no doubt that Florence Shinneman contributed in a significant way to help me experience and understand the value of religion and religious fellowship.

I kept in touch with Florence after I graduated from high school, and was always happy to see her smiling face and supportive presence. Her youngest daughter, Gretchen attended Illinois State University during the same freshman year that I did, and not many years later was killed when she was hit by a train as she was driving over a railroad track. I know that Aunt Florence and her family were devastated. As an adult, I had the opportunity to visit with Florence and tell her that I was appreciative of her influence on me when I was a teenager. Many years later, Florence was in Meadows Nursing home at the same time my mother was. She was in the Alzheimer's unit, and while she seemed to recognize me, it was clear that her mental faculties were pretty much absent. It was really sad to see the transition from the young, loving, bubbly, and supportive woman to the elderly woman who required daily help from her daughter Simone to function at all. But I'm sure that quite a few people who grew up in Weldon, Illinois will remember her with fondness and appreciation as friendly and helpful "Aunt Florence."

In addition to Florence's influence, I think my attendance at a Youth Fellowship Group at the Weldon Methodist Church as a teenager played a role in my religious education and experience. The Reverend Dwight K. Sailor was the minister, and I think his son Fiddle might have been instrumental in encouraging me, as well as my sister, Jane, to attend. In retrospect, I should say in all honesty that while I probably gained from the religious and fellowship component of this experience, it was what transpired after the meeting that seemed to be the strongest drawing card. It was pretty easy to get access to our 1936 Plymouth to go to church, and as an after church adventure, we often, without explicit parental permission, went other places.

One was a little roadside café we called "Temptation" that was about five miles from Weldon. There was a jukebox there, and we played, among others, the song that the establishment was finally named after. Also, there was a little slot machine that kicked out some nickels if you got a row of cherries, lemons, or some other fruit. When my mother asked, "How was church?" and I said "Pretty good." it may well have been a Freudian response to the nickels jingling in my pocket from that serendipitous row of cherries!

We also frequently went over to Clinton, which was 12 miles away, and had a hamburger and a milkshake at George's Shack. I have speculated about whether my mother ever wondered what we had eaten at church that made my breath smell like onions! And inevitably, in my later teenage years, a part of the

experience was taking Frances Reeves, a possible girlfriend who never really materialized, home after the church meeting.

Religion in College

After I met Harriet at Illinois State University, we would occasionally go to the Wesley Foundation, a college age group, at the Normal Methodist Church. My experiences at Weldon made me fairly comfortable in this group, and I continued to ask questions about religion, and question the beliefs I had developed as a child. Also, I occasionally went to a Sunday morning service at the church, but some Sundays I slept in too.

During two summers while in college, when I lived in Peoria with Wanda and Ken, my sister and brother-in-law. I had an opportunity to occasionally go to church with Harriet at the First Methodist church on Hamilton Street in Peoria. I think the importance Harriet's family attached to church, and their regular attendance also had an influence on me. I remember being impressed with their minister, Harvey Bodine, and his sermons, but even with the Gove positive influence, I don't recall that religion was a major part of my everyday life at that time. I wasn't one to say there is no God, but I sure did question the Virgin Birth, and to some extent, the Resurrection.

Religion During Marriage

Harriet and I were privileged to attend some excellent churches during our marriage that had very good ministers and

teachers. In Hammond, Indiana, our minister, Reverend Balsley, and Rex Hurt, our Sunday school teacher, were both inspirational and informative. In Muncie, Indiana, Directing Minister Harold Neil furthered our religious interest; and in Palo Alto, California, Reverend Marvin Stuart was a top-flight preacher. When we returned to Normal, Illinois, our ministers at the First United Methodist Church, Normal were Gordon White, Dick Brownfield, David Dees, Jim Bortell, and as of this writing, Dale Beck. In looking back on it, I think these quality Methodist ministers had a profound effect on my approach to religion as an adult.

I think my early religious experiences while I was growing up didn't overwhelm me with "churchliness," but made me comfortable with church. So, consequently, we attended church regularly, and got a lot out of it. I would say that my religion got more personal in Palo Alto, and prayer became a regular part of my daily regimen. I found that faith, and prayer, was the answer to fear and anxiety. I had a quiet conversion with God, so to speak, and begin to understand more about the value of religion in my life.

When we came to live in Normal, Illinois, we joined the Koininia Sunday School class, and had a series of really good teachers and discussions. I began to read quite a few more religious oriented books, and really enjoyed the insights. I knew I could feel religion from an emotional standpoint, but I was the type who needed logical, intellectual support for accepting the faith.

Also, around this time, the Chair of the Mathematics Department at Illinois State University, Clyde McCormick, shared with me his bibliography of religious books. I acquired and read a number of these books, and found them intellectually satisfying. I think it is fair to say that at different periods in my life I floated between the old Weldon Sunday School song "What a Friend we have in Jesus," and trying to answer questions like the one my son, Eric, asked me when he was in the second grade, "If God made everything, who made God?" I read books on theology, philosophy, rationale for the existence of God, and inspirational books on religion. During some periods of this time, I felt that a personal God was with me and working through me. During other periods, I felt I had slipped away from the personal God, and was only intellectually reading "about God." I sort of bought in to the idea that being religious is not a destination, but a work in progress, a journey.

After many years, I had become totally convinced in a new way that God, an intelligent presence in the universe, exists, as creator and savior. It is inconceivable to me that the intricate aspects of inanimate and living things could have happened entirely by chance--even by millenniums of evolutionary changes following some giant explosion. Also, I have seen actions of people, and effects on the lives of people, that attest in a dramatic way to an inspiration and support beyond what I perceive to be possible from just an atheistic everyday existence.

Much as in the giant linear accelerator, where scientists postulate the existence of infinitesimally small particles, not because they see them, but because they see what they do, I postulate the existence of an intelligence in the universe, and yes, a personal God, because I see what this Intelligent Presence does in the universe, and what God does in the lives of people.

In an age in which we are enamored by Science, it helps to stop and consider that scientists start with unproved hypotheses and theories, and look for patterns and evidence to validate and substantiate them. Certainly, we should be generous enough to give theologians throughout history using a similar approach some credibility. Clearly, Faith (ones hypotheses) is the basis for belief in God, and I believe this Faith is validated though life experiences. Even beyond this simple interpretation, I am compelled by philosophical arguments based on logical conclusions that must be drawn if one assumes there is no God, to assume that God exists. My views on this are continually strengthened when I read of thoughtful people, like Blaise Pascal and C.S. Lewis, who began as atheists and ended life as ardent believers.

However, even though my early experiences in the Weldon Methodist Church were saturated with the stories of the Bible, I continued as an adult to have difficulty with some of the traditional stories and beliefs. They often just don't seem credible to me, and this feeling deterred my acceptance of certain religious doctrines. I was also somewhat uncomfortable with outward displays of "religiosity," and with what I felt were

overly emotional approaches to religion. Some modern writings, which I mention next, helped me come to grips, in an intellectually satisfying way, with my difficulties with some of the religious ideas with which I grew up.

Recent Religious Experiences

As I indicated in an earlier vignette, I was really impressed with the ideas in the book When Bad Things Happen to Good People. by Rabbi Harold Kushner. It sort of put God in perspective for me, and gave me a view of God that squared with my study and life experience.

An experience in recent years that was also very useful for me was to read and discuss books by members of the Jesus Seminar, a group of theological researchers who studied the historical Jesus, and who were willing to analyze statements in the Bible with regard to whether historical and other evidence would substantiate that Jesus really said what was attributed to him or not. These books included Marcus Borg's books, Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time and The Heart of Christianity. I think the positions of these scholars helped me see the reason for and metaphorical value of the Biblical passages and stories, even though some of them may or may not be historically true. They helped me see that a deep faith in God is not dependent on believing every detail of the Bible stories I was introduced to as a child, but rather in the truth embodied in the stories.

Through these understandings, I think my faith was strengthened, and the journey continues.

As I become older, I value the church even more, and the effect of Faith and Love in humans as they support and care for each other. While I still sometimes question the details of the resurrection stories, I believe that the soul is not extinguished by death, and that existence, like matter or water is not destroyed, but only changes forms. I feel that, analogous to the change from caterpillar to butterfly, in death we take on a new life, more wonderful than we can explain or imagine.

I may not have really answered the question I asked at the beginning of this vignette. However, I do think I have given a thumbnail sketch of my religious experiences, and have indicated how, as a young person, becoming comfortable with church, but not having been "hit over the head" with church, kept me interested, and ultimately helped me keep on exploring and developing an adult view and acceptance of religion.

9

The Value of Mischief!

I could get into real trouble with all of the conscientious young parents I know by espousing the idea that mischief among the young contributes greatly to their healthy growth. But I can think of nothing worse for a young boy or girl than a childhood or teenage life without at least a pinch of mischief. Can you imagine how dull a life of total abstinence from mischief would be? And how stilted would an adult would be who had never freed himself or herself up for a spoonful of mischief? I think the occasional mischievous twinkle in the eye is the hallmark of a well-adjusted individual, and that if the ability to be a little mischievous from time to time isn't cultivated in childhood, it probably isn't going to ever happen later.

I think it is fair to say that the adults in my rural community and in Weldon, Illinois would have described me as a "good boy," or a really "fine young man." And my tendency to "always do the right, honest, and moral thing," instilled into me by my mother, Ruby, certainly guided my behavior. So this moral albatross around my psyche made it a little difficult as a child and teenager to learn the art of mischief. For example, when I was about nine years old, I had arranged to ride my bicycle about a mile to play with my rural neighbors, Buddy and Ronnie Clow. When I arrived, Buddy, who was always about five years age

advanced beyond his true age, beckoned me to come up to the haymow in the barn. He and Ronnie had stolen some cigarettes from their dad, and had decided to try smoking for the first time up in that haymow. Now it didn't take even a "smart little devil" to understand that this could spell trouble. So I basically hightailed it back home, and, like a dutiful "moral child" told my mother why I was back. Of course, I was highly praised, and my ability to engage in mischief continued to be stunted.

Before getting any deeper into this possible communication black hole, let me assert that I'm not talking about really destructive mischief, or just plain meanness as being valuable. Rather, I'm referring to what I call "good natured, wholesome mischief." I will admit though that the line between good-natured mischief wholesome and destructive, mean mischief often got a little blurred in Weldon in the 1940's and 1950's.

Halloween Mischief

Take Halloween. I finally reached the stage where I found it fun to make a character all dressed up and stuffed with straw to hang from the railing around the top tank on the local water tower. Given my fear of being on attached edges, I was certainly willing to help make the character, but not about to be the one to climb the water tower and hang him up. I think that Earl Thomas saved the day by climbing up there, and this mischief was appreciated by all the perpetrators. It was also a tradition to see if you could find a way to get a pumpkin out of old Mr. Conn's

pumpkin patch without him catching you. He was pretty alert, and we needed a fast getaway as he came roaring out of his farmhouse with what was either a broom or a shotgun. We were, in our red alert fleeing mode, much too scared to really look back.

The other Halloween tradition in Weldon-- one that bordered on being mean and destructive, and which would probably be called vandalism today-- was to upset Annis Yates's outdoor privy. But in Weldon, it had happened for so many years that it was expected! Even among many of the adults, who always helped Annis put it back up, there would probably have been disappointment if this annual tradition had not been fulfilled. Why Annis, you might ask? Well, Annis had an approach to young people that simply invited an upset privy, and her reaction to the finalization of the event was a sight to behold. Ronnie Edwards, a high school friend of mine who was later to own the local fertilizer business and most of the rest of the town, tells of the time he and a group of friends upset Annis's toilet on Halloween. The next day Annis primped up a little and went to knock on Clifford Edwards, Ronnie's father's, door. Annis asserted that she had information that Ronnie had upset her privy the night before, and asked if this was true. Cliff called Ronnie into the living room and asked "Did you upset Annis's privy last night?" Ronnie responded, "No Sir, I did not!" Ronnie said that it had always bothered him that he had "slightly misrepresented the truth," because, as he put it, "I drove the getaway car, but it was true that I wasn't the one who upset the privy." Many years later, as a prosperous adult, Ronnie said he was walking through

the Weldon Cemetery and saw Annis Yates's gravesite. Her small, stained, stone was broken, and the site was in ill repair. Ronnie said that he bought her a new gravestone, beautified the site, and placed a large bouquet of flowers in memory of Annis. It was his restitution and atonement, but without the mischief in the first place, that old stone might still be broken and ugly.

Fiddle Mischief

My friend, Hobart Sailor, who I've mentioned earlier, was a preacher's kid, and a master of mischief. Everyone called him "Fiddle," but I no one seemed to know why. At any rate, I remember one of my first introductions to Fiddle's brand of mischief. We were sitting in church one Sunday, behind one of the stalwart ladies of the congregation. I think her name was Lillie. The setting was rather peaceful. Fiddle's father Dwight was in the middle of a long sermon, and we were getting bored, if not nearly asphyxiated by Lillie's greatly over-applied perfume. All of a sudden, I thought I saw a very fine stream of water emanate from Fiddle's mouth and arch over the pew onto Lillie's hat. Upon questioning, Fiddle whispered to inform me that if you moved your jaw right, you could spray! I was amazed at this revelation, and decided to experiment. Lo and behold, I could spray too! I was in a "thine is not to reason why " mentality, and only later learned that there is an opening into a saliva gland inside the cheek, and that the proper motion of the jaw would activate it. Fiddle and I proceeded to spray Lillie's hat, but occasionally missed and got Lillie. I would guess that Lillie

carried the mystery of the "rain in church" on that Sunday to her deathbed, or alternatively, may have dismissed it as "an act of God" commemorating her Baptism by immersion.

"Spray Fiddle," as I called him for a while, was the cause of the only time I was ever kicked out of a class in high school. He had found a very old ham and cheese sandwich in his locker that smelled to high heaven, and brought it to Chorus class, which met from two to three o'clock in the afternoon. As Fiddle brought out the sandwich in the middle of our singing of "Go Down Moses," and began his antics in reaction to the smell and his pretense to eat it, I found it extremely funny and became uncontrollably tickled. Of course the sandwich found itself in odd places doing odd things, and I was somewhat overwhelmed with the humor of it all. Miss Harmony (name changed to protect the innocent) forthwith asked me to leave and go to the principal's office. I met our very stern, no-nonsense principal, Ernest Dickey, on the stairway leading to his office, and he asked me why I wasn't in chorus. I told him all the smelly details, and, without a reprimand, he told me to go sit in his office until the period was over, and then go to my next class. Lucky for me, as I recounted in an earlier vignette, Mr. Dickey had been my church Sunday school teacher for several years, and, like the others in Weldon who I mentioned earlier, was under the impression that I was a "fine young man." Other students who got into trouble in class often fared much worse, so I learned early the value of "having connections."

After Fiddle went on to college, I and others found time to do mischievous things like calling the local grocery owner, Swede Olsen, to ask if he had "Prince Albert in a Can," and responding to his yes by asking "Don't you think it would be better for his health if you let him out?" A group of us, with Jimmie Jiles driving, went all around Clinton, Illinois in his old Ford car with brakes that didn't work. We were driving slow and having a hoot of a time seeing if we could stop at the right times. It got less funny when we were stopped by the police, and taken to the police station to await the arrival of Jimmie's father. From short sheeting and putting hands in warm water at Boy Scout Camp to making up weird names for our teachers and animal names for our friends, we felt we were being true to our friend, mischievous Fiddle.

Many years later, I met Fiddle at our 50th high school class reunion, after not seeing him for some 40 years. I found out that he had enjoyed a long career as a Methodist minister, and was at that time a District Superintendent for his Methodist Church Conference in Michigan. As we talked, he observed that he had always thought that he felt that he needed to get me to be a little more mischievous. I retorted that I thought he had done a pretty good job at succeeding at that task, and thanked him for his role in introducing me to the nature and value of mischief.

So I believe that mischief, often accompanied by that certain twinkle in the eye, sort of flushes the stagnation from the soul, and seems to go hand in hand with a more creative

approach to life. It is the seasoning that needs to be sprinkled on the personality, and it is the therapy that puts things in perspective. A good sense of humor-- contributing or appreciating a pun, funny remark, or a clever practical or other joke-- is a mild form of mischief that shines up an otherwise dull day. So please don't underestimate the value of harmless mischief in making life interesting and keeping you well adjusted.

10

The Value of Sports

Coaches will tell you about the value of sports, from acquiring discipline and perseverance to developing the ability to function well as a team player. They will sometimes extol the virtue of learning a skill that you can enjoy for a lifetime. And they will also remind you of the importance of learning about fair play and good sportsmanship-- how to be a good competitor while still having respect for other competitors.

I agree with the reasons given above for participating in sports, and would add that the exhilaration that you feel when you can freely exert yourself to accomplish a goal in a sporting activity is a very precious and desirable thing. There is also a beauty of sorts in participating in or viewing a sport. I once said, only partially in jest, that a good college basketball game rivals a ballet for beauty of sequence, motion, timing, and rhythm. The strategizing involved in many sports, and the thinking involved in successfully reaching a game goal in a sport is a mentally stimulating activity, and is good for the mind at all ages. Also, there is sociability-- camaraderie with other players in a sporting game-- that is very beneficial and therapeutic. It is no accident that many retired persons spend a lot of time playing golf. It contains many of the positive attributes of the workplace that they just left-- including quality interaction with

others, planning and executing, intense concentration, and, yes, a bit of competition.

On top of all of this, many sports provide exercise that helps keep the body healthy, and a heightened sense of well being that you feel when you have been successful.

I have always loved sports. In my lifetime, I have, at one time or another had an avid interest in fishing, baseball, softball, basketball, croquet, tennis, ping-pong, and golf. I have also enjoyed occasionally playing badminton, flag football, horseshoe, hiking, backpacking, and bicycling. I was successful enough in most of these sports to experience the thrill of success, and many of the other good things I mentioned above. The exception was horseshoe. I could toss the shoe fairly well, but 99.9 percent of the time it did not land with the stake inside it. One of the interesting aspects of my participation in these sports is, in almost every case, there was someone who sparked my interest in the sport, and/or served as my mentor. Also, there was usually some recognized success on my part that motivated me to improve my skills.

Baseball

I learned to play baseball at Prairie View School from the older boys in the school. But I credit Phil Whiteside, who was a year or so younger than I for perking my interest in baseball. One day, when I was about seven years old, Phil invited me over to his house, on a farm about two miles from our farm, to play

baseball. When I arrived at his house, Phil had his radio on, and was listening to a baseball game! You have to understand the times I lived in to appreciate the impact of this. We had an old battery powered radio, and since the batteries were expensive by our standards and we had little money, we never, I mean never, turned the radio on in the daytime. Phil was not only listening to a baseball game on the radio, but he had pictures of the Cubs, the team playing! This was amazing, and opened up a new world to a seven year old farm boy. Many years later, when the Cubs team won their division title, I wrote Phil Whiteside a letter. I reminded Phil that I had followed the Cubs ever since that fateful day, and thanked him for introducing me to culture, and for broadening my worldview. As youngsters, after listening to the game, Phil and I went out to his pasture with ball and bat, arranged dried up cow piles for the bases and home plate. He was Phil Cavarretta and I was Bill Nickolson, and all of the benefits of sports began!

It would be three years later before I had a baseball glove. We just didn't have the money to buy one, so I put on three old corn-shucking gloves, one on top of the other, and made my own glove. After catching balls using the "shucking mitt," I was in baseball heaven when I finally got that real left-hander's baseball glove. I played baseball off and on, during those early years with Phil. When I was in the seventh grade, a new boy named Terry Glynn moved to Weldon. Terry and I spent many hours playing baseball, always pretending to be our heroes. I represented the Boston Red Sox at the time, and my major hero was Ted Williams.

I was a Cub fan, but Williams was something else. Terry represented the St. Louis Cardinals, and his hero was Stan Musial.

Terry and I had many long arguments about who was the greatest-- Musial or Williams, and we played out our argument when each of us came to bat. We had great fun together; except for the time I hit a Ted Williams homer that went through the front window of our old Mack truck. I was proud of the distance I hit the ball, but wasn't all that pleased about having to cut thistles out of the pasture to earn money to pay for a new window.

One summer, my mother decided that I should take piano lessons from Mrs. Sewell. I had lessons for eight weeks, and finally took a stand against continuing, on the basis that it was taking too much time away from my baseball practice.

I became a pretty good baseball player, for a person with my size and strength. I attribute a lot of my early skill development to Ken McDaniel, who became my brother-in-law. Ken spent hours hitting me ground balls and fly balls, taking time away from my sister, Wanda, who he was dating. I continued to practice, and played in some of the adult softball games in Weldon.



Phares O'Daffer, 1950

I later played on the baseball team at Deland-Weldon Senior High School, and, as attested by the copy of my batting average, copied from the 1950 Spotlight yearbook and shown below, did pretty well.

<u>BATTING AVERAGE</u>			
	<u>A. B.</u>	<u>H.</u>	<u>Pct.</u>
1. O'Daffer	21	9	.429
2. Loney	19	7	.368
3. Glenn	18	6	.333
4. Norfleet	18	5	.278
5. Ruble	12	3	.250
6. Edwards	13	3	.230
7. Kallembach	18	4	.222
8. Clifton	3	1	.333
9. Lubbers	10	2	.200
10. Parrish	17	3	.176
11. Grant	18	2	.111
12. Hiter	1	0	.000
13. Smith	1	0	.000
14. Thomas	0	0	.000
15. Cunningham	0	0	.000

After I graduated from high school, Terry and I played in a good summer league, with some of the better baseball players in Central Illinois. As a freshman at Illinois State University, I tried out for the baseball team, along with 100 or so others. I survived two cuts, down to 22 players, and a few days before the final cut to 17 players for the spring trip south, I mildly sprained my ankle chasing a fly ball in center field, and didn't survive the cut. I don't know if I could have made the team the following year or not, but with the advent of a girlfriend and other interests, I did not try out. I continued to enjoy playing intramural baseball, and in later years, in other situations. When I began teaching at Stanford, Illinois, I played on a summer league softball team, coached by Ken Barton, and enjoyed it very much.

Basketball

Moving on to basketball, it was no accident that I was invited to play with the Harlem Globetrotters basketball team when I was 13 years old! I had gone to see the Harlem Globetrotters play in Bloomington, Illinois, and was standing with some friends along the side of the court, a little beyond the three-point line, when they were warming up. When one of their balls came rolling over to me, I picked it up, took the shot, and it swished the net! I think it was Goose Tatum who came over, gave me a big grin, and shouted at their manager/coach, "Sign this kid up!" I say that it was no accident because I had been shooting long baskets like that every day for the preceding four years. I loved to play basketball at Prairie View School, and my dad had somehow found an old

basketball hoop and put it on the side of our barn. I don't know where he got the old leather, scuffed up, basketball, but it sure got a lot of use. It was also Ken McDaniel who was instrumental in developing my love for basketball. He taught me all the different shots, and played HORSE with me ad infinitum.



Ike and Ken with the Basketball, 1945

During my late grade school and high school years, boys from all around our rural community and from Weldon would come to our barn court and play basketball. Since they were of all ages, it was a great social setting, and a way for me, as a boy in a family of two sisters, to develop some of the "male toughness" that was otherwise hard for me to come by.

My other valuable basketball mentor was Will Glynn, Terry's dad. Will was the principal of the Weldon Grade School, and coached the boy's basketball team. The day that Will came out to Prairie View School, and asked Buddy Clow and I if we would have any interest in playing on the Weldon Grade School basketball

team was probably the most exciting day of my life up to that time. It was a totally wonderful experience for a seventh grade farm boy, and I attribute the opportunity and support to Will Glynn. We traveled to several towns in central Illinois to play, and had many games at home. I was the team's ball handler and three-point shooter, before the age of three-point shots. Will Glynn did get frustrated with me from time to time, since I had the habit of catching the ball and then starting to dribble it, even in situations where it would have been better just to shoot it as quickly as I could. Will once asked me, "Do you dribble before you go to the bathroom?" I recall that at a team banquet at the end of my eighth grade year, my award was for breaking the all-time scoring record for a 7th-8th grader, with a total of 343 points. What fun it was!

My early basketball success did breed more success -- my reputation had been established, and the next year I was selected to be a starter on the Nixon Township High School basketball team. I played varsity that year, but in retrospect it was a bad coaching decision. The pressure, from the coaches, older fellow players, and the rabid Weldon fans was too great for a green freshman. I reacted by becoming nervous, and blew a lot of shots and even lay-ups. In a sense, this defined my high school basketball experience. Our school consolidated into Deland-Weldon Senior High School, and even though I had some good games, I continued to have trouble in pressure situations, and ended up playing sixth or seventh man, even through my senior year. But the experience was good for me, and in an odd

sort of way, it helped me in later years to learn how to better deal with pressure in games and other situations.

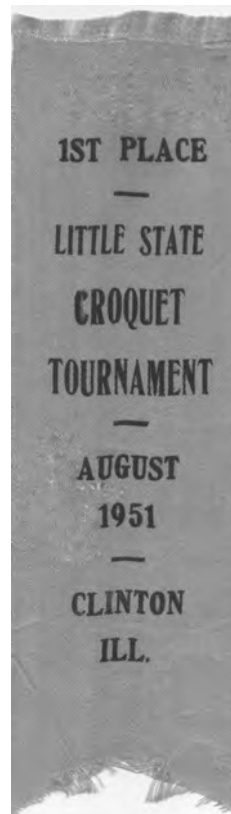
Croquet

Another sport that captivated me as a youngster was court croquet. On warm Wednesday summer evenings in Weldon, Illinois in the late 1940's, before there were multiple television sets in every home, you would find men and a few boys playing croquet under the lights. Now this was not the usual grass croquet court. Rather, it was a regulation court, made of clay covered with fine sand, and bordered by a six-inch high concrete wall. The arches were made of iron rods, 3/4-inch in diameter. The mallet heads, often beautifully carved out of walnut, were about 10 inches long, with hard rubber cap on one end, and a soft rubber cap on the other. The handle was about 16 inches long. The balls were made of hard rubber, and would barely go through the arches. There was a dime's thickness of space on each side between the ball and the arch. You could bank shots off the wall to hit a ball that you were unable to hit directly. It was, in a way, like playing croquet on a giant pool table. Some of the men were really wizards at playing the game, could hit the ball very accurately, and could impart just the right spin to make the ball, off to the side of an arch, go right through it.

I found this type of croquet very challenging and interesting to play, and my dad helped me get a good mallet and a ball. I played some with him on Wednesday nights, and also went

with Terry and his dad to various courts in Illinois for a game or a tournament. Will Glynn was considered one of the best players in the State, and again was an apt mentor for Terry and I.

Annually, the Little State Croquet Tournament was held in Clinton, Illinois, since it was near the center of the state. It was called "Little State" because there was another State tournament in the Chicago area, I believe. However, players came to the Clinton State tournament from all over downstate Illinois. When I was in high school, I entered this tournament, and had the day of my life. I was in a zone of excellence all day, and ended the day as the winner of the tournament and Little State Champion! A copy of the ribbon I was given, worn by the ensuing years, is shown below. I was definitely more proud of it than the event probably merited



Bedraggled First Place Ribbon

Tennis, Golf, and Other Sports

I have had just enough success and satisfaction from other sports to enjoy them immensely. As you might suspect, Ken McDaniel also taught me to play tennis, and took time to play with me. It has been a wonderful source of all the sport benefits. I have enjoyed winning tournaments with each of my children, and at our summer vacation spot. I also won an intramural badminton tournament once as a college student, and a couple of ping-pong tournaments on a cruise ship! As a student at Illinois State University, I took a physical education class to learn how to play golf. They had no left-handed clubs, so I learned to play right-handed, and played that way for two years. I then changed and played left-handed. I have also greatly

enjoyed the game of golf, and have had some great shots and days, but never a hole-in-one. And I am proud of winning an ISU summer golf league with my partner Randy Charles, even if it was Class C; as well as a Seniors tournament in East Peoria, Illinois.

Now, at age 70, I still enjoy many of these sports, either participating or watching. I play golf and tennis regularly, and still gain most of the benefits I mentioned at the beginning of this vignette. Every once in a while on the tennis court, when I run like I was 20 years old and make an "impossible" shot, I stop and say a prayer, giving thanks to God for the blessing of still being able to exert myself physically and mentally in this healthy competition. I know at this age that this wonderful privilege could be taken away at any time, and that I must enjoy it to the fullest while I can. I hope this recount of my life encounter with sports will help you see the value they can have, and encourage you to also experience this lifetime high. If I have gotten carried away and bragged a little, I apologize. But, without a doubt, sports have been a source of great benefit in my life.

11

A Big Fish in a Little Pond

We can't always choose what kind of a pond we can swim in, but when we can, we should give some consideration to choosing to be a possibly big fish in a small pond. This seems contrary to the goal often set before us to go as far as we can, and take on as many larger and larger responsibilities as we can. After all, we might become President of the United States someday!

But I wonder if being a big fish in a little pond as one is in one's formative years, and even later, might be desirable from a number of standpoints. First of all, it gives the average person a little bit more of a chance for success, and it certainly contributes to reducing the pressure. It gives an opportunity to taste success more quickly, and in a more comfortable setting, and it possibly gives more opportunities for growth. And perhaps it gives a nurturing environment for one's sense of self worth, since it's a little easier to feel worthy in situations where the competition isn't so great. A small pond also helps one develop a lot of confidence in one's capabilities. There is no question that a small pond gives a person more opportunities to develop a wider variety of skills, because there is more of a chance to get meaningfully involved in more productive situations.

I'm not saying that we should always back away from the most competitive, highest level situations (i.e., the big ponds), but I think I am saying that we need to really know ourselves-- our abilities and our limitations-- and choose the small pond when it makes the best sense. Or if we find ourselves, as I did, in a very small pond, recognize that it might not be that bad after all, and make the best of it.



My life found me in a few big ponds, but generally, I seemed to be a fairly big fish in a small or medium sized pond. The small rural community that I grew up in was certainly a small pond. There weren't very many kids my age per square mile, and I felt I was an important part of that small pond-- even a pretty big fish. When I put on my overalls as a pre-schooler and went to town with my dad, I felt pretty important. And when I walked around the town square on Wednesday nights as a teenager, I felt that I could whip the world. When I later played baseball for a community team, I might just as well have been a major leaguer.

Some Small Ponds

The one room country school I attended, Prairie View School, was, in the most magnified view imaginable, still a very small pond. And, as I moved through the grades, I found a way to be a pretty big fish. In the fifth and sixth grades, I seemed to cipher better than anyone else in the pond, and to read as good as anyone. I was a good wrestler, and could beat everyone except for the eighth graders. I was happy to be considered the best basketball shooter, and loved to make baskets. I also sensed that I was probably the best writer in the school. Maybe all these things weren't totally true, but many of them were most likely close to the truth. I was often told them, and I felt them. I developed a lot of confidence and self worth in the small pond called Prairie View School.

I went to high school at Nixon Township High School in Weldon, Illinois my freshman year, and to Deland-Weldon Senior High School my last three years. Both of these schools had an enrollment of less than 100 students. They were definitely little ponds. I was able to participate in all of the sports the school had-- basketball, baseball, and a little bit of track. I played on the first team of varsity basketball my freshman year, and felt like a pretty big basketball fish in that little pond. I continued to play when we consolidated with Deland, and got quite a bit of playing time. I was always on the varsity baseball team, and as I indicated in an earlier vignette, really enjoyed playing baseball.

I felt successful in these sports, and in most cases was a "big fish in a little pond."

In the non-sports arena, it was the same. I was able to be in several major school plays, sometimes with lead parts, and given my inability to project my voice, this could only have happened in a very little pond. I was also in the Boys and Mixed chorus, and for a short time in a school band. And, even though my family finds it hard to believe, I sang in a Boys Quartet that sang at my senior graduation ceremony. I was president of my class for four years, and held several other leadership positions. I recall being in charge of planning and producing the class yearbook my senior year. It was a strenuous, but great experience that I probably wouldn't have been able to experience in a larger pond. I was selected as representative to Boys State my senior year, and was the valedictorian of my class of 17 students. What a great example of the experiences you can have in a "little pond," and the value of finding a way to be a "big fish" in such a setting. I grew a lot in high school, developed several new interests, learned several new skills, and gained a lot more confidence. I've often wondered how my life would have been different if I had gone to a large metropolitan high school.

Partly because of my interest in teaching, and partly because I had very little money and thus qualified for a state scholarship to attend Illinois State University, I opted for a relatively "small pond" for my college experience. I really didn't even consider the University of Illinois, or any other even more prestigious

university, and, if the truth was known, may have felt that those ponds were just a little too big. I think this choice might illustrate a few of the drawbacks of being involved early in "small ponds." Certainly small ponds seem to beget small ponds. It seems clear that those who are able to have early successful experiences in large ponds are better prepared to continue swimming in large ponds, while those who begin in small ponds move to large ponds with some trepidation and lack of preparation.

Illinois State University had about 2500 students when I enrolled in 1951. It was a relatively small pond, as universities go. In some ways, however, it seemed like a big pond to me, after my experience at such small secondary schools. But I was able to grow as a fish in this pond. I became the president of my dormitory my freshman year, and felt like a big fish. As I mentioned in an earlier vignette, I came close to making the baseball team, but wasn't successful. I got pretty good grades, made the Dean's list on many occasions, and was president of an honorary fraternity, Kappa Mu Epsilon, in the mathematics department.

As I look back to the baseball tryout, I think that if I had had just a little bit of good baseball coaching, and had been in some previous situations where I had to deal with intense competition, I would probably have made the team. This was another disadvantage of the little pond. But, for the most part, because I had confidence in myself, and a good sense of self-worth, I simply tackled any deficiencies I had, adapted and improvised, made up for lost time, and got along fairly well, as it turned out.

I guess I would say that I was at least a middle-sized fish in a small to medium pond at ISU. I think it was in this setting that I realized that some of my college colleagues who had been reasonably sized fish in big pond high schools had an advantage over me. I recall having to get tutoring help to make up a deficiency in algebra that I had upon entering the mathematics department. When they mentioned the quadratic formula, I had no idea what it was. My high school principal had also been my Algebra I and II teacher, and I guess he was off dealing with a discipline problem the days we should have been introduced to or used this basic idea of algebra. Also, in my school, you could take physics or chemistry, but not both! I took physics. When I decided to pursue a science minor in college, I found myself in a beginning college chemistry class where all the other students had already had a high school chemistry course. Needless to say, I had some catching-up to do!

Moving to Big Ponds

I felt that my first "big pond" experience, other than teaching at Hammond High School and at Ball State University, was probably when I enrolled in the doctoral program at the University of Illinois in 1965. Even though I had often been a big fish in a little pond up until then, my previous experiences had given me the confidence and sense of self-worth I needed to jump into the big pond. I recall the first graduate level class I attended at the U of I. Everyone in the class seemed so knowledgeable, and could express themselves so well about high

level educational theories, that I was almost shocked, and felt I might be in over my head. But I had learned to work hard, and that trait and skill, along with the other positive feelings I had about myself, helped me bite the bullet and jump into the fray. When the semester ended, I was one of those few who got an A in the course, while some of my more verbal, but less industrious cohorts, came away with Bs. I learned through that course that good plain old hard work could help bring a pond down to size!

I felt that my writing career, with books published by Addison Wesley, was also a big pond experience. But I was so excited about doing it, and loved the activity so much that the size of the pond didn't seem to make any difference. And anyway, by that time, I had already figured out how to deal with big ponds, and they didn't seem to have as much effect on me as they might have had in my late teens.

Medium Sized Ponds

After I completed my PhD, I had another "medium size pond-big pond" decision to make. I interviewed at Michigan State and Illinois State, and could have taken a job at either university. I also had opportunities to interview at some other universities. I had a fondness for Illinois State, and decided that it might be better to try to be a bigger fish in a medium sized pond. Even though an outspoken mathematician friend remarked to me, "Back to the womb, huh," I took the job at Illinois State, and had a wonderful career. I never regretted the decision.

I became a full professor at ISU, and was grateful to be able to direct the mathematics laboratory, and play a mathematics education leadership role in the department. Every year I taught, I was humbled to receive the highest ratings for teaching, research, and service, and get excellent ratings from my students. I was privileged to serve as President of the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Chair of the Editorial Panel of a major mathematics education journal, and receive awards for these efforts. It was satisfying to be a "big fish in a medium sized pond," with selected adventures in really big ponds.

I guess you would have to say that even living where I live now, in Normal, Illinois, is being in a "medium sized pond" community. Because of this, my community volunteer work has gained me satisfaction and recognition that I probably wouldn't have enjoyed as a smaller fish in a "really big pond" community.

When all the dust settles, and as I look back on my opportunities and experiences, I can truly say that I believe my opportunities to often be a "big fish in a little or medium sized pond" have made a tremendous difference in the way I have been able to cope with and enjoy both my professional and private life.

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The Reality of Serendipity

The best dictionary definition of "serendipity" I can find is, "the faculty of finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for." If you put yourself in the right situations and are competent and receptive, it is amazing how good things can open up for you. In an earlier vignette, "God's Handiwork or Lucky Chance?" I talked about whether a given event was the will of God, or simply a chance happening. I mentioned that I tended to think that God only very rarely alters the laws of His natural world to make something physical, either bad or favorable, happen. Yet God works through people, and can help them do amazing things. In the case of serendipity, I think it might be explained as a triad-- a person prepared, God at work, and just plain luck.

In my life there have been plenty of serendipitous events. I would like to describe a few of them, to illustrate how a person's life can be guided, and often totally changed by "finding valuable and agreeable things not sought for."

Library Serendipity

Perhaps the first event in my life that illustrates serendipity was the doing of a somewhat frail little lady who was librarian at the Weldon Public Library, pictured here, in its current state of disrepair.



Old Weldon Public Library, now abandoned

Her name, almost as you would suspect, was Birdie Boaz (Pronounced " Bows"). My family and I always went to Weldon on Wednesday nights in the summer to see the free outdoor movies sponsored by the local merchants. People came from all around, and the young people walked around and around the town square (it was really a rectangle). The girls strutted their stuff, and the boys obliged by watching. So what else is new? And you could always go to Swede Olsen's store, buy an ice cream cone for five cents, and if you were lucky, find a piece of paper in the tip of the cone entitling you to a free ice cream cone.

I think it was the year that I was in the fifth grade that I was walking along the street on a Wednesday night and met Birdie.

She almost collared me, but in a friendly voice, said something like, " We've got some real interesting books for boys your age down at the library. If you've a mind to take a look at them, I'll be down there 'til nine o'clock." Now I had read a few books from our very small library at Prairie View School, and had a favorite book about an Indian boy, titled Hoot Owl, that I had checked out about six times when I was in the third grade. But you must understand that in those days, parents didn't push books on young children nearly as much as parents do today. As farm kids, there were plenty of other things to do, and the idea was that you'd do plenty of reading at school. It may surprise you to know that up until Birdie accosted me on the street that fateful night, I don't think I had ever been inside the Weldon Public Library. I took the bait, and went to the library before I left with my family for home. Birdie was right! And that began regular visits to the library and regular reading of every book Zane Grey ever wrote, as well as the Tarzan books and many others. Birdie and the books were not something I had sought, but they were something very positive, and my real interest in reading began.

Sports and Writing Serendipity

In an earlier vignette, I mentioned that a wonderful opportunity opened up for me when Will Glynn invited me as a seventh grader to play basketball with the "town" team. I had not asked to do this, and was totally surprised when the offer was made. Yet this serendipitous event made a quality

difference in my young life, and was an experience that greatly broadened my social and sports perspective.

A third event that illustrates serendipity happened when I was probably in the eighth grade. One day my teacher, Mrs. OConnor, handed me a sheet that described a literary contest sponsored by the DeWitt and Piatt County Governing Boards. Any eighth grader in Piatt or DeWitt county could enter and was to write an essay on a topic, as I recall, that related in some way to the role of the county government, and some of the issues that were on its agenda at the time. The contest was to be judged by the county board members, and there were small, incremental monetary prizes for first, second, and third places. For some reason, I decided to take some time out of my heavy sports agenda to enter the contest. The title I chose for my essay seemed creative to me then, but seems sort of commonplace now. It was "Big Oakes from Little Acorns Grow." I really enjoyed writing the essay, and remember feeling a good bit of satisfaction as I put it into the envelope and mailed it. Lo and behold, in about three weeks after the deadline, I received a letter from the County Officials indicating I had won first place in the contest, and offering their congratulations! And, of course, the full text of my essay was published the next week in the Weldon Record, a small local newspaper of great local renown. This event may seem insignificant, but I think it was a small serendipitous success that had important ramifications. After that, when someone asked me what I wanted to do when I grew up, I told them that I wanted to be a writer.

Harriet Serendipity

Another serendipitous event happened when I was working in Milner Library as an Illinois State University college student. I had been at ISU for a month or so, and had made a fairly well researched, but incorrect, observation that there really wasn't a pretty girl on campus. As I was busy checking out books in the Reading Room, I caught a glimpse of a young lady sitting across the room at a table, studying. I knew in a moment that she was a counterexample to my earlier brash generalization, and, to get a better look, I went over to sharpen my pencil at a sharpener near where she was sitting. I made a point to talk to her when she checked out a book, and found that her name was Harriet Gove. This chance meeting was the beginning of an exciting lifetime adventure of friendship and love, and was without a doubt the most important event in my life.

To add to the previous story a little, I met Harriet again about a week later, walking across campus. She approached me as a long lost friend, and was totally excited about just becoming an aunt for the first time! John Greeley, her sister Ellen and brother-in-law Bob's first son, had just been born. I was an indirect recipient of joy. It took the Homecoming Dance, a football game, and a couple of movies before it was kissing time, but, of course, after 50 years, I have to say that the wait was worth it. After dating for three years, I proposed to her under a big oak tree beside the pond in Miller Park in Bloomington,

Illinois. I probably should tell her, after all these years, that that sparkly diamond really didn't fall off that tree!

Career Serendipity

A fifth, quite remarkable serendipitous event happened to me at the beginning of my sophomore year at Illinois State University. I was walking across campus (a lot of things seem to have happened to me while walking across campus!), and felt that I didn't have a care in the world. I had just been elected President of Dunn Hall, the large dorm where I lived, and felt "reinforced by my peers," in the language of my education professor. I happened to see a sign posted on the bulletin board just south of Old Main that announced that all sophomores had to declare a major field of study at this time. I truly had no idea what I wanted to "major in" (except possibly sports and girls.) In retrospect, I am amazed at how casually I made what was a life-directing decision. I really didn't have a career counselor assigned to me, and was still green enough about the ways of life and of the university that I did not really know anyone who could have given me good advice.

I remember thinking that in high school I had scored high in mathematics and science on the Kuder Preference test. I knew that I also scored high in a preference toward careers involving writing and communicating. But without much more serious consideration than I gave to deciding what clothes to wear that morning, I went to the Dean's office and declared that

I wanted to be a mathematics major and a science minor. The pact was sealed, and I never looked back. What an amazing example of serendipity! This decision, which was almost picked out of the air, was the catalyst for an amazing chain of career events for the next forty years. I had not really sought such a career direction, it just sort of fell into my path.

Military Serendipity

Another serendipitous event in my life related to my Army experience. My draft board, in 1951, was in Clinton, Illinois. The board thought everyone should go, as soon as they became 18 years old, and serve in the United States Military Service. I became 18 in February 1952, when I was a sophomore at Illinois State University. I felt fortunate to get a deferment from the draft board that allowed me to finish my studies at Illinois State University. But when I completed my Masters Degree in 1958, I knew that my time had come. It was after the Korean War. I was married, and I had little enthusiasm for a two-year stint in the military service. I recall going to the Bloomington, Illinois Draft Board and asking to see any informational books they had on military possibilities. This time, I was doing my homework.

I vividly remember thumbing through a large book on all kinds of ways to serve in the military. On page 212, I think, I saw what proved to be the basis for my serendipitous event. It described a Critical Skills Program, in which someone involved in a "critical skill occupation," such as science or mathematics,

could serve in the Army for six months, followed by a five-year (it may have been more, I'm not sure) commitment to a three-four week summer army reserve program. I jumped on this, did all the extensive paperwork and verification of my critical skill status required, and signed up.

In June 1958, with pregnant Harriet staying with her parents in Creve Coeur, Illinois, I boarded a bus for Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri. They shaved my head, bossed me around, and gave me eight weeks of Basic Training. Push-ups, pull-ups, long marches with a 50 pound pack, rifle drills, crawling through a barbed-wire obstacle course with live bullets firing overhead, self-defense, war simulations, and a whole host of other indecencies made up this training. I was older than a lot of the 18-year-old recruits, and just wise enough to know how to stay out of trouble. As they say, it built character!

Upon completing basic training, and because I scored reasonably high on the aptitude/intelligence tests they gave us and was in the Critical Skills program, I was assigned to serve the rest of my time at the Army's Ballistics Research Laboratory at Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Aberdeen, Maryland. I went there, along with my now really pregnant wife, and spent a few weeks reading books and trying to teach myself how to program the large computer that was there. Harriet and I took a weekend trip to Philadelphia, and were planning a weekend trip to Washington, D.C. when I received the notice that at seven A.M. the next Saturday morning, all soldiers in the critical skills

program were to muster at the base headquarters. It was there that the shocking news came! The Lieutenant said that President Eisenhower had issued a directive that, in response to the Russian beating us to the punch and launching the space satellite, Sputnik, all critical skills personnel were to return immediately to their civilian occupation. We returned home in time for Thanksgiving, 1958. I had been in the U.S. Army for exactly three months and 18 days, achieved the paltry rank of Private E-1, and had been released with an Honorable Discharge. Because it was deemed that our country needed to make maximum use of those with "critical skills" in order to catch up with the Russians, they also relieved us of the summer obligation to the army reserves. All of this was not a drastic, long-term, life changing event, but amazingly serendipitous timing, nonetheless.

Job Serendipity

Another brush with serendipity came not long after my discharge from the Army. It was now February, and I was ready to teach mathematics! It was the best of times as far as getting a teaching job was concerned, and I was very surprised to get a letter from Henry Swain, Chairman of the Mathematics Department at New Trier Township H.S., asking me to come there for an interview. New Trier was recognized as among the premier high schools in the United States, and it was an honor to have been asked.

I went for the interview, and while I was there, I investigated the available housing as well as the living conditions. Being from Weldon, Illinois, I was shocked at what it would cost to live in that area. Then the fateful letter came. Henry Swain thought the interview had gone well, and offered me a job teaching mathematics at New Trier for \$5500 per year. It was a good beginning salary for those times, and by all rights I should have jumped all over the offer. But I was still pretty naïve, and was really feeling pretty important as I anticipated starting my new career. So, believe it or not, I wrote a letter back to Henry, and informed him that there was no way I could afford living quarters, and the otherwise high cost of living in New Trier on that salary. If he would raise it to \$6000 per year, I'd be happy to take the job! Henry was not accustomed to dickering with a cocky young upstart, and informed me that many young teachers had lived in apartments above someone's garage in order to teach at his school, and he was sorry I couldn't see my way clear to accept his very generous offer. Case closed.

Many years later, I became acquainted with the person who did take that job. He came there at about my age, and taught there all his life, until he retired. I'm sure it was a great job, but I thought about the career path that I was able to take, in large part because I didn't take that job, and the wonderful experiences I had as a result. I think my refusing that job, motivated by whatever unusual state of mind I was in at the time, was truly serendipitous!

In February, 1958, I accepted a job teaching mathematics at Hammond High School in Hammond, Indiana. I think the salary was \$5700 a year, so you can see that I lowered my sights from \$6000! It was an exciting time, and the situation there gave birth to the next serendipitous event in my life! I was asked to teach two experimental mathematics courses at one time-- the Ball State Program Geometry, and the University of Illinois Committee on School Mathematics Algebra. Thelma Abell, the Mathematics Department Chair, sat in my algebra class every day- quite a challenge for a first year teacher! Thelma, bless her soul, was very nice, but at the same time very intense and fussy! I really learned to adapt and improvise, but the saving grace was that, simply put, Thelma liked me.

As a teacher of the experimental courses, I was expected to send feedback to the project directors. But I didn't expect them to visit me at Hammond High School. One day it happened. Charles Brumfiel, Bob Eicholz, and Jack Forbes, Directors of the Ball State University Experimental Mathematics Project, came to visit my geometry class. I had never met these gentlemen, and didn't know what to expect. But serendipity had its day. It was a class to top all classes! Somehow, I rose to the occasion, and taught a beautiful lesson. But not without a lot of help. Phil, the boy mathematical genius who came into my class two weeks after it had started, broken arm and all, and who could still answer all the questions, seemed to come through in amazing fashion whenever there was a lull in the discussion. And Cleeta, the very bright, but quiet black girl in the back row, seemed to

sense that I needed all the help I could get, and suddenly became the talkative, informed student. She must have seemed to the visitors to be walking proof that I had done a good job teaching the basic ideas. Talk about finding something not sought for! About a week after the visit, I received a letter from Charles Brumfiel, offering me a job teaching mathematics at Burris Laboratory School at Ball State University, and working with the Ball State Experimental Program! I ultimately accepted the offer, and felt that it would have been fair and appropriate to have taken Phil and Cleta with me.

Serious Writing Serendipity

About two years after I began teaching at Ball State, yet another serendipitous event occurred in my life. I had taught there one year with Bob Eicholz, one of the authors of the mathematics textbooks used in the Ball State Program. At the end of that year, Bob left to take a job with the Greater Cleveland Mathematics Project, and I was busy working on a 7th grade textbook with Charles Brumfiel. The following year, Bob became involved with Addison Wesley Publishing Company, and began to write the primary grade books for a K-8 Mathematics textbook series. On a warm day in late October, I was busy teaching an algebra class and the Lab School principal came up to tell me that I had a telephone call from Bob Eicholz, and that he would "teach" my class while I took the call. The first thing Bob said when I picked up the phone was, "How would you like to retire in two years?" The purpose of the call was to invite me to

move to California and participate in the writing of the K-8 textbook series. Evidently Bob felt that the series would be finished in two years and become very successful.

Again, I was amazed at this unsolicited and unexpected opportunity, and it took me on a career adventure that was one of the wildest rides one could imagine. The books were finished in two years, and they were very successful. But I did not retire for another thirty-six years! I will tell more about this experience in a later vignette.

These are a few of the examples of the role of serendipity in my life. Some were so important that they literally defined my life. Others were important in more subtle ways, but made a lot of difference. My stepfather, Willie Atteberry, said to me one time, "You're so lucky that if you'd fall into a pond you'd come up with your boots full of fish!" I hope so! For sure, often something serendipitous seems to happen unrelated to anything you've done. However, at other times, your hard work and preparation puts you in a position for a serendipitous event to happen. Whether you call it luck, hard work, or God's plan, serendipity is real, and has greatly affected my life.

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Jobs 101

There is a lot of talk among people these days about the value of and what constitutes a good education. You can get a lot of differing views on this, and many valid points. But I would like to suggest that the jobs that people have while growing up are an integral part of this "good education," and their role is often underrated. In the discussion that follows, I'm thinking primarily of non-career, often part-time, jobs that are outside the home, where someone else other than a member of your family is the boss.

A job teaches a young person a lot. First, there is the lesson of responsibility. A job worth its salt gives you a responsibility, and helps you learn what it means to take and discharge that responsibility.

A job also helps you begin to understand the meaning of attention to detail, and to quality. I recall my mother telling me as a child a simple story about the two persons who applied for a job. Their qualifications were so comparable that the boss had difficulty choosing between them. Then the boss noticed that the first candidate had not polished his shoes at the sides and heel, but only on the toe. The second candidate, the total polisher, got the job, because the boss thought he would be the

best bet to bring this same attention to detail and sense of quality to the job. I created a related story/situation of my own when my son Eric was a youngster. We bought a car and had it undercoated and protected by a company named Ziebart. I was totally impressed with the quality of their work, and showed Eric how they coated even the hard to get places in and under the car that would probably never be seen. We began to talk about a "Ziebart Job," and this became a symbol of quality that we both enthusiastically refer to even today when a situation merits it.

A job usually gives you an opportunity to learn how to relate to and work with people, even if, in some cases, it's just the boss. It also helps you learn the value of and how to deal with money. When you receive a paycheck for a job you've done, it is your money, and you feel a new ownership and responsibility that is usually not so pronounced when someone outright gives you money. A job also broadens your perspective by exposing you to new situations. And, of course, a job can often help you learn a new set of skills. These are a few of the educational values of a job, even a part-time job, and you will probably think of several others.

After all this talk about the value of a job for young people, I am moved to think about my early job experiences and what I learned from them.

My Early Jobs

The first job I can recall was at Prairie View School, when I was around 10 years old. I went to school early every morning during that winter and carried the cobs and coal from the shed into the schoolhouse, so there would be fuel for the large furnace that graced the one room. My teacher, Mrs. Wene, asked me to do it, and she paid me a quarter a day for my efforts. I learned about being on time, and about doing even a simple job well. I also learned, when I got up a little earlier on those cold winter mornings, that sometimes you just have to do it, whether you feel like it or not.

My second paying job was mowing my Grandmother Odaffer's yard. When I was about 12 years old, I would ride my bike from our farm two miles or so to her house in the small town of Weldon, Illinois. She provided the lawn mower, and I provided the push. This was usually in the summertime when it was pretty hot, and I worked up a hefty sweat before I was done. Of course, my grandmother was the world's easiest boss, and made the job as comfortable as possible, with frequent rests and refreshments. Probably no employee has ever been pampered as much! From this job I learned the value of job benefits. Not only did she give me all of those good breaks with refreshments, but when I was finished, my grandmother always cooked me a full-fledged lunch. And she could really cook! So my benefit package was one to be envied, and set a high standard for future jobs.

I was pretty excited about my next job. Willard Gift, who lived on a farm about two miles away, came by our farm one day and asked me if I would like a job baling hay. Now Willard owned a hay baler, and baled hay for a lot of farmers, far and wide. He would pull the baler with an old tractor, and it would scoop up the hay and force it into a shape that I later learned was officially designated in mathematics as a rectangular parallelepiped. As it passed through the baler, one person sitting on a little seat on one side of the baler would feed and push wires through the bale. Another person, sitting on the other side, would tie those wires. The tied bale would then be pushed out onto the ground or a rack wagon, and another bale came through right behind it. My job would be to tie the wires. And Willard offered me a few cents a bale to do this job. Needless to say, it would take quite a few bales to make a dollar, but I was pretty excited to get the job, anyway. Now not all jobs are what they are cracked up to be. What Willard didn't tell me was that there was always a giant cloud of dust around a hay baler, and that the wire tie-er not only had to breathe dirt, but got really dirty all over. To try to keep the dirt out, I wore a mask over my nose that was hard to breathe through in 100-degree weather, and wore clothes and tied handkerchiefs around my neck. It was, of course, to no avail.

I could have walked away from that baler right into a pigpen and felt totally at home. I learned from this job that salaries are not always very good for the work you do, and that some working conditions may not make a job worth the money.

The word "slave labor" took on new meaning. But I must say here that having to deal with tough, uncomfortable working conditions does develop character, and gives an invaluable life experience. And also, Willard was a nice man, and my expectations were low, so the little bit I earned gave me a lot of satisfaction-- another benefit of having a job.

Moving Up in the Job Market

When I was around 13 years old, and since my parents had very little extra money, I started looking for a part-time job. I found it at Lisenby's Shell Station in Weldon, Illinois. My job was to wait on customers in the days when the service station employees pumped the gas and really gave service. I also helped when I could with greasing cars and changing oil. For this I started at a wage of 50 cents an hour. After I had worked there part-time for a year, my salary increased to 75 cents an hour, and I was elated! I felt a little strange working for Don Lisenby's Shell Station, since my uncle, Andy Jackson, operated a Standard Oil Station directly across the street. But Andy did not have a job available, and Don had, so that's the way the cookie crumbled.

Archie Whiteside, my friend Phil Whiteside's older brother, also worked at the station. I learned a lot from Archie, who was an old pro. Archie told stories that were of questionable truth, like about the time that he placed a speaker under the seat in the women's outdoor toilet at the station. When one of the grouchy old women customers, who always gave Archie trouble, left her car

to be serviced and went to the toilet, Archie waited the appropriate amount of time, got on the microphone wired to the toilet speaker, and said in a loud voice, "Hey, Lady, can't you see I'm working down here?" Archie claimed that the indignant, embarrassed, lady abandoned the toilet in a disheveled state, never to return to the outdoor privy again. I learned from this job that there are all kinds of people in the world, and you have to learn to accept all their quirks, particularly if you work with them.

College Jobs

My next major jobs were during the time that I was attending Illinois State University. During my freshman year, I worked in Milner Library, the main library of the university. My job was to get books from the stacks for people, and also to put returned books back in the stacks. I also worked at several of the reference desks. Much like mowing my grandmother's yard, this job had a lot of benefits. One was that I became familiar with the stacks, where all the library books were stored when not in use. And when I came upon a topic of interest, it was easy to stop a minute and read an excerpt, or take the book to check out. It so happened that the library had a pretty good section on sex education, and I found time to read about some things that I didn't know about the "birds and the bees." I think that my earlier, and probably only, sex education had come from the group of boys at Prairie View School, plus what I had learned later from my very limited personal experience. So I had a real education in the stacks. Also, the librarians at Milner Library

were generally middle aged to older women, who thought that I was "a fine young man." So again, I received a lot of attention, and a degree of adulation. I think I learned from this job that it helps to have the respect of your co-workers, and that some jobs help you broaden your knowledge and perspective quite a lot.

When I was a sophomore at ISU, I had two part-time jobs plus a full load of class work. I was basically trying to put myself through school. My other job, in addition to the library, was in the Normal Hardware Store. The owner was John Clark, and his wife and somewhat spoiled daughter also worked occasionally at the store. The other store employee was Dayton, an unmarried man who had made that job his career. I hadn't worked at the store very long when Dayton invited me to his house for dinner and recreation. Even though I was pretty naïve about the ways of the world, contemplation about what I had learned from the stacks at Milner Library, caused me to highly suspect that Dayton was gay. The manner in which he approached the house-visit situation verified that suspicion, and I graciously declined the invitation to "recreate." So the hardware store was quite an environment! A boss, a bossy wife, a spoiled daughter, and a gay clerk, made working there an interesting challenge. I did learn about a lot of hardware store items, and at Christmas time, how to wrap packages and put bicycles together. Because of the role of the boss's wife and daughter in the store, and the thinly-veiled advances of Dayton, this job taught me about nepotism, and a little bit about sexual harassment. A job situation can be physically hazardous, as with the hay baler, but

it can also be mentally hazardous as well. But you can also learn a lot about working with all kinds of people, and, as in this hardware job, how to sell something you know nothing about.

Summer Jobs

My next part-time job was sort of out of character for me. I was living with my sister, Wanda, and brother-in-law, Ken, in Peoria during the summer of my sophomore year in college, and I needed money for two purposes. First, I was dating my future wife, Harriet that summer, and needed money to support that pursuit. Also, I needed money to keep me in school, and to pay what I owed on the old Chevrolet that Wanda and Ken had helped me buy. So when a job at Pabst Brewery was advertised in the newspaper, with an hourly salary of, I think, \$1.65, my ears perked up. I knew immediately that my teetotaler mother would want me to have no part of this adventure, and I knew that Aunt Florence would probably burst her girdle over this one. And, of course, having signed the "card," and for other reasons, I was not into drinking alcohol myself. But I reasoned that I needed the money, and that someone was going to do it if I didn't, and that it was time I exerted even a little more independence about what I chose to do. And since I knew it involved cleaning out the large pasteurizers that pasteurized the beer bottles before they were filled, I rationalized that my job efforts might somehow be saving mankind from a life-taking disease. So the job was getting nobler all the time. The bottom line is that I applied for the job, was accepted, and assigned to work the four PM to 12

PM shift. So off I went to work one fine June evening in 1952, to help pasteurize bottles and bottle beer.

It was basically a hot and smelly job, but I soon got acquainted with a nice older fellow and his brother, and began to fit into the early night world of the Pabst brewery. No, there wasn't any beer in the drinking fountains, but once I did see a cleaning mop in a full beer-making vat.

After the first week, I was excited to get my up-to-then largest paycheck. I cashed it right there on the spot, put the money in my billfold, and naively left it in my unlocked locker for a few minutes while I took a shower. When I came back, my locker was open, my billfold was in my pants pocket, but the \$60 plus dollars for my first week's work was nowhere to be seen. Needless to say, one of the lessons from this job, along with learning that the evening shift is to be avoided, was that after you earn your money, keep it in sight all the time. I also enjoyed the coffee/"lunch" breaks with my new friends, and learned that you can find good working people wherever you go.

Since my mother intimated that she thought my morals might be slipping (although she really didn't give me much flack about the brewery job), and Harriet's brother Jack told me a job was open at the A&P Grocery store near Bradley University in Peoria, I changed jobs the next summer and got into the grocery business. I became an expert in the produce department, and was so skilled at identifying good cantaloupe, that I developed a

customer base who came back week after week asking for my services. I was sure that my gardening relatives would be proud of "Phares the Grocer," and that my mother would be relieved upon hearing about this new job. Just as I was beginning to fit into that produce department really well, the store manager asked me if I would like to learn to be a checker! Now of course I was quite honored, since it was only the best and brightest who became checkers. So I doffed the produce apron, went to the last cash register, and under the tutelage of Frieda, began to learn to check out grocery orders. The manager was correct about me being smart and personal enough to be a checkout person, but where he erred was in his estimate of the speed I could develop. Pushing those keys on the cash register fast was a skill akin to typing, and I had gotten a C in a typing class I took at ISU just that spring. Somehow, just like my feet when dancing, my fingers when typing just don't move as adeptly as a lot of people's. I could either type 50 words a minute with many errors, or 28 words a minute with just a few errors. I was to remain a checker, but I didn't move up the line of checkers very far, because speed was of the essence, and I had very little.

Some Valuable Other Jobs

When I went back to ISU in Normal at the end of that summer, I applied for a job at the A&P Grocery store in Bloomington, anxious to use my newfound skill as a slow checker. I was hired, and worked there part time during the rest of my time at ISU. My first support money after Harriet and I were

married came from my A&P paychecks, which I never left in my locker while I took a shower. My grocery experience taught me not only to deal with people in a friendly way, but that you should choose jobs that match your skills. It also taught me that I didn't want to make a career out of working in a grocery store.

My next part-time job was as a summer employee with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. I did it during the first summer after I taught at Stanford High School in Stanford, Illinois. My task was to visit farmers who wanted to sign up for crop support programs, measure the acreage of their farms, make a map, and interview them to fill out an information form. While they were interested in the money they might make in the farm program, they didn't always agree with my assessment of their acreage, nor did they always want to give the information requested for the form. I greatly enjoyed the triangulation procedures I used to measure irregularly shaped fields, and also the mapping. I didn't really enjoy the hassle some of the farmers gave this young "government agent." On this job, I learned to deal diplomatically with people with complaints, and to get along with your average, down-to earth-farmer.

My only other jobs that could be considered part-time were supervising student teachers while working on my doctorate degree, and tutoring an Army colonel in algebra while I was teaching at Hammond High School. I sort of decided, after the tutoring experience, that this was not a tremendously rewarding task. I did very little tutoring, at least not for pay, after that.

So that pretty much describes my part-time job experience. I can truthfully say that I feel that these various and sundry jobs really were an integral part of my education. I learned a great deal, and I think they did a lot to prepare me for many of the situations in which I later found myself in my chosen full-time profession. So don't underestimate the value of part-time jobs! Take 'em early and often, and be open to the learning opportunities they provide!

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An Experience of a Lifetime!

My stepfather, Willie Atteberry, was probably right when he said I was pretty lucky. When I think back on my total career experience as an author of mathematics textbooks. I am still amazed, and at the same time very grateful, that this experience somehow came my way. Like all experiences in life that are worth their salt, however, the wonderful parts come inextricably tied together with stress and periodic frustration. This was certainly true of my experience, but it was worth every tight stomach and stiff neck.

It never ceases to cause me to ponder how things happen in life when I think of the path I took from a naïve farm boy, pretending to be King Arthur's knights fighting with swords that

were really cornstalks, to a mathematics educator whose co-authored textbooks were used by over a third of the elementary school children in the United States at one point, and by many children in other countries. I don't report this to brag about my accomplishments, but to simply report a fact that still astounds me. Also, I think it might be of interest to look a little more carefully at how this happened, and describe what the experience was like.

My interest in writing got its first boost when I won an essay contest in the eighth grade. In high school and college, I found that writing papers and other documents came easy for me, and that I enjoyed it. So the interest was there and all that was needed was a serious opportunity to write. During my senior year in college, I decided to take the initiative and try to get an article published. I wrote an article, "Humor in Mathematics," and sent it to the editorial board of the Mathematics Teacher, a journal of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. The return letter, politely rejecting the article, conveyed the impression that they did not find my mathematical references nearly as humorous as I did. But the day finally came when the opportunity to write was presented, in the form of an invitation to join the staff at Burriss Laboratory School at Ball State University, in Muncie, Indiana.

Writing at Ball State University

I remember that soon after I arrived, the principal of Burriss Laboratory School, Curt Howd, began telling visitors to

the school, and anyone that would listen, that I was a nationally renowned author and teacher. Of course, neither of these was even close to being true, but it didn't matter to Curt. He had this trait of talking about things that he either wanted to be true or predicted to someday to be true about a person as if they were the gospel facts. Thanks to Curt, my reputation was beginning to be built with no production on my part, and basically detached from reality. I often think about Curt's approach and wonder if saying it, even though it wasn't true, didn't help me believe a little, and contribute to eventually making it a reality.

My teaching colleagues involved in the Ball State Mathematics Project writing were Bob Eicholz and Charles Brumfiel. Charlie Fleenor was a teaching colleague, but not yet a part of the project writing team. It was in this setting that I had my first opportunity to write mathematics materials. Before I arrived at Ball State, Brumfiel, Eicholz, and a Purdue University colleague, Merrill Shanks, had written an algebra text, a geometry text, and an eighth grade mathematics text. The eighth grade text had been quite successful, and the opportunity arose to write a seventh grade text to precede it.

Because the rest of the team was involved in revision of the original texts, I was invited to participate with Charles Brumfiel in writing the new seventh grade text. Stuart Brewster, the editor from Addison Wesley Publishing Company, came to Muncie in the dead of the winter in 1960 to sign up the text. He advised me that, since my first name was somewhat unusual, it might be best to have my name appear in the front of

the book as "P.G. O'Daffer." Being rather naïve about the affairs of publishing, and the new kid on the block who didn't want to make waves, I agreed. Charles Brumfiel and I were to do the writing of the book, but the author listing on the book would be Brumfiel, Eicholz, Shanks, and O'Daffer, because of the seniority status of the first three in the project. The title chosen for the book was Arithmetic- Concepts and Skills. In retrospect, this was an outmoded title that emphasized the "arithmetic" of the past, rather than the more modern focus on "mathematics." I learned several things not to do from this experience, but at the time I was just excited to begin writing a book that would be published. Contrary to this first experience, in my later writing career, I always used my full name; its placement on the text reflected my portion of writing involvement; and I fought for text titles appropriate for the times.

Even though Charles Brumfiel was my mentor on the writing project, he and I complemented each other. Charles was known as a writer who had ink in his fingers. He would start it flowing and just write everything he knew about the subject, which was usually quite a lot. He gave little thought to motivation, the appearance of the page, how a teacher would teach it, or the difficulty of some of the problems. He brought mathematical expertise, and I brought the teachers perspective, and was more creative about layout and presentation. The book was published, and although it wasn't a blockbuster, was used by quite a few teachers. It was translated into French and Spanish, and used in other countries. Ultimately, the text was rewritten to adapt it to use with teacher education. It is only fair

to report, however, that many years later my sister, Jane, found a copy of this first book of mine on sale in a used bookstore for 10¢, A very humbling state of affairs, to say the least.

About the time I finished the seventh grade book, Bob Eicholz called and asked me to come to California to participate in the writing of a series of K-8 mathematics texts for elementary school children for Addison Wesley Publishing Company. My ultimate positive response to his call resulted in my leaving Muncie, Indiana, and embarking on an adventure in writing that would literally change my life.

Writing in California

With my family in Palo Alto, California, after Christmas, 1962, I began an intensive two-year writing project that was to produce Elementary School Mathematics, a K-8 mathematics textbook series for children. The new West Coast office of Addison Wesley Publishing Company during this project consisted of Bill Larkin, the head of the operation; Elizabeth Wattenberger, his secretary; Bob Eicholz and I, the authors; Jeanine Ardourel, the editor; and Don Fujimoto, the artist. It was undoubtedly the smallest operation ever assembled to attempt to produce a major textbook series. The writing schedule was horrendous. I arrived at the small office at least by 8 a.m. (quite early by California standards.), and got home around 5:30 p.m. I would eat supper play with the kids, and then

continue writing from nine until 12 or 12:30 a.m. I generally worked on Saturday, and on Sunday in the late evening.

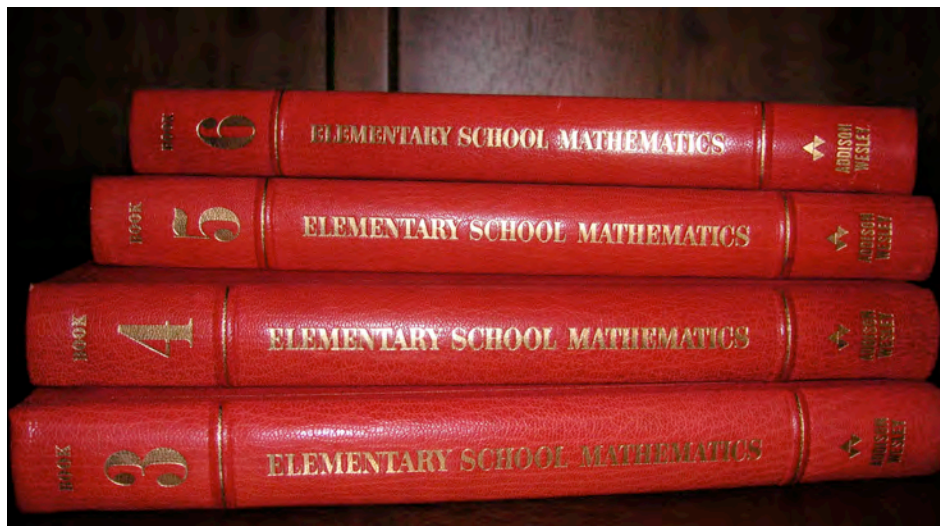
But I loved the writing activity. It was made for me, and I for it. I was totally involved in trying to develop the very best mathematics materials for children in the schools, and was really not highly motivated by the future possibility of making money on it. I loved the creative opportunities, and relished, even in my sleep, coming up with innovative, motivational approaches. However, I do remember wondering for a fleeting moment at the time if all the intensive efforts would eventually even pay for my time. This was a legitimate concern, since there was no assurance that it would be at all successful, and because having been invited by Bob Eicholz to participate, my best negotiations had still left me with considerably less of the author royalties than were commanded by Bob.

This project was, by all standards, a risky operation. Up until this time, the K-8 textbooks in use were heavily oriented toward arithmetic facts and skills. The mathematical education climate was slowly beginning to change in the country, and schools were beginning to look at changing their curriculum to still do arithmetic facts and skills, but to add more mathematics; in the form of geometry, thinking, and rudimentary algebra. Our goal was to meet this need in the schools, and come up with an alternative to the standard texts, then so ingrained in the schools. Since we were literally breaking new ground, you can see why Bob Eicholz and I, sharing a small office, spent hours planning

and arguing about what should go in those books. We would each present our ideas, give support for them, and defend them as forcibly as we could until they were either accepted, or died from stubbornness and exhaustion. This pattern of interaction between Bob and I continued throughout our careers, and I believe contributed to a lot of good decisions in developing the textbooks.

The First Results

Elementary School Mathematics was published with a 1963 copyright, and was well received by the schools as an innovative new mathematics series. To be honest, it was a success beyond my wildest dreams. A new, two-bit publishing operation with a couple of relatively unknown authors (except to Curt Howd) had developed a book that was the talk of the industry! These texts were ultimately revised, and even with Addison Wesley's anemic sales force, were still going strong in 1971. The following photo shows a gold edged, special cover edition of Elementary School Mathematics, grades three through six, designed to commemorate selling a million copies of the texts.



Elementary School Mathematics, Commemorative Books

A Personal Educational Decision

It was at the end of this project in 1964 that I made another decision that probably drastically affected my personal, and financial life. Bob Eicholz wanted me to stay in California, write a lot of supplementary items for the series, and be ready to revise it when needed. In other words, to make a total career out of writing mathematics materials for the schools, and helping schools implement them. He offered to "sweeten the pot" considerably with regard to my percent of royalty interest in any new project. On the surface it might have seemed like a no-brainer, but Harriet and I both felt that it was important for our children to know and grow up with relatives and grandparents. Also, I had always had the goal of becoming involved in higher education, and going back to school to pursue a Ph.D. Also, during my time on the writing project, I learned that I missed the creative aspects of teaching, and still wanted that to be a part of

my life. I wasn't sure it would be satisfying for me to spend my life writing at a desk and occasionally speaking to teachers.

After careful consideration, we decided to move back to Muncie for a year, and then I would apply to the Ph.D. program at the University of Illinois. I think that it is safe to say, in retrospect, that I made the right decision, and that my life has been more whole and satisfying because of it. It is also safe to say that, had I taken Bob's offer, I would have made twice as much money over the years from writing than I eventually did. And because I also decided to continue to participate as much as possible in revising and improving the Elementary School Mathematics texts, the decision to leave the project at that time indirectly caused me to spend all of my summers, a lot of holidays, and many Saturdays for the next 35 years in writing activities.

About Being a Successful Author

For several years following the publication of Elementary School Mathematics, it was pretty heady stuff. Bob Eicholz and I were both in demand to speak to teachers in districts using our books, and at mathematics conventions all over the country and in Canada-- Bob more than I, since he had started the project, and was working full-time on it. However, I still had more invitations to speak and consult than I could possibly accept. I recall for several years at the annual meeting of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics having to remove my name tag when walking at the convention center to avoid having so many teachers

stop me and want to show adulation (and much less often, the opposite) for a "nationally known author" and his texts.

We were basically revered by the teachers and because we were a "winning team," and wined, dined, and coddled by the publishers as potential writers of their *next* textbook series.

At one time, our texts were used by over one-third of all the elementary school children in the United States, and we really felt the impact of that by the way professionals in mathematics education and classroom teachers reacted to us. In a minor sort of way, I think this experience helped me understand what real "stars" encounter, and why so many of them wear sunglasses and disguises in public.

Building on the First Success

Being involved in writing a text series always presents new problems. Text series do get out of date, and any problems inherent in the texts begin to stand out in stark relief as the series ages. It was a remark by an elderly fifth grade teacher in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio, that brought home to me that Elementary School Mathematics was in need of serious changes. She said, as politely as she could, "Dr. O'Daffer, I know what you're trying to do, but my students just can't understand the understanding." Clearly, in trying to help students really understand the mathematical ideas, rather than just do things in a rote manner, we had probably gone too far in some ways for the average student and teacher.

So after at least 10 successful years, we began writing a new textbook series, titled Investigating School Mathematics, which was published in 1973. Charlie Fleenor, my colleague from Ball State University, joined our team to help write this series. While it would retain the parts of our first series that were most successful, it would again be a pioneering project. For the first time, the concept of active exploration by students of mathematical ideas, often involving use of manipulative materials would be the central theme for an elementary textbook series. I felt good about being the initiator of this new idea, which was accepted by the rest of our author team and Addison Wesley. It was received positively by many teachers around the country, and was adopted by many schools. However, even though the innovative series was well accepted at first, difficulties eventually arose, as they had with our first series, with average teachers not being able to use the texts effectively. They wanted to just tell the students, and weren't comfortable with putting them in situations where they investigated some of the ideas on their own. In this case, I was quite appreciative of the fact that even authors and publishers tend to forget who had the idea first.

However, many innovative teachers loved the books, and I believe they were one of the key catalysts for a major trend in later years toward active involvement with manipulative materials by children in elementary school mathematics classes. As the difficulties average teachers had using the series were better defined, we decided to do a revision to enable them use the materials better. I recall being in a lunch line at the Addison

Wesley Palo Alto office with Don Jones, the company CEO visiting from the main office in Boston. Don looked at me, and asked a question for our author team that, of course, was impossible to answer, "Why didn't you do it right the first time?"

Our third series, Mathematics in Our World, was published in 1978. It was developed in response to a desire by mathematics educators to place greater emphasis on the basic skills and processes required to apply mathematics in real world situations. In some ways, it could be described as a "back to the basics" series that recognized the need for greater emphasis on developing and practicing basic arithmetic skills. It did, however, include other topics such as geometry, measurement, and probability; and retained the clear development of concepts and interesting themes for which our books had become famous.

During the writing of this series, which took from three to four years, I was teaching full time at Illinois State University, and was using holidays and summers to keep up my end of the writing. I think I also had a one-semester leave, without pay, from ISU to allow time for writing and speaking to teachers. I was still very excited about writing, and enjoyed the involvement in developing these texts. This text series was also reasonably successful, and adopted by many schools around the country.

However, the world of mathematics education was changing rapidly, and we felt the need to keep up with the changes. One key area that needed to be included more effectively in our

books was that of problem-solving. New techniques for teaching children to solve "story problems" were being developed, and we wanted to be on the cutting edge of introducing them into the classroom. After a national search, we enlarged our writing team to include Randy Charles, Carne Barnett, and Sharon Young, and spent three to four years developing a new K-8 text series published in 1985 and titled Addison Wesley Mathematics. We seemed to have literally hundreds of planning meetings to develop our plan for these texts and carry it out. It was a very intensive effort that produced good results. This text series was the most successful of our text series since the original Elementary School Mathematics. Problem solving was big, and our texts had a good system for teaching it. My involvement with teachers and at conventions around the country increased, and I was a busy juggler trying to keep all my "balls in the air." My wife Harriet, who has always been tremendously supportive in all my writing projects, kept things going at home, and gave me the strength to do my work. Our Addison Wesley Mathematics program had become the "one to beat," and the competition from several other publishers was growing.

In subsequent years, we would develop two more major K-8 textbook series, both titled Addison Wesley Mathematics. One was published in 1991, and the last in 1995. The innovative aspects of these texts would be improved problem solving, estimation, mental mathematics, and cooperative learning activities involving group work, writing about mathematics, and active involvement with manipulative materials. Addison Wesley

mathematics continued to be a very successful mathematics program through these years, and the authors were nationally recognized as among "the best in the business." Our texts had now been used throughout the United States, extensively in Canada, and had been published in at least four other languages. I retired from the writing of elementary school mathematics textbook after working on the last series in the early 1990s, but continued writing several other texts, including Pre-Algebra, Plane Geometry, Mathematics for Elementary Teachers, and Geometry an Investigative Approach. These writing projects, and revisions of the Elementary School mathematics series enabled me to work with some other fine authors, including Stan Clemens, John Dossey, Tom Cooney, Janie Schielack, and Carol Thornton.

Evaluating the Experience

My writing experience, from 1962 to 1995 was an amazing ride, and I would like to say a few more things to put it into perspective. First, it was, as I titled this vignette, "An Experience of a Lifetime!" I loved writing and creating situations to better help teachers teach and children learn mathematics. I had an intellectually challenging and rewarding experience working with my co-authors, and with the various editors over the years. It was amazing and rewarding to be looked upon by teachers and fellow educators as among the best authors of such material in the world. It was always a very

satisfying thrill to see the final product-- the books-- that resulted from our approach of writing and revising, relentlessly, until no stone of quality had been left unturned. I truly felt that we spent more time striving for the ultimate quality in the text materials than anyone else in publishing. We called this satisfaction that resulted from seeing quality work after hours, days, and years of perfecting, "the old zing."

Writing elementary school texts also opened doors for me to write junior high school and high school texts, as well as texts for teachers, which was an extremely stimulating and rewarding experience. It was also very satisfying to know that many of our creative efforts, from the very first books in 1962 to the last ones in 1995, were often emulated by others, and sometimes helped set trends in future textbooks. Finally, I take a deep satisfaction in knowing that over the past 30 some years, literally millions of teachers and young children have used our books, and hopefully have learned mathematics in a way that has enhanced their enjoyment, understanding and life use of this important subject.

All that glitters is not gold, however, and there were certainly conditions attached to my "experience of a lifetime". To be realistic, I want to mention some of these. Make no mistake about it, they do not diminish the value of this "experience of a lifetime," but rather put it into an honest perspective.

One such situation that required the ability to adapt is understood by looking at what I call the "evolution of decision-

making" in the development of mathematics textbooks. When I first started writing, Bob Eicholz and I were the key decision makers about what went into our books. The single editor and artist employed by Addison Wesley basically carried out our wishes. When we developed the second major mathematics textbook series, the editors played a more prominent decision-making role, so the hierarchical ladder of decision authority on what went into the books was authors-editors. In developing the third major series, however, the publisher was spending more money, and thus wanted to give marketing research a stronger influence. So the decision-making ladder changed to authors-editors-marketing. In developing the fourth major series, the world of the author began to change drastically. The order of decision-making power changed considerably. Even though authors still wrote the material, when push came to shove, the decision-making hierarchy seemed to be moving toward marketing-editors-authors. Finally, in the fifth and sixth major series, the decision-making hierarchy almost seemed to be state adoption requirements-marketing-editors-authors.

The bottom line was, that although we authors always did much of the planning and writing, the others involved had a much greater influence on decision making than when I first started writing. It took a heightened vigilance to retain the basic integrity of the texts, and to not have someone change your writing intentions to achieve marketing benefits. Even the state textbook commissions would go through the texts and request that the publisher remove everything that they deemed

politically incorrect. The last elementary school mathematics series I helped write cost the publisher over 30 million dollars to produce, so you can see why the publisher was serious about having an influence over what was in it.

Another interesting twist involved the financial reward that I received from writing. As I indicated in describing my satisfactions from writing, money was never the prime motivator for me. But it affected my life greatly, both positively and sometimes slightly negatively. Granted, it helped make my life significantly more comfortable, and enabled me to support my family and give to good causes. However, making money on writing is not often received very well by some individuals in the academic community, and even though I gave strong financial support to the Mathematics Laboratory and some local Mathematics Scholarships, the act of doing something for financial reward occasionally evoked individual jealousy and sometimes had a dampening effect on some of my opportunities and relationships at Illinois State University.

Another factor in the life of an author was that since publishing is a commercial venture, publishing personnel, who work with authors, come and go. This transitory nature of publishing often leaves no people in the company who understand or appreciate an author's earlier contributions to the company's book successes, and so retiring authors must learn to get their satisfaction from what they know they have accomplished, rather from recognition given them by the publishers.

All this notwithstanding, my more than 30 years of writing mathematics books was a fulfillment I could never have dreamed of as an eighth grade essay contest winner. It altered my life in a highly significant way, and was truly an unforgettable experience.

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A Sequence of Life Events

By now, these vignettes have provided some pieces of the puzzle of the important events in my life. In order to pull it all together, I would like to first digress, and then summarize.

Not long after we were married, Harriet and I would often visit Harriet's parents, Mildred and Sabin Gove, on Sunday afternoons in Creve Coeur, Illinois, near Peoria. On these fairly regular occasions, Harriet's brother Jack and his wife Jean would also appear on the scene. Jack and I would invariably wash and service our cars, as the ladies talked with Mildred. Jack had a 1956 Blue and White Chevrolet, and I had a 1956 Blue Ford. Often, during this distinctly male activity, we would talk to each other about our goals in life. It was popular to talk about "our 10-year plan." As I look back on these conversations, I believe this emphasis on thinking ahead and setting goals in life was really useful for me. Certainly my plans did not always work out, and many things happened to divert a plan in an even more positive direction. But the planning was valuable, just the same, and helped me set further goals for education, work, and family,

Planning for Education

My early planning regarding my future education was rather limited, but I knew fairly soon in my life (about nine or 10) that I did not want to be a farmer. This must have been somewhat disappointing to my father, but if it was, he never gave a hint of it to me. After winning an essay contest in the eighth grade, I had this very distinct, continuing feeling that I wanted to be a writer. And even though I didn't know much about the world, I knew that a writer should probably have a college education. No person in my immediate family and none of my known relatives had ever attended college, much less graduated, and my father had quit school after the eighth grade to begin farming. My mother was Valedictorian of her high school class, and took a three-four week course to qualify to be a temporary rural grade school teacher. But by attending a four-year college, I would be breaking new ground. With some of my best high school teachers as inspirations, my feeling about writing took the back seat to my new interest in becoming a teacher.

I sort of fell into going to Illinois State University. Since I was Valedictorian of my high school class (of 17 students), the State of Illinois offered me a scholarship. I didn't even visit; I just enrolled and took the inter-urban railway to Bloomington-Normal on the appointed day. As a sophomore at ISU, I made a very un-studied decision to major in mathematics and minor in science. I thought that I would go to college four years and then begin teaching. About my junior or senior year of

college, I realized that I really enjoyed learning, and began to think that it would be interesting to go ahead and complete a masters degree. After the masters degree, I began to have visions of teaching at the college level, and immediately scheduled an appointment with the head of the graduate school at the University of Illinois to inquire about enrolling for a PhD. His advice was that study at the doctoral level in mathematics education is much more meaningful if one has had some public school teaching experience, and I was convinced. It was eight years later, with teaching and writing experience under my belt, that I was accepted as a candidate for a PhD. Here is a timeline of my educational activities.

Education Timeline-

- 1934** Born (Feb. 3) on a farm southeast of Weldon, Illinois. Education begins!
- 1939** Started school at Prairie View School, a mile and a half east and south of my home.
- 1947** Entered high school at Nixon Township High School in Weldon, Illinois.
- 1948** Entered our consolidated school, Deland-Weldon Senior High School, as a sophomore.
- 1951** Graduated from Deland-Weldon Senior High School.
- 1951** Enrolled in Illinois State University as a freshman.
- 1955** Graduated from Illinois State University with a Bachelor of Science degree.

- 1956** Completed a Masters Degree at Illinois State University.
- 1957** Took summer and evening courses in mathematics at University of Illinois.
- 1958** Took summer courses in mathematics at the University of Iowa.
(NSF* Supported)
- 1959** Took summer courses in mathematics at Ball State University.
(NSF Supported)
- 1960** Took summer courses in mathematics at the University of Michigan. (NSF Supported)
- 1965** Enrolled in the University of Illinois to work on a Ph.D.
- 1968** Graduated from the University of Illinois with a Ph.D. in Mathematics Education.
- * National Science Foundation

Planning for Work

I always had a good "work ethic," even though I could at times be a little lazy, too. I can remember trying to avoid jobs on the farm that I didn't like, such as cleaning out the chicken house, but I always felt that work was a natural part of my life. And, of course, the basic absence of any money in my life except what I earned, was a strong motivation for looking for a job. My decision to "get an education," as they say, was really an important part of my work planning. As a student at Illinois State University, I worked at two jobs to help put myself through college. Later, I also often worked at two jobs, to meet financial goals, and/or to gain certain needed work experience. Here is a timeline of my work activities:

Work Timeline-

1945 Mowed my grandmother Odaffer's yard, for pay!

1946 Worked in the summer for Willard Gift tying wires on a hay bailer.

1947-1950 Worked part-time at the Shell Station in Weldon, Illinois, for Don Lisenby.

1951-1952 Worked in the summers at the Weldon Hardware store for Bruce Axtell.

Worked during the ISU school year at the Normal Hardware Store and at Milner Library.

1953 Worked in the summer at the A&P Grocery Store in Peoria, Illinois.

Worked during the ISU school year at the Normal Hardware Store and at Milner Library

1954 Worked in the summer at the Pabst Brewery in Peoria Heights, Illinois.

Worked during the ISU school year at the Normal Hardware Store and at Milner Library.

1955 Worked part-time at the A & P grocery store in Bloomington, Illinois

1956 Taught half time at Stanford High School, Stanford, Illinois.

1957 Taught full-time at Stanford High School, Stanford, Illinois

1957 Taught part of the year at Garfield Elementary School, Peoria, Illinois

1958-1959 Taught mathematics at Hammond High School, Hammond, Indiana.

Taught part-time at Purdue University, Calumet Center, Calumet City, Indiana

1960 - 1962 Taught at Burriss Laboratory School, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

Taught one mathematics class each semester at Ball State University.

1962-1964 Involved in a K-8 mathematics textbook writing project in Palo Alto, California.

1964 Taught at Ball State University, at Burriss Laboratory School, and in the Mathematics Dept.

1967 Supervised Student teachers in the Education Department, University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois

1968-1988 Taught in the Mathematics Department at Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois. Wrote textbooks in the summers and during four one-semester leaves of absence.

1988 - 1998; 2004 Wrote/Revised mathematics text materials at all levels, K- College.

Planning for Family

Family planning involves planning where you live (often dictated by your education goals and your work) and how many children you will have. Harriet has noted that during our early married life we moved 14 times. These moves were my education and my work related, and Harriet was very willing to accommodate these needs. Certainly it's impossible to plan for everything, and often the best of plans are impacted by events upon which you have little control. Deaths, of course, are not

planned, and not all births are planned. For example, we had not planned to have Eric seven years after Sara was born-- it just happened that way. But when cherished plans go awry, the old adage, "Adapt and improvise" comes into play, and life goes on. And it should also be said that, often it's the inadvertent changes in plans that are the fertile soil of the serendipitous events I've talked so much about. A timeline of our family development and related events follows:

Family Timeline-

1933 Harriet was born in Newton, Iowa

1934 Phares was born in Weldon, Illinois

1949 My father, Ray Odaffer, was killed in a farm accident.

1955 Married Harriet Joan Gove on January 30, in Peoria, Illinois.

1955-1957 Lived at 303 W. Ash Street, Normal, Illinois.

1957-1958 Lived in Havre De Grace, Maryland, and Creve Coeur, Illinois.

1958 Daughter, Susan Rae born February 6th in Normal, Illinois.

1958-1960 Lived in Hammond, Indiana at 218 Fernwood

1959 Daughter, Sarali Ann born in Hammond, Indiana on November 17th.

1960-1961 Lived in Muncie, Indiana at 3133 Riverside Drive.

1961-1962 Lived in Muncie, Indiana at 2006 Concord Road.

1962-1963 Lived in Palo Alto, California on Kenneth Drive.

1963-1964 Lived in Palo Alto, California at 103 Lupine Avenue.

1965-1968 Lived in Urbana, Illinois at 2001 Golfview Drive.

1966 Son Eric Stephen born in Urbana, Illinois on June 12th.

1968-1988 Lived in Normal, Illinois at 1021 Gregory

1973 Harriet's father, Sabin died on November 14th.

1984 Sara O'Daffer and Richard Marberry were married on February 25th.

- 1986 Sue O'Daffer and Bruce Thornquist were married on June 14th.
- 1989 Granddaughter Jordan Rae Thornquist born on June 11th
- 1989-Present Lived at K-149 Lake Bloomington, near Hudson, Illinois.
- 1992 Granddaughter Dana Suzanne Thornquist was born on June 19th
- 1994 Grandson Wesley Phares Marberry was born on February 27th
- 1994 Grandson Lee Allan Thornquist was born on March 20th.
- 1994 Harriet's mother Mildred Adams Gove, died May 6th.
- 1994 Eric O'Daffer and Stacy Chuchro were married May 28th.
- 1997 Granddaughter Alison Gray O'Daffer was born on May 25th.
- 1999 Grandson William Kenneth O'Daffer was born on June 15th.
- 2000 My mother, Ruby Gray Odaffer Atteberry died on January 4th.
- 2002 Grandson Henry David O'Daffer was born on May 3rd.

I have generally thought that if I would have had the miraculous power at an early age to plan in detail what would happen in my life, I could no way have planned it as well as it has turned out in reality. At age 70, as this booklet is being written, I have a peaceful feeling that if I would get the word tomorrow that I had only a few weeks to live, even though I would not want to miss my family and friends, and a lot of good things to come in this world, I would in many ways feel ready because I have been blessed with an interesting and rewarding life far beyond what I expected or deserved.

16

That Wonderful Institution-Marriage

The chain of events that lead up to choosing a mate and getting married has always been amazing to me. I know the practice of arranged marriage, which has been used in countries like India for Centuries, can work well and produce happy marriages. Yet I am always heartened when a young man and a young woman, sometimes almost by accident, meet and by their own design begin to establish a relationship that eventually ends in marriage. Some feel that their choice of a spouse was predestined, and that chance or accident had little to do with it. On the other hand, one woman I knew, who was beginning to worry about the possibility of living live as a spinster, was strongly doubting her father's assertion that even if she was sequestered in a closet, she would still meet Mr. Right when her time had come.

Others feel that there are many people in the world with whom they could be compatible in marriage, and, if you're lucky, you may just happen to find one of them. I'm not sure whether or not Divine Guidance was at play in my choosing a mate, but I find it difficult to deny it. Given all of the women I had met before I met the woman who became my wife, it is certainly clear that there was something about her, as she related to me, that made her stand out as different from the others. Perhaps I met her by chance, and perhaps I didn't, but given how it turned out, far be it from me to completely rule out the presence of the Hand of God in this life transforming process.

Dating and Proposing

I described in an earlier vignette how I first spied Harriet Gove at a table in Milner Library at Illinois State University in 1951. And how I went over to a pencil sharpener near her table, and sharpened my pencil in order to get a better look. A week or two later, I met her walking across campus and asked her to go to a homecoming football game, followed by a dance. She obliged, and that began a sequence of dating for the next few years.

Harriet was not one to easily be sold a bill of goods. I think it took several dates before she seemed interested enough to be moderately receptive to a good-night kiss, and many more before she may have even contemplated the possibility of marrying this enthusiastic country boy from Weldon, Illinois. But what do I know? She may have wanted that kiss on the first date, and she may have gone to bed that night and said "he's the guy for me!" Women are mysterious that way, and appearances don't always tell the whole story-- or so I would like to believe.

At any rate, we dated several times during our freshman year at ISU, and, when summer came, I found a way to get to Creve Coeur, Illinois to visit her home on a couple of occasions. That summer I was working at the Weldon Hardware store for Bruce Axtell, and since my mother had sold our car after my dad's death, I had no transportation. Or so I thought. It's amazing how good, helpful people keep cropping up in one's life, just when they are needed. One day, Bruce Axtell, out of the blue, asked me if I would like to drive his old jeep and to go see

Harriet. It was vintage Bruce, since he was the type of guy who always seemed to understand people's needs, and had a history of being helpful. Of course, I was overjoyed, and greatly appreciative. It was quite a trek for the old vehicle, but we made it that time, and later made it again.

During the summers of 1953 and 1954, I made it easier to see Harriet by seeking and finding gainful employment in Peoria, Illinois. Also, as I indicated in an earlier vignette, Wanda and Ken McDaniel were very generous in letting me stay at their house during those summers. And so the dating relationship continued, and I was convinced that Harriet Gove was a "keeper."

As a culmination of that extended dating period, and the almost hypnotic influence of love, there came a warm evening in spring in 1954, when I took Harriet for a ride in Miller Park in Bloomington, Illinois, and, pretending to pick a diamond ring off of a red maple tree, proposed that we get married. In those days, it was not deemed the proper protocol for men to get down on their knees to propose, for which am I glad. As that expectation came into vogue, I always felt that it was a pretty dumb idea, and that if one desires and expects equality in marriage, then there should be a sense of equality in the proposal. And expecting the male to beg like a puppy doesn't seem like a sense of equality to me. Anyway, it was a warm and loving proposal, Harriet said "yes," and we were married the following year, on January 30, 1955. Since I was to be 21 on February 3, let it be recorded here that because of the Illinois law, I was still a minor, and had to ask my mother's permission to get married. Lucky for me, she liked Harriet!



Harriet and Phares, Wedding Day, January 30, 1955

Getting Married- Our Philosophy

When we were married, we had no concerns about "whether it would work or not," since our parents, and most of the people we knew were still married. We had no professional careers, since we were both students. We had essentially no extra money, since all we had were part-time jobs, and they provided just about enough for rent and food. And we had a philosophy that you didn't have to "have it made" financially before you got married, but that our satisfaction would come in making it together. We had absolutely no thoughts about not being able to be "foot loose and fancy free," since the nature of our lives growing up was

such that this phrase had no meaning-- we had never really been foot loose or fancy free. My stepfather, Willie Atteberry once said, "You can get married at age 40, and have trouble enough!" We weren't 40, but we had no fear of future trouble if we got married. Rather, we seemed to have a basic faith that everything would work out okay.

The fact is that we simply loved each other, and wanted to get married. So we decided, in the words of Nike, to "Just Do It" between semesters of our senior year in college at Illinois State University. I have joked many times (much to Harriet's chagrin) that we "had to get married." But our first child, Sue, was born three years later, so there really wasn't much in that regard compelling us to take the leap.

We were married on a cold, snowy Sunday in winter, and as we drove out of the parking lot at the Peoria Methodist Church, we ran over a sharp object that had been covered with snow and punctured a tire. We got it fixed, and set out for the honeymoon destination, The Palmer House in Chicago. Since we had to get back to go to our classes on Tuesday, it was sort of a short honeymoon.

Settling into Marriage

Our first living quarters-- all we could afford on our limited budget-- was a small one room "apartment" on College avenue in Normal, Illinois. Our bed was a single little bed that we had to pull down from the wall every night. We had a small (4' x8') kitchenette, and a bathroom we shared with another couple. I think we paid \$35 per month rent, provided I would mow the lawn. It was pretty austere

situation and the first of our 14 different "homes" as a married couple, but as we started the adventure of marriage, where we lived didn't seem to matter much, even though we weren't too happy about the rat we encountered in our second apartment on west Ash Street.

It didn't take us a decade to find out that married life, although generally very good for us, was not always Camelot, and that we each had a few foibles that irritated the other. There were certain things that set us off, and that we did, as they say, "have words" with one another. We did notice, however, that a couple of married friends, who said they never argued or had a harsh word, were divorced within a year, so that salved our conscience. As we started our careers and our family, we found that we had less time for each other, and reality set in.

And yet, at the same time, we experienced the joys of marriage. And, being totally committed to marriage, we began to develop strategies for avoiding the minor, but irritating, trouble-producing situations. At each stage in our married life, there was absolutely no question that being married was, for us, far superior to a single life.

There is no doubt that Harriet and my relationship, always good, has gotten even better as we have aged. I am amazed at how, after living with someone for 50 years, you can still be just as excited about coming home to see your spouse after a long day, as you are after a short trip. Our love for each other has grown, we are more mellow in our relationship, and marriage after all these years is still getting better and better!

Making Marriage Work

When Harriet and I had been married for 40 years, our son Eric and his fiancé, Stacy, asked us to participate in their marriage ceremony. As a part of that ceremony, we presented them with a plaque that displayed the following advice for a happy marriage. It was gleaned from what we had learned after 40 years, along with some adaptation of ideas of others. It follows, and I feel it is still timely advice for making marriage work.

Ten Love Habits of Highly Effective Spouses

RESPECT

Love is creating an "us" by nurturing each "me" - with guidance from "Thou."

ACCEPTANCE

Love is accepting each other, rather than expecting to make an imperfect person perfect.

SUPPORT

Love is looking for the best in each other and what they do, and putting it into words.

COMMUNICATION

Love is patient listening, talking, and planning in a true partnership.

GENEROSITY

Love is letting it sometimes be 40-60 rather than 50-50.

HUMOR

Love is laughing- especially at ourselves- and having fun together.

CONSIDERATION

Love is doing and saying things that make each other feel good, rather than feel irritated.

PRIORITIES

Love is focusing more on the kind of you living in a house than on the kind of house you live in.

FRIENDSHIP

Love is being a best friend, knowing that true friendship is a union of two good forgivers.

GROWTH

Love is agreeing to work toward positive marriage habits, knowing that it is natural to falter.

Created/Adapted by Phares O'Daffer, May 28, 1994

Upon reflection, I observe that the preceding Ten Love Habits don't say anything about sex. This may be an omission, but I do think it is highly probable that if you develop the ten habits, and stay away from the advice in popular magazines, your sex life will work out wonderfully well.

The Joy of Marriage

On our 40th Wedding Anniversary, our adult children surprised us by treating us to a weekend in Chicago, and a stay in the Palmer House, where we had had our honeymoon 40 years earlier. You might say that our original short honeymoon was extended for a few days; something we greatly appreciated, and felt was quite appropriate.

This fall, on September 5th, 2004, we hosted 270 guests to celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary. We wanted to have our big celebration when the weather was nice and people could travel, rather than in potentially snowy, icy January. It was a wonderful event for us, attended by almost all of our family and relatives, and by many friends and colleagues. Being genetically construed in many ways like my shy mother, I could have settled for two or three small dinner parties with close friends. Harriet, however, remembering that neither of our parents lived long enough as a couple to celebrate their 50th, had vowed that if we made it that far, we would have a BIG PARTY. And that's

exactly what we did. Our adult children planned a superb program, which was their take-off on our "Ten Love Habits of Highly Effective Spouses," titled "Seven Habits of One Highly Effective Couple." The following photo shows how we looked after about 50 years of marriage.



Phares and Harriet O'Daffer, October, 2004

Now as we approach our actual 50th Wedding Anniversary date, we have been asked by some if we plan to "renew our vows." Our response is easy. There is no need to because they really never have gotten old or worn out! We are hoping for good health in the next several years, and continued happy times as spouses.

Recognizing the danger of giving advice, I leave anyone who is contemplating marriage with the following: Use some good sense about when you begin to think about marriage. (16 years old is too soon, etc. you'll know when.) Then, if you've found the right person-- one who can

be not only a spouse, but also a really good friend-- don't be afraid to take the leap and some risks, and be willing to take them together. Remember, marriage is a grand endeavor, and a source of great joy. So long live the wonderful institution of marriage!

17

The Marvelous Miracle-Family

As college students, my future wife, Harriet, and I both took a course titled "Marriage and the Family." If such a course is around today, it is probably taught much differently than when we took it more than a half century ago in 1952. It also appears that the books young people read about raising a family have a philosophy quite different than those Harriet and I read. Nonetheless, I know some wonderful children today, and see some child-raising practices that have stood the test of time, as well as others that seem to make better sense than some we used.

My view of the value of having and raising a family hasn't changed-- I believe it is one of the greatest, most satisfying experiences of a lifetime! What better way to elaborate on this than by reliving some of the wonderful memories I had during the years our children were born and grew to be adults.

I heard a comedian say recently that it had taken his wife 27 months to enable the birth of their children, but it took him less than seven minutes. Not entirely accurate, but certainly a grain of truth here. Looking back, there were three major emotions that overcame me when each of our children was born. First I was totally overjoyed that they had been born, and were healthy. Second, I was in awe of the miracle of birth, and how from a tiny egg and a determined miniscule

sperm such miraculous life could be created. To believe something like this could happen by random chance is absolutely and totally out of the question. Thanks be to God! Third, I was so impressed with Harriet's courage, equanimity, and mothering instincts. I think Harriet's feelings were similar to my first two, coupled with a major sense of relief that the ordeal was successfully ended.

Our Children's Births

When each of Susan Rae, Sarali Ann, and finally Eric Stephen, were born, we felt truly blessed, and accepted the responsibility of helping them grow to adulthood.

Susan (who became known as Sue) was our first-born. At the time, in 1958, we were staying at Harriet's parents home in Creve Coeur, but Harriet's doctor was in Bloomington, 45 miles away. To make it interesting, Harriet's contractions began on an evening when the weather was nasty and the roads were icy. We drove to Bloomington at 35 miles per hour, made it on time, and Susan Rae was born five hours later at Brokaw Hospital. We were excited and overjoyed to have our first child.

Sarali (who became known as Sara) was born in Hammond, Indiana in 1959. Harriet had had a miscarriage earlier, and we were greatly anticipating the birth of our second child. We had gone to a restaurant and eaten spaghetti a couple of hours before Harriet's labor pains started. We rushed to the Hammond hospital, and Sarali was born about one hour later. No waiting around for this youngin.

We were tremendously happy on the birth of this fine, healthy baby, and immediately called our parents and friends. For a while, I called her the "spaghetti girl."

Eric was born at Carle Hospital in Urbana, Illinois, in 1966. We waited several years after Sarali was born for Eric to appear on the radarscope, but we had high anticipation for our third child. We had attended my sister Jane and Arkie McCraw's wedding, and had returned home to have the signal for Eric come about one a.m. We made it to Carle Hospital and Eric was born about four a.m. When the happy black nurse carried him in to present him to us, she said, "Here's your little business executive!" Little did we know how true that would ring later, but we were again really happy this little guy was born.

Our Approach to Raising Children

We had taken our college class, read Dr. Spock, and were armed with all we thought we needed to know to raise these children. Except, of course, what we learned from one child to the next. And we were blessed with our parents, Mildred and Sabin Gove and Ruby and Willie Atteberry, who were really good role models and who gave us help and advice when we needed it.

Our method of raising children was similar, but differed in a few respects, to what I see conscientious parents doing today. Our approach to our children was, above all, grounded in love. I know that they felt our love, and saw that as the basis for our family life. We also felt that it was important to be consistent, to make any "rules of the home" clear, and to ensure that these rules were followed. Our

children learned early on that we said what we meant and meant what we said. They also learned that I would stand behind Harriet's decisions and she would stand behind mine.

We felt that communicating with our children was of utmost importance. We talked a lot about things, and I think our children generally felt they could talk to us about most things. We early created the "family conference," where we talked over issues at the dinner table. Our children had many opportunities to vote on things and make decisions, but we did not bombard and frustrate them with continual decision making at an early age. Even though we had "rules," we tried to be flexible and bending as an appropriate occasion arose. However, in their minds, we probably didn't do this enough.

With all our good intentions, to be honest, there were some normal frustrations along the way. Like our children running around out of control at a church potluck, massively messy rooms, hiding broccoli one didn't want to eat under a napkin, not getting home at the appointed time, not doing the homework, fighting with a sibling, not owning up to doing the dastardly deed, experimenting with potentially dangerous things, and of course, not "trying not to." (When our children did something wrong and said, "I didn't try to do it," I would sometimes puzzle and frustrate them by responding "Well, you didn't try not to!")

But these normal, very minor breaks from "perfect behavior" are what make children interesting, and are often a part of their valuable commodity of mischief that I discussed in an earlier vignette.

And, of course, there was the ominous FRATERNITY PADDLE! Let me say at the outset that I never, ever, used that fraternity paddle to spank any of our children. In fact, I was always amused by the situation. Someone left the notorious fraternity paddle in a house we rented in Muncie, Indiana. It got packed in one of the boxes when we moved, and it became our fraternity paddle. When we moved to Normal, Illinois, I hung it on a nail in a little workshop Eric and I created in a furnace room area. For some reason, perhaps from an intended humorous remark, our children held out the possibility in the back of their mind that it might be used for spanking if they did something bad enough to warrant it. A minor "fear factor" set in, and I truly suspect that the presence of that paddle alone thwarted many an errant behavior!

It should be understood that we lived in an age where judiciously (and sometimes non-judiciously) spanking a child for bad behavior was standard and accepted. Even then, Harriet and I didn't put much stock in spanking, and the number of times we spanked our children, in total, could probably be counted on the fingers of one hand. And while spanking appeared to realize the intended results, I think we always had a bit of a guilty, apologetic feeling after the punishment had been inflicted.

As our children reached junior high age and the specter of alcohol, drugs, and premature sex loomed on their horizon, I conceived of what I called "The Immediate Pleasure Principle," and began to espouse it whenever the opportunity arose. Perhaps it should have

been called "The Long-Term Pleasure Principle," but retrospect is always wise. Anyway, it goes like this.

There are two important types of pleasure. One is immediate, where you do something and immediately experience pleasure. The other is long-term, where you do things in your life that often aren't as pleasurable immediately, but that set the stage for wonderful, satisfying pleasure later. Often, immediate pleasures create ensuing pain. A one-time sexual encounter might provide immediate pleasure, but the resulting pregnancy might be very painful for a teenager to deal with. Taking drugs is known to provide immediate pleasure, but the ensuing addiction can create a painful life. And so on. But having the foresight and will to forego immediate pleasures that can potentially produce much pain later, set the stage for a satisfying life later, a long-term pleasure. I don't really know if this had much effect on our growing children, but it still seems to me to have merit. I wonder if our children will explain this principle to their children?

A Little About Our Children

But it was all a wonderful experience! Each of our children was different, and yet they had a lot of similarities. Sue, Sara, and Eric all played at the top levels of their high school tennis teams. They were all good students, each maturing in their attention to academics at different ages. When each of them recently reviewed the vignettes in this booklet for me and made very thoughtful, professional comments, I couldn't help remembering making comments for them on the first little papers they wrote in elementary school.

Maybe that's what is meant by "What goes around comes around."

Sue, Sara, and Eric all had friends, and dated in high school. They all exhibited varying degrees of the normal teenage rebellious nature, but none to the extreme that caused major difficulties.

And, yet, there were lots of differences. So many memories come to mind that it is tempting to do a chronology of each of our children's experiences while they were growing up. But I'll resist that temptation and leave that revelation to them. Rather, I'll just tell a few stories that stick in my memory about each of them.

Susan (Sue)

Sue had a strong interest in music, sang in the Madrigals, sang solos at church, and played the clarinet in bands and orchestras through college. She was never enthused about getting up early for the practices, but somehow managed to be a "morning glory" when it was absolutely necessary.

When Sue was quite young, and when we were sticklers for cleaning up plates at dinner, she asserted her independence. The food item was liver, and we were pressuring her to "clean it up." At the point of no return, she vigorously spit it out and bravely asserted, "I don't want to eat any more of that liverage as long as I live!"

I would be remiss not to tell a story about when Sue was in the fifth grade, and got her first bra. Sue and Harriet left for Pennys, and I was upstairs in my office, working away. Some time later, I heard the downstairs door slam and heard Sue run up to her bedroom.

What seemed like only seconds later, Sue burst into my office, threw open her unbuttoned blouse, raised her arms in the air to bare the brand new bra, and shouted "Ta Da!" Unabashed pride is always joyous.

It is a demonstrated fact that Sue, being a very sensitive person, cried not only at entering kindergarten, but also upon entering first grade, junior high, high school, college, and even graduate school. Yet she loved her friends and the social settings of all these institutions. We always felt her tears indicated her love for her family. As I recall, I once told Sue she was a "Rare Gem." After that, she signed "Your Rare Gem" on ceramic piece she made, and on cards she gave me on special occasions. She still does today.

Sarali (Sara)

Sara was the animal lover of the family. She made a strong assertion one day that she wanted a puppy. We thought this desire would blow over, but it didn't. So we went to the sheltie farm and picked out Buffy, who proceeded to throw up on the way home. Fearing that we might take Buffy back to the farm, Sara quickly discovered that the puppy wouldn't throw up in the car if we let her put her nose out the window. In subsequent years we did a lot of driving around with a dog's nose out the window. Sara loved Buffy, trained her, and was amazingly devoted in her care for her. We had a rule that if anyone was the first to see a mess that Buffy or our cats made on a carpet, they had to clean it up. I wouldn't swear to it, but I think on many an occasion Sue and Eric spied a problem and looked the other way, knowing that trusty Sara would rise to the occasion.

Sara also took a strong interest in horses around 11 years of age. After much persuasion, she became the proud owner of a quarter horse, Chubby, whom she kept at Hinthorn Stables, about one and one-half miles from our house. She won ribbons at several horse shows, before we finally sold Chubby and bought another horse, named Missy. Sara always thought it was a bit cruel of her parents to make her ride her bike to the stable in wind, sleet, and snow, and we were never very successful in persuading her that such a hardship helped develop her character. But I'm still sure it did. It should be recorded that Sara was great with horses, and really did a nice job showing and taking care of them. Even though I often questioned the honesty of horse traders, I did enjoy the years of taking Sara to horse shows.

Sara's animal interest was manifest in other ways also. Like the time when she was overheard describing how she had seen the cow and bull interact in grandpa Willie's pasture to her cousins at a Thanksgiving dinner in Muncie, Indiana. Or the time when Sara was in high school and we were at the dining room table with her grandmother, Mildred, trying to choose a name for a new kitten. Many names had been suggested and rejected. Finally, Sara, getting a little tired of the conversation, asserted, "I think we should call it Little Shit." Grandma, needless to say, proceeded to change the subject and talk about the weather. Since Sara had always been the daughter so good to help with the yard work, we later planted a tree in front of the kitchen window in her honor, and affectionately named it "Little Shit."

During her elementary school years, Sara got interested in producing Geometric designs, and attractively coloring designs. Perhaps

she sensed that her Dad loved that too, but for whatever reason, it was a source of great camaraderie between father and daughter.

Eric

Eric, who moved to the forefront when Sue and Sara went to college, was also good at helping with yard work, but felt put upon when asked to do tasks like clean out the tree well that was inhabited by various rodents. He also still remembers the time when I was teaching him to use the electric hedge clippers. In order to demonstrate the need for safety precautions, I brought a carrot to the garage, and observed that what was about to happen to the carrot could also happen to his finger if safety wasn't foremost in his thoughts. I then proceeded to cut off the top half of the carrot with the hedge trimmers. Eric was duly impressed, and still remembers the demonstration.

Eric and I often played basketball, inside and outside, and baseball. I recall playing one-on-one basketball, and having to take it easy on Eric so I wouldn't beat him all of the time. Somewhere around his age 14, we both realized that the tables had turned, and I'm sure Eric began taking it easy on me, so he wouldn't beat me all the time. I really enjoyed the many activities I engaged in with Eric.

Another story had to do with the fact that a boy named David used to bully Eric, and push him around in junior high school and early high school. Eric grew six inches during his sophomore year, and suddenly realized, during a P.E. class activity, that he was now stronger than David. Eric came home and asserted that he planned

to finally get revenge, and beat up David the following day. It took all the logic and persuasive techniques I could muster to deter him from this long awaited payback. But to Eric's credit, good judgment, happily, prevailed.

When Eric was in the seventh grade, I was on his case for not practicing his French horn. In sort of a role reversal, he took me aside, and in a fatherly way, told me in effect that he "was not going to play this horn for a living," and that his only goal was to make the second band. So he urged me to get off his back, and let him worry how much to practice. I did, and he ended up making the first band, and, even though Sue and Sara did very well in the band in high school (and Sue in college), became the only one of our three children to play his band instrument as an adult for pure enjoyment.

Some More Thoughts About Raising Children

At one time in our life, after our children had become adults, someone complimented us on being such good parents. My response was that "good kids" create good parents. I know it could be argued that it could be the other way around, but I do believe we simply had "good kids." Aside from a few late high school, early college trying times, our children were always fairly well behaved, caring, and considerate-- and they still are! Maybe it came from their grandparent's genes, but in any case, it has made them always a joy to be around. I have always liked this early photo of three good kids, and their pets.



Buffy(7m), Sara(10), Eric(3.5), Sue(12), Bing(2)

However, after our children became adults, I made a statement that at first raised their ire just a little bit. I commented, "Raising children is a process of gradually lowering your standards." What I meant required explanation. During the first year after a child is born, he or she seems so sweet and perfect, and parents have such perfect dreams for them. Who could ever imagine that they would ever tell a lie or do anything devious? Of course not! Instead, they will be loving, moral human beings, always doing the right thing. After all, they may become President of the United States someday!

But as these little paradigms of perfection get just a little older, they begin to speak, move about, and to show some of the same shortcomings that we see in all of us older members of our species. They argue, get mad, tell fibs, treat siblings with less than respect, and frequently do other things they are not supposed to do. So as a parent, reality sets in, you lower those unrealistic standards you had at their birth, and accept them for who they are. And as they grow up, this pattern happens again and again. In college, for example, they may not do just as you would have them do, but they

have choices and must learn from those choices, so you lower your probably unreasonable earlier standards, and adapt to situations you thought you'd never adapt to.

We greatly enjoyed the many good times with our growing children, and the fun on our many trips and excursions with them. Here's how our family looked when the girls were teenagers.



Harriet, Sue, Eric, Sara, Phares, 1976

The Joy of Adult Children

And we are very proud of our children as adults. At our 50th wedding anniversary celebration in September 2004, Sue, Sara, and Eric worked together to develop the program. and pull off the event. It was very professionally done, and with great feeling, compassion, and thoughtfulness. We could tell that they cared deeply for us, and

we greatly appreciated their help, and that of their spouses, in planning and carrying out the celebration.

It is difficult to imagine life without our children and grandchildren, and the joy they bring. Here are photos of them.



**O'Daffers: Eric, Stacy, Henry
Will, Alison**



**Thornquists: Dana, Jordan, Bruce
Sue, Lee**



Marberrys: Wesley, Sara, Richard

What a wonderful reward for being parents!

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Playing Around-The Fun of Travel

It is of great value to the human soul to take a break from the mundane, everyday things of life, and embark on a travel adventure to another place. It allows one to "let one's hair down," and enjoy new and interesting people, situations, and places. It is "playing around" in the best sense of the word. It is rejuvenating to see what is going on with people in a new place in the world, and refreshing to see how people on different parts of this globe are so much like us, and yet to see how they are different. It seems to broaden one's perspective on the world, on life, and, if done correctly, leaves one refreshed, inspired, and energized.

I mentioned earlier that when I was 14 years old, I wrote a "back to school" report for vocational agriculture class about my summer, and my life up to then. I mentioned in that less than brilliant report that I had never been more than 40 miles from home! Well, in the last half of the 20th century I've certainly made up for that deficiency.

We have taken a lot of interesting trips, by ourselves, with our children, and with our friends. I'd like to tell a few stories about things that happened on some of these trips, just to give a flavor of events and predicaments that trips can bring, and to

illustrate the valuable things that I think can result from just "playing around" in the world of travel.

Our Family Hawaii Trip

The first story is about an early trip with our children. After our children got to the age where they were fun to go with on trips (pretty quickly, in our case), we took a trip or two to Hawaii with them. The second time we went, Sue and Sara were 21 and 20, and Eric was 15. Keeping up with them was almost more than a couple of sane parents could muster. We had gone to a beach on the southwestern coast of the island of Maui, and were enjoying the sand and water. All of a sudden, Eric was moving down the beach a little far. Evidently he had gotten wind of the fact that just past the end of the public beach was a fenced off, private, nude beach. He somehow got the word got back to Sue and Sara, and a free peek was had by all. It was our second venture with nude bathing, since we had earlier come upon some people swimming nude in a little pond at Yellowstone National Park. We all agreed that they had been the only "bears" we had seen in the park.

At the same beach in Maui, Sue and Sara got acquainted with two male school teachers from Oregon, who took a more than passing interest in them. It seemed sort of funny-- a couple of teachers gravitating admiringly toward our two relatively young, naïve (?) daughters, and all of us, including younger brother Eric having lunch with them. I think they

wondered what they had gotten themselves into, and so did we. But it was a wonderful family trip, and we were, I hope in the *broadest* sense of the term, "playing around" in Hawaii.

Our Interesting India Trip

A second story comes from when we traveled to India so I could attend and speak at an International Conference on Mathematics Education. After the nine-day conference, Harriet and I traveled on our own, and I must tell you about just one of our travel experiences. Upon arrival at our scheduled hotel in Jaiper, India (the "Pink City"), we found that our scheduled hotel was full, and no amount of cajoling would get us a room. Feeling a culture shock and somewhat alone in this strange and very busy city, we finally found a room at a third rate hotel.

After a meal in the hotel restaurant(after nine days of Indian food, I think I had a large bowl of tomato soup, with accoutrements--a big mistake) we retired to our room for a much needed nights sleep. About four hours into this so called sleep, the action began! To tell the tale adequately, I must , in the format of several current TV sitcoms, tell about the event from different perspectives all going on at the same time.

First time period

My perspective: All at once, I believe I am as sick as I think I have ever been. Suffice it to say that my body is divesting itself of everything possible, from every possible port of exit. Woe is me!

Harriet's perspective: My husband is, inconveniently, here, in the middle of the night, as sick as a dog, and as a good wife, I need to be as helpful to him as I can. Oh brother!

The Cavorting Monkey's perspective: Hey, there's a light in that window. Let's have some fun! Let's cavort outside that window! Let's cavort really loudly!

Second time period

My perspective: After what seemed like a couple of hours of total chaos--me erupting, monkeys cavorting, and Harriet putting up with it and stewing--I find the action continuing unabated, but suddenly realize that there is no toilet paper left in the room! Panic ensues.

Harriet's perspective: I need to help this ill husband... I'll call the main desk to have some tissue brought up. Oh no! At this third rate hotel, there is no-one at the desk in the middle of the night. Emergency Plan B- I'll rummage through my purse to find an unused, or even a used Kleenex. Don't panic. But ah, last of many compartments, sweet success!

Monkeys perspective: Let's keep cavorting and having a great, loud, hilarious time, just outside this window!

Third time period

My perspective: Emergency over, kleenex holding out just long enough-- now I can get some sleep. Totally worn out, dazed, almost asleep, but gosh, those monkeys are noisy!

Harriet's perspective: Wow! What a mess. How are we going to get enough rest to drive all the way back to New Delhi tomorrow? Can't sleep. What in heck are those monkeys doing?!

Monkeys perspective: Wow! Enough cavorting. Let's start making whoopee! Let's bump into their window so vigorously that it they will think it is about to break. Oh boy, what fun!

Well, morning came way too soon, and, with very bleary eyes I looked out the window and saw this very pensive monkey sitting on the edge of the building, who was, I imagined, smoking a cigarette.



Cavorting Monkey- Jaiper, India

What a story to be able to tell! And if not for travel, this illustration of just "playing around," monkeys and all, would not have graced your attention!

Cavorting in Egypt

And then there was the trip to Egypt and Israel we took with Herm and Evelyn Harding. A part of it was a three-day trip down the

Nile River in a pleasant little boat. My favorite picture of all time is the following, where, at a party on the boat, we all agreed that we would try to look like sly "Egyptians." Some of us succeeded, at least. I think, after they developed and looked at this photo, security seemed to be watching us just a little more closely.



Evelyn, Harriet, Phares, and Herm- On the Nile, 1989

During that same trip, we stopped at Luxor. and decided to take a horse and carriage to the downtown area. The Egyptian driver, who had a PhD in Dickering About Price, finally agreed that he would take us there and back for the equivalent of about \$10 U.S. dollars, and that would include the bakshish (tip). So off we went. Upon return, we hopped out of the carriage, and as we were about to take our leave, the grinning driver held out his

had and said, in an innocent voice, "bakshish?" Ever diligent in sticking with the idea that "a deal is a deal," I patiently explained that we had agreed that the bakshish would be included in the agreed upon price. "Oh," he exclaimed benevolently, "No bakshish for me! Bakshish for my horse!" Needless to say, the humor of it all melted me immediately, and the horse got a fine tip!

Animal Hunting in Africa

We took a trip to Kenya, Africa, with Terry and Carol Glynn, and went on an exciting, but unusual safari. I say it was unusual because of an interesting couple from California who were also on the trip. To put it very mildly, they were fanatically interested in birds. He was the avowed bird watching leader of the whole state of California, and knew the name and disposition of probably every bird in the world. And they had come to Kenya with one major purpose in mind-- BIRDS! We called the male of these human, but birdlike specimens Birdman, and his wife Birdiegal.

During our time in southern Kenya, Mt. Kilimanjaro was often shrouded in fog, but one morning, at the start of our safari, the fog dissipated and there it was, in all of its glory! In the presence of all the exclamations and oohs and ahs, Birdman's comment was "Look, Birdy, there's a Black-Bellied Bustard!" Clearly, for Birdman and Birdiegal, a bird trumped a majestic mountain every time.

Another time, on the second day we were in Masi Mara, we had yet to see a solitary elephant. We were riding in an open top observation van with Birdman and Birdy. Suddenly our van stopped, and out of a nearby clearing came some elephants, more elephants, and still more elephants, of all sizes and shapes! Evidently, because of the weather patterns of El Nino, the elephants had changed their habits, and were migrating en masse to a different area. Our guides estimated, when all elephants had passed, that around 600 were in that mighty herd! We were feverishly taking photos, and really excited to see so many elephants, including babies and elders, all in one place, interacting with one another. All except the Birdpeople, that is. Birdman ignored the elephants, and had his eye on a White-Bellied Go-Away Bird. And all the while Birdiegal was emitting exclamations like "Oh what a sweet little Bee-Eater 2 on that elephants back!" So birds trumped elephants too.

It was a wonderful experience to be in Kenya, and after drives through many rough, ruddy, muddy roads we observed many exciting animals, up-close in their own habitat, But our enthusiasm for everything else was no match at all for the intensity of Birdman and Birdiegal's interest in their precious birds!

Great Fun in Canada

A final story is about a trip Harriet and I took in 2003 to the beautiful Canadian National Parks. We went to Banff, Jasper, and even found ourselves one fine morning at Lake Louise. Harriet is a hiker. If there is a destination, high in the mountains up a safe,

but steep trail, Harriet must reach it. Such was the case with the Lake Louise trail up to the teahouse. It was a two-hour walk up a pretty steep path. And to add to the intrigue, there was a sign at the entrance that asserted, "Bears have been sighted on this Trail." Now Harriet also does not like the thought of a bear. It is almost as repugnant to her as the thought of a mouse! Harriet had also been assured that if you make noise, say ring a bell, it is known to scare bears away (except for black bears). She had heard the joke all too often. that the way to tell a black bear from a brown bear is to open the stomachs of the two bears. The one whose stomach has bells in it is the black bear.

On this particular day, we started up the trail at 7:30 a.m., and there was no other human being in sight. About half-way up, I detected that Harriet was getting more and more concerned about bears, so, being the dutiful, protective husband, I asked her if it would help for me to yodel. I don't know what went through her mind, but she must have weighed the negatives, and decided that hearing me yodel was maybe a smidgen less threatening than being killed by a bear. A little known fact, however, is that I have a talent for yodeling. It originally grew out of my extensive early experience, on the farm where I grew up, in calling hogs. At any rate, I let forth a yodel that would have either utterly charmed a Swiss lass, or totally destroyed her hearing. And, immediately, about two levels up on the winding trail, came a much higher quality yodel in return. I guess bears like to play around too!

More About Our Travels

I have a strong temptation to tell a lot more travel stories. I could embellish the story of the short camping trip to Lake Shelbyville we took when our kids were growing up, and where our dog Buffy got covered with you-know-what from a makeshift toilet someone had used in the woods. There was a massive thunderstorm that night, and our daughter Sara insisted that shivering, stinking Buffy be kept in the tent.

Or I could elaborate on the incident from a trip in 1957 where we encountered the bear in the Smokey Mountains. And I could have some fun with our brief encounter with Victor Borge in Oslo, Norway.

Also, much could be made of the hilarious happening at the airport in Paris, France where Herm Harding and I couldn't communicate well enough in French to get a cab driver to understand that we (he) had to pick up our wives who were only two blocks away. I know you would like to hear about how we enjoyed the Flamenco dancers in Spain with the Glynn's. And I could tell about how we got lost so many times with the Hardings as we got off of the autobahns in Germany, and what resulted. Harriet won't let me tell about how well she liked the raw egg in her soup at the austere restaurant not far into East Germany when we were on the Martin Luther trip directed by Dick Brownfield on our 25th wedding anniversary. And there are so many stories I could tell about trips with the delightful members of our 5-Star Investment/Social group—made up of Jack and Jean

Gove, Gary and Jan Bragg, Terry and Carol Glynn, and Herm and Evelyn Harding-- to Hawaii, Alaska, Panama Canal, the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean. I could also have fun elaborating on our China trip with Hardings and Bill and Mary Caisley, and exaggerating the disruptive way the Chinese people, including little old ladies, pushed us roughly out of their way when they charged through a crowd.

But enough is enough, and even "playing around" must come to an end, so we can get back to the real world. In some ways I wish the whole thing were reversed-- travel first, while you are young, and then, in later years, work to pay the bill. But that would probably leave some bills unpaid, and maybe you wouldn't appreciate the travel as much. I hope that these stories illustrate some of the fun we have had through travel, and why we value these experiences. We highly recommend taking some time to play around, and travel really gives that opportunity.

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Thoughts about Politics and Presidents

I have always been interested in politics. Presidents, with their successes and problems fascinate me. I love to watch the political conventions every four years, and listen to the speakers

and commentators expound, even though a lot of it is just hot air. And I get a kick out of people wearing an elephant or a donkey on their head. The headpiece almost takes the thinking skills from their brains, and their unquestioned allegiance to their party has always been puzzling to me.

In all probability, affiliation with a political party is important for the political process, but I have always felt better being an "independent," choosing candidates on the basis of how I perceive them and whether I agree with the stands they take, rather than because of their party. Some of my friends would probably say that I seem to always like the stands the Democrats take better than those of the Republicans, but I claim that I have voted for a reasonable number of Republicans in my lifetime.

Whatever the approach, and whatever the flaws, I marvel at our system for electing and getting rid of our leaders. I get goose bumps when I see a President who is leaving office shaking hands with the one just voted in and joining the newly elected president and spouse for lunch and discussion at the White House. No military coup. No bloodshed. No exhibited animosity. Just a couple of humans following the rules of a just and orderly society! I thrill at the civility in our election process. It's there, more than in most countries, even when the candidates say dumb things about each other or create stupid advertisements.

Presidents I Remember

We've had some "interesting" Presidents of the United States in my lifetime. I remember listening to our old battery powered radio when I was seven years old, and it seemed like Franklin D. Roosevelt was almost shouting as he talked about Japan attacking Pearl Harbor and said, "This day will live in infamy!" Roosevelt seemed to have a lot of ideas for solving the country's problems. Some thought his "New Deal" was a "Raw Deal," but his social programs put our country to work, and got a number of useful things accomplished.

Later, when Roosevelt died and Harry S. Truman was called into duty, I remember the doubts my parents had. How could a fiery tempered haberdasher from Missouri lead our country? And I remember being in the barn milking cows when I heard on our barn radio that President Truman had authorized dropping the atomic bomb on Japan to end World War II. Like others, I have had thoughts about whether he made the right decision, but, as was his philosophy, he simply studied the situation carefully, made what he thought was the best decision, and then never looked back and questioned it. I have always thought this was a good way to approach decision-making, whether or not I agreed with the decision.

My first opportunity to vote came in 1952. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the revered WWII general had thrown his hat in the ring, and I was mesmerized by this successful general with the infectious smile. I voted Republican, as did the majority of us,

and he was swept into office. Four years later, after getting a college degree and thinking a lot about things that had happened in the preceding four years, I voted for Adlai E. Stevenson instead of the General. Adlai seemed to be pretty smart about things, had some good ideas for our country, and I liked the hole in his shoe. I liked to think he was how I would be if I were a candidate. So the second time, I voted for a Democrat. I was just being true to my philosophy of paying attention to which person I thought would make the best candidate at the time, and not to their parties.

In 1960, I was totally inspired by the charismatic John F. Kennedy, his wit, his intellect, and the new vision he had for our country. As I voted for him, I was convinced he had what it took to bring our country to a new spirit, and a more noble way of thinking about and doing things. Later, I was impressed with his handling of the Cuban Bay of Pigs incident and totally stunned when he was shot in Dallas in 1963. I recall vividly the day I learned about his death. I was in a small office in Palo Alto, California, with Bob Eicholz. We were writing our elementary mathematics series, and had just had one of our respectful "knock down and drag out" arguments about how it should be done. I walked out to the water cooler to simmer down, and someone ran down the hall and informed me that Kennedy had been shot. Certainly, in this case, I felt it true that "the good die young."

Why I Voted for Democrats for President

For some reason, even though I voted for several local and state Republicans, I never voted for another Republican candidate for president after Dwight Eisenhower. The list of Democrats that I voted for is as follows: Johnson, 1964, against Goldwater; Humphrey, 1968, against Nixon; McGovern, 1972, against Nixon; Carter, 1976, against Ford; Carter, 1980, against Reagan; Mondale, 1984, against Reagan; Dukakis, 1988, against G.H.W. Bush; Clinton, 1992, against G.H.W. Bush; Clinton, 1996, against Dole; Gore, 2000, against G.W. Bush; Kerry, 2004, against G.W. Bush. Yet, I was often a registered Republican in the local primaries, and never thought of myself as a Democrat. I did not get involved in party politics, but I must admit that I once distributed brochures door to door for a candidate. Ironically, that candidate, George McGovern, was beaten by the largest margin of any president in recent history.

I've tried to analyze why I, vowing to be an independent voter, gravitated toward the Democrats in presidential elections. It wasn't because I wanted to vote for fellow left-handers, because Clinton was the only left-handed president I ever voted for. (note that Truman was also left-handed, but I wasn't old enough to vote for him.) I want to point out that Gerald Ford, George Bush and Ronald Reagan were all left-handed, and I resisted voting for them. Although I came closest to voting for G.H.W. Bush than any of them. I always thought he was more moderate at heart. and I was almost persuaded. But I liked Benston, Dukakis's running mate, much better than Dan Quayle, and that, and some policy differences, swayed my judgment.

I actually think I voted for so many Democrats for president because I simply liked them better. I thought they were more capable, and that their positions on issues were closer to mine. For example, Goldwater, although a respected person, appeared to rattle the saber of war too much to suit me. I was always suspicious of Nixon, and early on felt that "Tricky Dick" was an apt moniker for him. He seemed to be self-serving and never really had an exciting vision for where he wanted to take the country. Ford was okay, and I probably underestimated him, but I was impressed with Carter's intellect, thoughtfulness, and character. I thought he was intellectually active, and I wasn't sure about Ford. To be fair, I was impressed to find out that Ford was ambidextrous, being left handed while sitting down and right handed when standing up. But this wasn't enough to tip the scales. Ronald Reagan was a very nice guy, and personally appealing. But when you began to look at his stands on the issues, he always seemed to see everything as black and white. Again, I didn't feel that he had thought carefully about the issues, but rather, had a four point agenda that he had brought to his presidency; and which he would carry out, come hell or high water, or even in the face of changing conditions. I wanted a thinker as my president, not a person who appears to rarely consider alternatives. Also, I could never see that his "trickle down" economic theory did much for us except make the middle class poorer, the rich richer, and create a sizeable deficit. I just felt that Dole was over the hill with respect to the presidency when he ran, and that he wasn't motivational enough.

On the contrary, I saw Bill Clinton as smart, charismatic, and with potential to change a lot of things for the better.

G.W.Bush, in my opinion, was not as well qualified for the presidency as Al Gore or John Kerry. Also, he seemed shallow and cliché-prone when he discussed important issues, and seemed to color the truth a little more than I liked to fit his needs.

I felt he didn't understand the world and how our country should relate to it in any depth.

How and Why do Political Philosophies Differ?

I think my preference for Democrat candidates over the years might be closely related to my overall perception of life, what I feel is ultimately important, and simply my way of doing things. So let me discuss that a little.

In looking at my own perception of life, I can say that I believe in God, and that patriotism is high on my list as an important value. My church is very important to me. I also believe that I am fortunate to be living in the United States of America. I think the family is the centerpiece of society, and the core traditional family values are extremely important. I believe in equality of humans, and that respect for all releases us from the shackles of prejudice. I believe in balanced budgets, and enough government to insure security and opportunity for all. I also believe that we must do what is necessary to preserve our institutions, and to protect our basic freedoms. And finally, I like to participate in the capitalist

system as well as the next person, don't like excessive taxes, and don't consider making money sinful.

Well, you might say, "these are all good Republican values, so why have you shied away from the grand ole' party?" I think the answer is partially illustrated in a discussion I had with some people a few years ago about a controversial local issue.

I made the remark that "I'd like to think that a person deciding how to vote on this would study both sides of the issue, and then logically decide which makes the most sense." To which the other person responded, "What does logic have to do with it?" After considerable thought, I decided that the person who made the remark really meant it. His approach was to make an emotional decision, based on a firmly held belief, and then proceed to defend that decision. And in a sense, he seemed to equate the decision with his belief, and anyone who differed with his decision was essentially differing with his basic belief. I honestly believe that logical analysis played absolutely no role in that person's thinking.

My orientation, to the contrary, is to logically and ethically analyze the situation, and in that process at least see which way the scales should tip in terms of what is the right thing to do.

So it seems to me that the differences between many of the Republican and Democrats I know, as well as some of the major Republican presidential candidates I couldn't bring myself to vote for, is directly related to what they are comfortable

with when it comes to *questioning* their beliefs about important issues. Some people are very uncomfortable and reluctant when asked to question their beliefs about a situation. There are others who are very uncomfortable when asked *not* to question their beliefs about that situation. And many fall on a continuum from one of these comfort levels to the other. So the big Democrat vs. Republican difference may be a question of how one views his or her beliefs. Some think once a belief has been accepted, it is fixed and immutable, and the unquestioned foundation for their living and decision-making. It is a source of comfort for them to have established their belief, and to live life in a way consistent with that belief. Others think that a belief is accepted only to be thoughtfully questioned, logically and ethically analyzed, expanded, and possibly even revised on the basis of new evidence. They find comfort in the knowledge that they are not hidebound by an immutable belief, and that they logically analyze situations to make a decision.

People in the first group tend to decide quickly what their position is, based on their accepted beliefs, and then search for evidence that supports what they've already decided. Then they defend the position almost as if they were defending the underlying belief itself. I generally find that people in this group tend to think it's unpatriotic to question decisions affecting the military, and are prone to never question what their party's candidate or president says or does. The people in the second group take longer making a decision, and do so only after trying to logically analyze the situation. They tend to apply their beliefs to the situation,

always holding open the possibility that their belief is outmoded, and may need to be modified. It is not that they are wishy-washy regarding their beliefs, but that they realize that changes in the world and new evidence can sometimes be good reasons for revising a once held position. People in this group often feel that it is their responsibility as a citizen to question policies of governmental officials that seem wrong, or inappropriate actions of our military.

It is the approach of the second group that seems most appropriate to me, and which I particularly didn't find in Goldwater, Nixon, Reagan, and G. W. Bush. Ford, G.H.W Bush and Dole showed signs of more intellect and flexibility, and that's why I could have more readily voted for them. However they still didn't exhibit this mode of operating to the degree that their democratic opponents did. So there you have it. Just a theory as I've experienced it, but maybe one with a grain of truth in it. But, in fairness, I might have been a little too hard on my elephant loving friends, and it should also probably be noted that my views are currently in a minority in the United States today.

Near Carlock, Illinois, there are two cemeteries, across the road from one another. One has historically been designated a Democrat Cemetery, and the other a Republican Cemetery. Not long ago, Henry Bird, the Directing Publisher of the local newspaper, the Pantagraph, asked a group at a small table at a dinner party in which of those cemeteries they would want to be buried. Even after all the preceding discussion and my history of voting, I honestly had difficulty deciding what to tell him, since

I still think of myself as an Independent, leaving options open to vote for the person, and not for the party. Also, I think I hold many Republican values, as well as Democratic ones. But when forced to choose between only the two options, I opted for the Democrat resting place, along with the other Donkeys.

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Oh, for the Good Old Days!

I recall at one time in my life hassling my mother about her reverent references to the "Good Old Days." In her mind, things were always so much better back then. For example, she would say " There just wasn't as much crime when I was a teenager as there is now." And I would counter with points like, "There are more people now, so that's what you would expect," and, " It just seems that way because we have such better avenues for news now, and we are more aware of the crimes." But she was unwavering in her belief that things were just better when she was young than they are now, and nothing I could say would persuade her differently. She just wasn't too keen on many of the aspects of the modern day society.

Now that I have reached a ripe older age, I understand how she felt. But I only partially share her feelings. My friend, Lloyd Berthoff, a past president of Illinois Wesleyan University, gave a speech to our Kiwanis Club on his 100th Birthday. He, too, talked about the days gone by, but his view was more like mine. Remarking about how much more important his accomplishments had gotten as he aged, he expressed a curiosity and a frustration about some of the modern trends, but acknowledged that in many ways we are better off now.

I don't know what the experts would say about why so many people unequivocally feel that the good old days were better. Maybe it's because as a young person, things/situations are fresh, and one does not have the experience of other similar things/situations to compare them with. So, they stick in one's mind as the best. When you get older, you've experienced a lot more, and so you see a lot deeper into things and see the flaws. A lifetime of experience might make a person more critical, so earlier things that you weren't very critical of then seem better now in comparison. And, it's just possible that when you get older, you get a little "set in your ways," and it's more difficult to look at changes objectively. Just a thought, and there may be other much better reasons, or maybe simply no reason at all!

At any rate, I think that the things we pick out that "ain't like they use to be" say something about our generation, and, like the things that just simply puzzle or mildly disturb us, say something about our personality, and our perceptions of our world. So I'd like to share some of my thoughts on such things.

Musing About Styles and Fashions

I suppose that one area that tends to be mildly disturbing to me is that of "styles and fashions." For example, in the realm of clothes, I have never understood the value of wrinkled cotton or baggy rayon pants, skirt-like shorts or basketball trunks, tattered, bleached jeans, or heavy clunky shoes. I like to dress casual at times, but the near deification of casual dress, and the

desire to dress casual at church, in business settings, or at important events, makes me sort of long for the "good ole days."

In other fashion areas, I'm sort of puzzled why young women apparently like to have a string or two of hair over their eyes that they have to keep brushing out of the way. And currently, hip-hugger jeans are all the rage, even though they don't look all that good to me on most people. I often wonder if it's the "fashion setters," who are responsible for things like this. If so, I'd have to say that they didn't seem to have near that much clout when I was a kid!

Communication Then and Now

Another part of life that "ain't what it used to be" is in the area of communication. For example I remember when, in my early years, we had to write a letter, even though it took longer, because we didn't have a telephone. Now we have a telephone, but would rather write an e-mail "letter," even though it sometimes takes longer. And I recall when my mother used to get frustrated with her lack of privacy because Maud, our neighbor, listened to all of her conversations on the telephone "party line." Now, many cell phone users seem perfectly happy making all their many calls in public, inviting the modern Maud, still all ears, to give them no privacy at all. But even if you stick with regular telephones, I sometimes wax nostalgic for the old party line. I hate to call somewhere and not be able to get a live human on the phone. At least on the party line there were plenty of live people

on the phone! And the rapid pace at which young people talk on the phone has a tendency to make me yearn for laid-back, slow talkin' party-line Maud of the olden days. And Maud would never put you on hold to answer other calls. She would just answer the other call and let you listen in! And in the olden days, we didn't have those pesky tele-marketers either! I admit that all this sometimes causes me to wonder if some aspects the "good ole days" didn't have a little bit of an edge on these modern times. My mother would be nodding her head in ascent.

Finally, just a brief word about magazines. I don't like getting a subscription renewal notice one month after I've just renewed a magazine for five years. And when the magazine arrives, I have a hard time dealing with the plastic wrap, which is so strong that even a saber tooth tiger couldn't tear it open (much like the plastic in cereal boxes). And then, when I do get it open, a bunch of order cards that flutter out intermittently. I remember when I was a kid going to the mailbox and getting the Prairie Farmer magazine, with no wrap, no cards- nothing, except some simple down to earth articles that only farmers would enjoy, and some sometimes pretty corny humor. I do yearn for this simplicity.

Thinking it Over

A few things that I particularly liked about the good ole days included a more relaxed pace, more outdoor active involvement because there was no TV to watch, more trees/hedge

along fence rows in the Midwest country side, outdoor movies in the summer, and an ice cream cone, often with a free-ice cream cone slip in it, for five cents.

Having said that what a person thinks may have been better in the good ole days than in today's world says something about his or her personality, I wouldn't want you to think that I am an old curmudgeon who is both cynical and impossible to please. Actually, there is a lot about the world today that is good and worthwhile, and much better than in my "olden days." For example, I really appreciate this word processor I'm using. It beats the old typewriter and whiteout a hundredfold. Also, my neat copier is a lot better than the old mimeograph machine or the stinky purple jelly-like stuff we used to use to make copies. Also, I really enjoy the Internet as a wonderful source of information, and e-mail for instant communication. Cars and all mechanical devices are much better, and that's a plus. Refrigerators have enabled us not to have to carry ice for an icebox anymore, and that's also good.

And I don't miss the outdoor toilet, or bathing in a tub with only a kerosene lamp to see what you're doing. And even though I get a little frustrated when a bottle of anything that has a secret childproof lid can only be opened by a near-genius, I think the safety it provides is probably worth it. Our institutions, the churches, schools, and government, are trying hard to do the right thing and provide for the needs of the citizens, even though there is always room for improvement. And finally, I

truly think my grandchildren are all pretty good kids, and that their parents have done a wonderful job raising them. So, oh for some small good parts of the good ole days, but cheers for the many large good parts of today!

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It's The Gift That Counts

As children, most of us have heard, especially at Christmastime, that "It's far better to give than to receive!" I wasn't sure it was true then, and, after 70 years of life, I'm still not sure it makes sense. I think it might fit my perception better to say that "giving and receiving are both absolutely wonderful!" and, I might add, necessary for a full life. One is fortunate indeed to experience the joy of giving. But if one is truthful, one has to admit that receiving is mighty joyful too.

So in this last vignette in this book, I'd like to talk about two kinds of very special gifts-- the gifts I've given, and the gifts I've received. First, a look at the gifts I've (we've) *given*.

Gifts We've Given

Gifts to Family- I would like to think that Harriet and I have given a gift of "good beginning" to our children, Sue, Sara, and Eric, as well as a gift of "continued love and support." I'm not thinking about financial gifts here, but gifts of love, time, respect, and genuine interest. And also, we have tried to give the gift of "love, attention, and support" to our grandchildren. Beyond this, it has been our philosophy to give our children gifts of monetary support when needed, and to share financially with

them through loans or "estate distributions." We feel that our parents and others generously helped us with money or loans when we needed to buy a car, a house, etc., and now it is time for us to pass that on to our children.

Gifts to Friends- I wasn't a fount of continued giving when I was a young person, but I do remember one incident that indicated that I had a spirit of giving, even as a high school student. My coach at Deland-Weldon Sr. High School, Maurice Clapper, died suddenly at a fairly young age. I recall feeling really sorry for his family, a wife and three small children. So I took what money I had, which wasn't very much, and bought Christmas gifts for each of the children, and for Mrs. Clapper. I saw her recently at a Deland-Weldon High School reunion, and, as an older woman still with lots of memories, she remembered me delivering those gifts to her home, and thanked me again for my concern as a teenager.

Because my own family was very poor, my mother and father were more into saving, rather than giving. While they were quick to help neighbors in need with work, I don't recall that they gave any monetary gifts to help others. Later, however, my stepfather, Willie Atteberry, helped nurture my spirit of giving. I often think about his statement, "If you have the means and can't help someone who needs it, what good are you?" and realize that it had an affect on my view of giving monetary gifts to friends.

Of course, there are other non-tangible gifts that I try to give. When I can, I try to make myself available to a friend or

family member who needs someone to talk to. And if they need help or support in other ways, I try to help if possible. It may be no big deal, but it is a gift, nevertheless.

Gifts of Time as a Volunteer- During the past 30 years, both Harriet and I have spent many hours volunteering in our community. She has volunteered for the Unit 5 School Board, the Shakespeare Board, the Baby Fold Board, the Symphony Board, the Church Building Committee at First United Methodist Church, Normal, other committees at church, public school organizations, and a variety of other community projects. I have volunteered for the Heartland Community College Foundation Board, the BroMenn Hospital Board, the Constitution Trail Board, The Baby Fold Capital Campaign, The Shakespeare Theater Capital Campaign, and public school organizations, as well as served as director of our church building financial drives, and held other positions in the church and community projects. There was a need, and it just seemed like the right thing to do to give some time and energy to the betterment of our church and community. And giving these gifts has been a real growth experience, and very satisfying to both of us.

Gifts to Charitable Organizations- We feel that our church, and several other charitable organizations play an extremely important role in the lives of people. And we think our gifts help them continue to operate and be effective. Sometimes we give gifts to these organizations in memory of our parents. For

example, if you go to door of the large gym for children in the newest Baby Fold facility in Normal Illinois, you will see a plaque recognizing a gift made by Harriet and I that reads:

Children's Recreation Center

Donated by Phares and Harriet O'Daffer

In memory of their Mothers, Mildred Gove and Ruby Atteberry , whose daily lies were a testimony to their extraordinary love for Children.

At the door of the library in the First United Methodist Church of Normal, a plaque reads,

Donated in memory of our parents Mildred and Sabin Gove and Ruby and Ray O'Daffer.

Recently we donated trees to be planted at a new entrance to BroMenn Regional Medical Center in Normal, Illinois, in memory of my stepfather, Willie Atteberry, who always felt it was so important to plant trees for later generations to enjoy.

And each year an older student, who is attending Bradley University to complete a degree for teaching elementary school children, gets the Mildred A. Gove Education Scholarship to assist with her or his expenses. We started and helped fund this scholarship because Mildred, as a parent, sacrificed to attend Bradley to become a certified teacher. Also, every year a promising graduate student in mathematics education at Illinois State University gets a full-ride scholarship because of an endowment gift we made for this purpose.

In addition to honoring our parents with charitable memorial gifts, we have sought out some select charitable causes in our community that we feel make a lasting difference, and have tried to support them with significant gifts. Examples include the new Cancer Center, The Shakespeare Festival Theatre, The Baby Fold, the BroMenn Regional Medical Center, Habitat for Humanity, The Children's Discovery Museum, Heartland Community College, Illinois State University, and the First United Methodist Church of Normal. And, of course, we make smaller gifts to a variety of other charitable causes each year. We feel that giving to good causes helps them, and helps us experience the joy of giving.

And now, a look at the gifts I've (We've) *received*.

Gifts We've Received

The Gift of the Satisfaction of Giving- As you might have understood from my earlier comments in this vignette, we feel that the gifts we have given have provided us with a great deal of satisfaction, which is in itself a gift back to us.

Gifts from family and friends- We consider our parents, family, relatives, and friends true gifts in themselves. In addition to that, however, we have been the recipients over the years of a number of tangible gifts from family and friends. When my sister Wanda and brother-in-law Ken McDaniel loaned me money to help buy my first car, I greatly appreciated that timely expression of interest and support. I know that Harriet always

was very grateful for the monetary and other gifts that her aunt, Sara Gove, gave her from time to time, and continued to give us after we were married. Also, it is a legend how our parents helped us as a young married couple. Whenever Harriet's parents, Sabin and Mildred, came to our house, they always bought an ample supply of groceries, and a few extras, like aspirin, toilet tissue, soap, etc. With a fairly meager amount of money available, we really appreciated the thoughtful gifts. And we recall that when we visited my mother Ruby and stepfather Willie Atteberry, they would always give us some meat or fresh vegetables to take home with us. And every year, Willie would butcher, and provide us with a "half a beef" or "half a hog" to put in our freezer. Also, during our married life, Willie and Ruby were very generous in loaning us money to buy automobiles and even some farmland.

Our children have always been generous in giving us wonderful tangible gifts on all occasions--Christmas, birthdays, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and in response to favors or vacations we have done or provided for them. But they have also given us the finest gift that children can give their parents--love, respect, attention, camaraderie, and support. And also they have given us the treasured gift of simply being superb people, as well as the gift of grandchildren, who we treasure so much.

We were also blessed with the gift of exchange students from other countries. Our first student, Eddie Chio, was from Taiwan, and we had many delightful and educational times with him and later

his wife, Li. Another gift was Phillip Bastenier, from Belgium. He spent ten months with us as an AFS student. He became part of our family, and we have visited his family in Belgium on two occasions. His father and later Phillip and his family have visited us in the U.S. What wonderful gifts and experiences!

An important gift of friends is the colleagues I have written books with over the years. What great, creative people! In order of our writing together they are Charlie Fleenor, Charles Brumfiel, Bob Eicholz, Merrill Shanks, June Ellis, Marvin Bittenger, Stan Clemens, Randy Charles, Sharon Young, Carne Barnett, Carol Thornton, Tom Cooney, John Dossey, and Janie Schielack. I was also blessed with the gift of wonderful teaching colleagues in several different schools. It would take a book to name them all. And there is the gift of the super ministers, who have served churches we've attended, and the wonderful volunteer colleagues we've known.

In several of the vignettes in this book I have commented on friends who have assisted and supported me at some time in my life. Each incident where someone goes out of their way to help another is a gift they have given, and I have certainly appreciated all those gifts!

The Gift of Life and Health- I think I expressed in the second vignette in this book how fortunate I feel about the gift of life, with good health and mind. It is truly amazing to look back on the favorable events that have shaped my life. It is also incredible to consider the blessings of good health that I have been given. I am fully aware that, at 70, I am living one day at a

time, hopefully with as much quality as possible. I also know that a very serious illness, even death, could strike me at any time. But to have lived 70 years and to never have stayed overnight in a hospital is certainly a rare gift, and I am in awe of it.

I marvel at life, and the stimulation and joy it can bring. I recognize my shortcomings, but admit to being human and don't spend my time dwelling on them. God's handiwork or lucky chance? Your choice, but after giving some careful thought about the power of chance, I'm compelled to say again "Thanks be to God!"

So I hope this discussion about gifts I have given and received gives meaning to my earlier statement that "both Giving and receiving are absolutely wonderful! " And in conclusion, I guess I would say that this whole book is about wonderful gifts and I would like to now dedicate it as a gift to you.

Phares O'Daffer, December, 2004