

## **Check Your Visas Kids: The Life and Times of Dan Richardson, A Memoir**

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### **Table of Contents**

2	A Fragmented Memoir
2	My Family Was A Village
12	Cattle and Mules
20	Richie's Super Service
30	Check Your Visas Kids, We're About to Enter the Bible Belt
36	The Dog Ate My Computer: My Life of Science and Science Teaching

### ***A Fragmented Memoir***

I was told, or rather I read it somewhere, that everyone should write a memoir about their life. I am not sure why, but it sounded like a good idea, so I decided to give it a shot, and even took a short course in how to write a memoir. However, as I sat down in front of my trusty (ha ha) computer to start writing, I realized that I have already done this. Shortly after full retirement from academia (circa 2011) I started writing short stories and essays. My goal was simply to see if I could write something besides science manuscripts, which I had been doing for the past 40 years. Science writing, you must understand, is very restrictive in the degree of creative prose you can use, which is essentially none. Consequently, most scientific papers make a phone book seem like an exciting page turner.

With the goal of breaking out of the science writing mode in mind, over the past several years I've written lots of essays and short stories about one thing or another, took a few courses in creative writing, including the aforementioned one on memoirs, and even managed to finish a novel. Some, but not many, of the short stories are based on my own life. Accordingly, it seemed to me that putting together some of them would constitute a memoir. The following are selected stories from those that are sort of memoirish in nature. But other than being about my life and times, there is no central theme to any of them, nor is there consistency in writing style from one story to the next. That is, they present a fragmented look at my life. Disjointed though it may be, I'm sure that at the very least the reader will find this collection less yawn inducing than a science manuscript.

### ***My Family Was a Village***

My great-grandfather, John Bain, was a Union soldier in an Indiana regimen during the Civil War. According to his letters back home to his father, grandad John was with General Grant during his transition from the western front to the east where he (Grant) took over the Army of the Potomac. Evidently Grandpa Bain's time with the O' cigar chomping general (it is rumored that he smoked up to a dozen a day) was quite harrowing as evidenced by the fact that after returning home grandpa decided to get married and have a passel of offspring in case such a thing as another civil war should happen again at least some of his progeny just might survive to carry on the family name.

By and by the passel of offspring did happen, six girls and four boys, but an event such as another civil war, against which grandpa was hedging his bets, didn't. As a result of this, as well as having the fortune of good health, the entire Bain brood, my grandmother being one of

them, made it into adulthood. Not only that, but as adults they all hung around Morgan County Indiana. And with their subsequent marriages and resultant passels of offspring they single handedly increased the population of my hometown, Martinsville, IN from very small to just small, a bit larger if you include everyone's dog.

The population spike from grandpa Bain's brood meant that by the time I came around, I was related to a significant chunk of the local citizenry. Of these, there were, of course, all the Bains from my four great uncles. And from my grandmother and the great aunts who married there were the Richardsons, the O'Neals, the Labertews, the Mosers and the Hensens. Then there were all the relatives on my mother's side who was a Deatline. The Deatline branch consisted of the Dyers, the Fishers and the Kriners.

You would think that would be more than enough, but wait there is more. When I was about 10 or 11 my parents divorced then remarried each settling down with their second spouses in, where else, Martinsville. So now my circle of relatives ballooned out even further to include the Johnstons, from my stepmom, and the St Johns, from my stepdad, the latter providing me with a younger brother and sister.

As a consequence of all these marriages and begottens, by the time I was in high school the chances of me bumping into someone who I wasn't somehow related to was at the same level as a 40 to 1 shot in a horse race. Meaning it happened but you would be wise not bet heavily on a win ticket. You have no doubt heard of the Jeff Foxworthy bit about how you can tell if you're a redneck, one of these being if you go to a family reunion looking for a date. Well for me that was a reality, not a joke. I remember having a few dates with Mary Grace Labertew (our grandmothers were sisters), and my dad saying to us – "do you two know that you are related"? The tone of his voice suggesting that we shouldn't be dating. To which Mary Grace, who was in the same swamped kin folk boat I was in, responded "Well yes Mr. Richardson, so what's your point?"

While being raised in a sea of relatives had its downsides, such as finding a date with someone to whom I wasn't related, these were markedly overshadowed by the upsides. The security and comfort of family was something that for me was omnipresent – always there in a tangible way. If it is true that it takes a village to raise a child, then you would think that my omnipresent sea of relatives would assure that I would succeed in life, and it no doubt did to a certain extent. However, keep in mind that my childhood "fetchens up", as one of my many aunts would say, occurred in Indiana, a state that gave us such political notables as Dan Quayle and Mike Pence. Meaning that the bar wasn't all that high.

This may seem like a side bar, but bear with me it really isn't. One of the most spectacular natural wonders of the world is Brice Canyon in Utah. I've been there several times and never cease to be awestruck. The place for miles and miles looks like God made an immense number of sand castles by blowing wind and rain around a seemingly infinite number of sand stone

outcroppings. And just as God's sand castles in Brice Canyon were shaped by forces in their environment, so are we shaped from birth to adulthood and beyond by the influences in our environment. Being surrounded all of my childhood by farmers and mechanics, most of whom were relatives, and me working on my grandpa Deatline's farm and in my dad's automotive and tire shop gave me a love of the outdoors, the satisfaction of working with my hands and a preference for blue collar attire over white collar coats and ties. I think that I went into bioscience research as a career not because of any passion to discover new things, but rather because at the time it was the best job I could find in which I could work with my hands.

The downside being that I did my science gig in the hallowed halls of academia within which the wearing of ties was expected up until about the 1980s when, thankfully, that trend faded away. And now jeans and T-shirts are more common among faculty than ties ever were. At almost the instant the tie thing started to fade most of my ties found their way to Goodwill save a couple of them that I kept for things like funerals and weddings. I still have them because they were presents of my children. But they haven't graced my neck in many a year, including for funerals and weddings. Furthermore, a tie depicting a fish dangling from a hook, would be a bit tacky for something like a funeral, but I doubt that anyone would notice or care if they did.

Farmers, mechanics and academics were all interesting folks to be around and each group had its characters. For example, I found academia to be crawling with nutty Wendell Cory absent minded professor types who pottered around in thread bear tweed jackets and wore ties with the skinny part hanging down longer than the fat part. Their bizarre clothing habits were often equally matched by bizarre behaviors. In particular I remember this one guy who was a brilliant mathematician who worked in theoretical biophysics, an area of endeavor that practically no one, myself included, had the slightest idea as to what it was all about. Anyway, this chap's office window faced the approach path for medical evacuation helicopters. He was dead sure that someday a blade would spin off of an approaching craft, sail through his window and do major damage to his thread bear tweed jacket along with significant parts of his body. And, as a final insult, chop off his tie. He even approached the med evac people and asked what the chances were that a blade would fly off a helicopter and hurt someone. "I don't know" was the response he got. "Why's that" he asked. "Because it's never happened in the history of helicopters" was the answer he got. At which point, our brilliant mathematician, who as a student obviously slept through lectures on probability, became sure that he would be the first.

All I needed to do in order to find characters among mechanics was to be at my dad's automotive and tire shop on any given day. Two of these characters in particular were the Scott brothers. There was Beanie Scott, short in stature, wiry and skinny as a rail with a protruding nose that put Pinocchio to shame. His nickname came from the fact that he always wore the same old fashion grease stained mechanics beanie – it was probably older than he was. I never knew Beanie's first name. I doubt that anyone else, perhaps including Beanie himself, did either. Then there was Beanie's brother Chocolate Scott, considerably heftier than

Beanie with a perpetual broad grin and chuckle to go with it. But unlike Beanie, Chocolate never wore a hat, his thick dark curly hair doing the trick of protecting his head from just about anything. The nickname Chocolate (no one knew his real first name either) came from the dark brown tone of his skin which clearly pointed to some sort of glitch in his genetic heritage. This was long before the concept of political correctness was invented, hence the nickname Chocolate. I do remember that for both of the Scott brothers one of their favorite food combinations was beer and ice cream.

But it was the farmers among my relatives who provided some of the most interesting characters in Morgan County. Oddly enough, the more economically successful they became at farming the more of a character they turned out to be because none of them knew exactly what to do with their positive cash flow. For example, there was John Bain, grandson and namesake of the brood producing John Bain Senior. Kinfolk wise he was my second or third cousin once or twice removed. My dad somehow knew all the technicalities of kin folk jargon, but no one else, myself included, did. And so, I don't know exactly how I was related to him. But I do know that he was tall and lanky like most of the Bain men, and he appeared to me to be a bit of a curmudgeon. Anyway, John had a very large high yield bottom land farm the proceeds of which he used to buy three brand new Buicks every year. One went to his wife, and one to his daughter while John used his to carry feed to his hogs as well as for a variety of other farm chores normally performed with a tractor or a team of mules, both of which he had on hand.

I suppose the character who takes the cake, was Uncle Oscar St John. He was an uncle by way of my mom's second marriage, so not a blood relative, but an uncle nonetheless. Oscar was of medium height and a bit sour looking with a seemingly permanent frown that was a living lesson from my mother who frequent said to me, "Don't frown your face might freeze up that way." I think she was right about that. To say that Oscar had a cash flow problem with his farm would be technically correct, but not at all what you might think. Typically, cash flow problems consist of more cash flowing out than flowing in. With Oscar it was the exact opposite. His high yield farm brought in bucket loads of cash, but Oscar had a serious, almost pathological, problem spending any of it; hence, for him, inflow exceeded outflow by several orders of magnitude. As an example, he would rather eat supper in his overcoat during the winter than throw an extra lump of coal into the potbelly stove in his kitchen. For Oscar an extra layer of clothing would do just as well. One afternoon during a wet spell in the spring of 1955 I spent all of my after school shift in my dad's tire shop putting a set of retreaded tires (much less costly than new ones) on Oscar's 1940 something Ford. His old tires were original and slicker than billiard balls. The hub caps on Oscar's car had long since popped off from Oscar hitting one of the many ruts in the dirt road leading to his house from where the hub cap would go sailing like an unguided missile into his cow pasture terrifying its occupants. One of his cows had what looked like a brand on her rump, but on close inspection it turned out to be an indentation from a 1940 something Ford hub cap. Anyway, what took me so long with Oscar's tires was

prying off the rusted-on lug bolts which, even with the help of pry bars, required all the strength my 16 year old lanky (six foot one inch) body could muster (WD 40 and pneumatic lug wrenches had yet to be thought of let alone come on the market).

The only reason Oscar agreed to do something about his tires was because he did a 180 on rain slicked Jefferson Street right in front of the police station/fire house (they were one in the same). Dingbat Lingle, the cop who saw him do his spin number stopped Oscar before he could get too far headed north in the south bound lane, and told him to go see Richie for a new set of tires. Richie was my dad's, Ray Richardson's, nickname, and our auto and tire shop was Richie's Super Service. Of course, Dingbat's real name wasn't Dingbat, but that's how everybody knew him, but nobody, perhaps including Dingbat himself, could remember how he got such a distinguished nickname.

Back to Uncle Oscar. As Dingbat later told my dad, "Hell Richie if I hadn't of stopped O' Oscar he most likely would a drove all the way up Jefferson till he ran into Jasper's front porch, and that old geezer wouldn't a taken kindly to such a thing." Jasper (his actual first name) O'Neal, a great uncle by marriage to one of my grandmother's sisters, had the house at the north end of Jefferson Street where it dead ended. I could just see it; Oscar knocking Jasper's front porch off its concrete block stilts with him sitting there in the porch swing smoking one of his many daily cigars (not as many as General Grant, but he did smoke quite a few). Then Jasper saying something like, "What the hell did ye do that fur Oscar. Didn't I pay ye just yesterday fur them smoked hams?" Anyway, once Uncle Oscar arrived at Richie's Super Service it took my dad a goodly while to convince him that there was no way to fix billiard ball tires. "Caint ye just take a saw and cut new treads Richie?" argued Uncle Oscar. My dad who knew how to deal with the likes of Uncle Oscar stretched out his full six foot frame, looked down at Oscar and responded with, "I recon I could (of course dad knew that he couldn't), but the labor would cost more than a set of retreads. I think you can get by with those, and I can have Danny (me) put em on straight away." "Well have him get to it then. I ain't got all day," orders Oscar. At which point I hopped to it, but Oscar was fuming a bit before I finally finished much later than what would have suited him. By the way, I was quite proud of the fact that I was an inch taller than my dad by the time I was 16.

Last, but not least, in the character category among my relatives was Benjamin Bain, one of the younger ones of Grandpa Bain's brood and clearly the great uncle most near and dear to my heart. Furthermore, as a career military officer (US Army), he was probably the most successful of the Bain boys having risen to the rank of a full bird colonel before retiring a few years after WWII. Tall like all the Bain boys and always a bit serious looking, he most definitely had the look of an army officer which is probably why he was known by one and all in Morgan County as Colonel Bain, or Colonel Ben or simply The Colonel, a title bestowed upon him years before Arlo Sanders fried his first chicken somewhere down in Kentucky. Upon retirement Uncle Ben the Colonel settled in Martinsville, his hometown, where he became very active in the

community. He was my scout master during the years that I was a boy scout. It was his guidance that enabled me to get more merit badges and a higher rank (life scout) than I am sure I otherwise would have. But he is most endeared by my family because he was the one who loaned my dad the money to start Richie's Super Service. But all the positive attributes of Uncle Ben didn't stop him from being somewhat of a character. For example, in keeping with his nephew John Bain the farmer, Uncle Ben bought a new car every year, only his was a Dodge instead of a Buick and he bought only one at a time instead of three. The Colonel obtained his annual new automobile from his friend and local Dodge dealer Skeeter (nickname of course) Daily. There was this one year when Uncle Ben drove his brand new Dodge off the lot but only made it a few blocks before he majorly rammed it into a solid object of some sort that refused to give, even for the Colonel. Having survived the battles of WWII, it is unlikely that such an event as running your car into some sort of solid object even caused a minor blip in his heart rate. As evidence of this, Uncle Ben calmly got out of his car, marched back to the Dodge Dealership (it was only a few blocks) with sharp military strides, looked up Skeeter and says to him, "Skeet, I just wrecked that car you sold me a while ago. You got another one."

All those fond memories of my oversized circle of relatives and how I remember some of the more "interesting" characters among them, came flooding back to me as I was sitting here looking at my most treasured family photo, a 1902 portrait of my great grandparents, John and Mary Bain, and their brood of ten children arranged in two rows ([Photo appended, p11](#)). The somewhat petite gentle looking girl at the left end of the top row is my aunt Adelia Bain Hensen. If there is such a thing as angles sent from heaven, she was most definitely one of them. Her two youngest sibs, Claud about age two sitting on his mother's right knee in the front row and Cora about age five standing on the left side of her mom, were both mentally retarded. The argument could be made that perhaps John and Mary should have stopped with eight offspring and not pushed it to ten. But the universe has reason, well beyond our comprehension, for folks like my Uncle Claud and Aunt Cora who I remember from Bain family reunions as being good natured and delighting in the virtual army of us kids that attended those things. So, who are we to even suggest that they never should have existed. Anyway, Aunt Adel took care of Claud and Cora throughout their entire adult lives while still having a husband (Uncle Ed) and raising a family of her own. In the holiday classic "It's a Wonderful Life" the angle Clarence sent down to help George Baily said that angles had to earn their wings. If this is the case, then I am sure Aunt Adel soared into heaven with hers already firmly attached and spread out.

The glamorous looking lady next to Aunt Adel is my Aunt Mary Grace Bain-Labertew. The Mary Grace I dated in High School, somewhat to my dad's chagrin, was her granddaughter and name sake. Mary Grace the grandmother and Mary Grace the granddaughter had similar features (i.e., they were both good looking). This being the case, Mary Grace the granddaughter had her choice of boys. She didn't really need to date relatives, albeit for her, as with me, finding

datable non-relatives was, to say the least, a bit of a challenge. But she had a knack for it, hence, we only had a few dates.

The tall good looking teen age lady with the bright eyes next to Mary Grace is my grandmother Myrtle Bain-Richardson. Of course, I only remember Grandma Richardson as a much older but loving and gentle woman. She delighted in her grandkids, all seven of us, and made each of us feel special, like we were the only one. There was this stairwell in her house that led up to the attic. Open the door and out poured all kinds of toys and gadgets which were not duplicated in any of our houses. So, my cousins and I absolutely delighted in going over to grandma's house. I never knew my Grandpa Richardson as he died before I was born. But I know that his name was Ziba and that he was a soldier in the Spanish-American war with Teddy Roosevelt and his rough riders in Cuba. So that gives me two relatives who served in the Army under officers who later became presidents of the United States, John Bain with Ulysses Grant and Ziba Richardson with Teddy Roosevelt. Not a bad heritage.

I must have been nine or ten when Grandma Richardson died since it happened a year or so before my parents divorced. That was my first time to mourn the death of someone near and dear to me. There have been many more deaths of love ones of mine in the subsequent 70 years since grandma's death. Looking now at the photo of that attractive teenage girl who became my grandmother, I realize two things: One, that I still miss her; and two that there is a lot of her in me – at least I like to think that there is. Myrtle Bain-Richardson was one of the gentlest loving people I have ever known.

The tall guy next to my grandmother is Don Bain, father of the John Bain who single handedly kept Buick stock prices afloat. Next to Uncle Don is Aunt Florence Bain-O'Neal wife of Jasper O'Neal, he of the porch on concrete block stilts which no doubt would have been leveled by Oscar St John had it not been for Dingbat Lingle.

The serious looking 10 or so year old boy next to Aunt Florence, and rounding out the top row, is my Uncle Ben Bain, the Colonel. He looks militarish even at that tender age. But his serious demeanor belied the fact that, as I knew him, he was a nice guy who cared a lot about folks, particularly those under his care, such as his Boy Scout troop in my day. I imagine that he was admired and respected by the soldiers under his command.

The boy on the left side of the front row, who looks to be about Ben's age, but I don't recall if he was younger or older, is Uncle Robert Bain. I know that he was around when I was and that I am sure I met him at family reunions and such, but I don't know much about him other than that I had a cousin Robert who was his namesake.

The lady next to Uncle Robert is Aunt Jessie Bain-Mosier, the oldest of the Bain girls. I don't remember her at all, but I sure do remember her three Mosier grandsons of my generation; Larry, David and Steve. They just as well could have been named Larry, Curley and Moe for all the shenanigans they pulled and trouble they, occasionally including me, got into throughout



their school years. We sort of lost track of each other when we became adults. Going with the no news is good news theory, I guess that means they turned out OK.

The rough looking guy with the long white beard next to Aunt Jessie is her dad and Bain family patriarch, my great-grandfather John Bain. He looks a bit sad in the picture. So maybe he was thinking that perhaps this trove of offspring thing might not have been such a great idea. If so, I would have to disagree. Think of all the wonderful folks, not to mention characters, Morgan County Indiana would have missed out on had it not been for John and Mary Bain's brood. Who knows, I might not even have been here. I'll have to think about whether that would have been good, bad or indifferent.

Whether or not a bit of my Grandmother Richardson's gentleness and kindness somehow ended up in me is something that those who know me well could answer better than I can. Nonetheless, according to the phenomenon of entanglement I am connected not only to my grandmother, but to all of those who came before me as well as those presently with me both friends and relatives.

Entanglement, a phenomenon first described by Albert Einstein, is where the energies of two sub-atomic particles, such as photons, that have at one time been connected remain connected no matter how far they may become separated in both space and time. Since Einstein's day entanglement has been expanded into the realm of biology and holds that the energies emitted from all living things past and present are interconnected in a vast universal web of existence and remain so over generations of time. At present entanglement it is thought to be the mechanism of extrasensory communications such as telepathy and clairvoyance.

With my understanding of the phenomenon of entanglement and its implication on spiritual connectiveness, now as I look at that cherished 1902 photo of my Bain family relatives, in particular my grandmother as a teenager, what I am seeing is images of their physical bodies, but what I am feeling is a living connection by which through the wonders of how the universe was put together they are still alive within me and all of my aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, children and so on who are similarly connected to them as well as to me. An equal wonder exists, sans photo, with all of those who came before me on my mother's side of my genetic blueprint. In a lot of ways, I think that this is what is truly meant by one big family. I hope that when my physical life is over, they will have considered me to be worthy of being a part of it.

A few years ago, I was back in Martinsville for the funeral of my mother, and the funeral home who handled the arrangements was O'Neal & Summers. The O'Neal who ran the place was the great granddaughter of Florence and Jasper O'Neal, my great aunt and uncle. The two of us spent an interesting few minutes trying to figure out exactly how we are related. Second? Third? Fourth? Cousins. Once? Twice? Three times removed? We finally gave it up. If anybody who happens to be reading this can figure it out, I'd like to know.





John and Mary Bain and family, Morgan County Indiana, circa 1902

Front row: Robert, Jessie (Mrs. James Mosier), John, Claud, Mary and Cora

Second row: Adelia (Mrs. Ed Hinson), Mary Grace, (Mrs. Archie Labertew), Myrtle (Mrs. Ziba Richardson), Don, Florence (Mrs. Jasper O'Neal) and Benjamin (Colonel United States Army)

### ***Cattle and Mules***

I was jolted awake by the sound of a train whistle. Normally I sleep right through these since the tracks are at some distance from my grandparent's farm house where I am staying. But sometime today a train carrying angus cattle that grandpa bought off a range in Nebraska was to arrive to be fatten up in our feed lots over the next several months. A staple of our farm, and a lot of farms like it in the 1950s, was to fatten cattle with silage made mostly from corn husks and molasses.

My help, such as it is for an 11 year old, will be used to get things ready for the arrival of the herd. But since this is the first year that I am old enough and big enough to be of real help, I've no idea exactly what I'll be doing. Probably not a lot given my tender age and still small size. But that's probably what my grandfather had in mind since getting used to cattle and all will prep me for doing "real" work around these critters once I become more or less adult size.

As I pry my eyes open and glance out the window, I see that the sun has yet to peek even a portion of its face over the top of the hill on the east side of the house as ghostly images start to take shape with daylight beginning to creep in. I catch the outline of someone moving on the path leading to the barn. Has to be my grandfather heading down to do the milking. All these early morning scenes mean that the whistle that woke me wasn't from the train bringing our cattle. That would come much later in the day. But since I'm wide awake, I decide that I might as well get up. Besides I can hear grandma in the kitchen, meaning that breakfast will soon be ready.

The chilly upstairs bedroom spurs me to dress quickly while standing over its only heat source - a floor register positioned more or less over the coal stove in the living room. I decide to make my bed without being asked. When it comes to pleasing grandparents, a little extra effort can go a long way.

The 'family farm' as we call it, is run by my grandparents and their son, uncle Harold my mother's brother. Grandpa is the managing partner for the major owner of the farm, Doc Bothwell; our family physician who brought me, my sibs and all my cousins into this world. The farm stays quite busy all year long producing grain, fattening cattle and hogs, sprouting many vegetables from the ground, giving milk from our cows and eggs from our chickens. In the process it supports two or three families: my grandparents, uncle Harold and his family and occasionally a hired hand and his family in addition to providing fresh farm food for my family.

The main house, a big 19<sup>th</sup> century farm house with wood siding painted white, proudly sits on a hill overseeing the farm and providing a comfortable home for my grandparents. A large concrete and brick front porch with a couple of swings looks out over the assortment of trees

that cover the hill between the road and the house. The side yard opposite the driveway supports a couple of pear trees and grandma's close lines. A gate on the side yard fence opens to a path leading down the hill to the barn lot with its two big red barns the lofts of which can be seen from the house. Smoke cured hams hang in a shed behind the house in which grandpa keeps some of his tools. A large, at least to an 11 year old, fenced in chicken yard, always teaming with Rhode Island Reds, sits a short distance beyond the shed; a reliable source of eggs, Sunday fried chicken and fluffy baby chicks that gently peck grain from your hand. All in all it's the type of farm house that folks think about when they think about farm houses.

As I walk into the kitchen, grandma gives me her usual cheerful smile and "good morning Danny" greeting as she ties on a white apron over her print dress and starts laying sausage patties in the skillet. She is a tall woman who seems quite tall to 11 year old me in her elevated scuffed up leather shoes, the only pair I have ever seen her in, and with her dark hair tied up in a bun. Buns were as popular among farm women then as pony tails are now for the simple reason that they keep your hair out of the way when you are working, which for farm women is most of the day. As a senior citizen now older than my grandparents were then, I have often pictured my grandmother in present day farm girl attire of sneakers, jeans and T-shirts with her hair in a pony tail. She could have carried that off quite well.

As grandma stretches to get plates out of a tall cabinet she continues in her upbeat optimistic manner telling me how glad she is that the cattle will finally be getting here so that grandpa can quit fretting over it with such things as: will they all make it? Will they lose too much weight on the trip? And who knows what all. Grandpa is quite a worrier, and that is probably where I got that tendency which still plaques me today.

As grandma hands me the plates, a signal to help her set the table, she gives me a big hug with her gentle comforting hands toughened by years of farm work raising chickens, a garden, cattle and hogs as well as children and now grandchildren, and driving teams of mules as well as tractors. "Glad you're here Danny," she says, "you always cheer daddy - grandma's term of endearment for grandpa - up and Lord knows he could use it to get his mind off things that his mind ort not to be on."

In the middle of helping grandma set the table grandpa comes in the back door carrying two buckets of milk from this morning's milking. Before even setting them on the counter for grandma to process and store in gallon jars later in the day, he gives me a grin and a "Well looky here. Our number one helper is up and at em as he gives me a hug and I lean into his well used canvas jacket with its comforting mixed smells of cigars, barn lots and farm animals.

"Eat up", says grandma after laying out her usual hearty breakfast of sausage and eggs from our own hogs and chickens, both lard fried and really good, toast with real butter, and lots of whole milk from our own cows (all considered health food in those days, and still considered soul food by me some 65 years later). No problem for grandpa and I as we chow down after which he sits

back with his cup of coffee and reads the paper for a few minutes before he puts it down and says “lets head for the barn”.

“Mornin Walter, mornin Danny”, the tall blond headed man leaning against his truck smoking a cigarette, says to us as we come through the barn lot gate. “Mornin Jack”, says grandpa. “Mornin uncle Jack”, says I. Jack is my uncle Harold’s brother-in-law so not an uncle blood line wise, but in our close nit family he’s uncle Jack to me and all my sibs and cousins.

“What’s the count” (of cattle) asks Jack. “Eighty head”, grandpa replies. While I stand by grandpa to listen in he and uncle Jack continue discussing how to handle the new arrivals. Being basically a quiet child, and later a quite adult, I think I learned a lot just by listening to the adults around me. I was rarely told to be quiet. It was just something I did. As a result, it wasn’t until much later that I learned that my childhood occurred during the era of ‘children should be seen, not heard.’ Totally different from what I have seen recently where children as young as three or four almost demand to be the center of attention 24/7. The problem is, of course, that their parents buy into this and let them get by with it.

Grandpa and uncle Jack decide that it would be best to keep the cattle in a holding pen near the railroad loading/unloading shoot for a few days before taking them over to the feed lots where they will spend the winter getting fat. “Welp I spect them cattle be mighty hungry on top of that long train ride, so I’m off to load the feed” says Jack as he teasingly pushes the bill of my cap over my eyes before climbing into his truck.

“Danny and I’ll be by with the hay directly”, says grandpa as Jack drives off with a wave of his hand out the window.

As uncle Jack’s truck disappears down the road, grandpa sort of stands and stares for a minute in midst of our picture post card barn lot with its two large barns painted bright red with white trim. The one with the towering white silo sits adjacent to the feed lots, to which the cattle will be transferred from the holding pen sometime later, while the other barn provides a home to three teams of mules with tons of loose hay in its loft for them and other livestock.

Of course, I have no idea what grandpa is thinking. He may be planning the day in his head, or just admiring the bountiful farm that he has labored in all his adult life. Or maybe the reason he is looking kind of somber all of a sudden is that he is glimpsing into the future to a time when this will all be gone. And in this, I am so thankful that he didn’t live to see what I saw some 50 years later as I stood at the collapsed barn lot gate and stared at the burned out remains of the once Norman Rockwell picturesque barns laying like fallen warriors a few yards from tickey-tack pre-fab houses standing where the feed lots once were.

(Many years after grandpa’s death and with grandma in a nursing home, Doc Bothwell passed away without leaving a will – or if there was one, it was never found – so the farm was settled by the state. Uncle Harold and his son Steve, my cousin, decided to

each buy farms of their own rather than continue with this one. So, our farm was bought by another farm operation in the county who in turn sold the main house and a few surrounding acres separately. Fortunately, an energetic young couple bought the house and have kept it in pristine condition. The barns at the bottom of the hill and attached feed lots, also sold separately, didn't fair so well. An unscrupulous developer put up the ticky-tack houses and totally neglected the barns which eventually got torched; an unsolved case to this day.

Grandpa suddenly turns to me with a grin on his face as he says, referring to Jack, "that boy's a good hand, but he don't say a lot does he?!" Well, no he doesn't, I thought, but neither do you grandpa, and your OK. A lot of the men I grew up around and admired were men of few words. No doubt that's why I have gotten along well with quite types throughout my adult life, and tend toward being one myself.

"Let's get Babe and Bess (a team of bay mules) hitched" he tells me. This is a chore that I really look forward to since every time I help grandpa with the hitch I learn something about how to put farm tack on a pair of mules. He rarely "instructs" me on how to do something. I mainly learn just by watching.

Having brought the team from the barn and tied them to the hitching post, grandpa hands me a curry brush with a simple "get on with it". My spirits get quite a boost from his straight forward instruction of few words. I well know that, basically being a quiet man, the fewer words that grandpa uses to tell you to do something, the more confidence he has that you'll get it done.

As I enthusiastically start brushing Babe she turns her head to give me an "O it's just you" look. Of all six of the mules, Babe is the one I am most familiar with, and in turn I am more familiar to her than I am to any of her stable mates. Babe and Bess are the team grandpa uses the most, when he's using mules, and ever since I was about six he has often had me ride Babe, the lead mule to help guide her, hence the team, in whatever it was we were doing. Through riding her, helping to hitch and unhitch her, feeding her and just talking to her sometimes as she munches her hay and oats at the end of the day, Babe and I have developed a definite bond which I believe transcended to other critters of her breed. Many years later as a married adult, my wife and I were visiting the Grand Canyon. When we happened by the mule corral I leaned up to the fence to have a look at the herd. One of the mules, a mare, walked over to me to be petted. The wranglers told us that that particular mule tended to be people shy and rarely, if ever, came up to a stranger. But I knew, or rather my spirit did, that I was no stranger to her as she seemed to be saying "hi Danny, it's me Babe. Good to see you, and grandpa's just fine by the way."

The team having been hitched to a hay wagon, grandpa drives us over to a hay stack, stops, gets out, picks up two pitch forks and hands me one. No instructional words at all this time. I must have reached the zenith of grandpa confidence, I think to myself.

The springboards in the seat give a squeak of protest as we climb into the wagon now bulging with hay. With no more than a slight flip of the reins in grandpa's hands and a cluck of his tongue, the team takes off pulling the wagon out the barn lot gate by the road. With a firm sounding "gee Babe; gee Bess" the team sort of side steps to the right and heads toward the feed lot by the loading shoot a half mile or so down the road and into the set of barns next to uncle Harold's house.

Waiting for us by the feed lot, uncle Harold gives me a "ho there Danny good to see ya out and about" while cousin Steve gives me a perfunctory "hi Dan, whatya doing here". Being only a year apart in age, Steve and I are more like brothers than cousins, meaning we more-or-less tolerate each other.

Uncle Harold, who inherited grandma's jolly nature, always has a smile on his face and a chuckle in his voice. He is a medium height muscular man who looks the picture of health, and in fact is. He won a health contest of some sort when he was in high school and took it seriously by never smoking or drinking his entire life. Uncle Harold lived to be 95 and actively farmed until he was well into his 80s. Steve followed in his dad's footsteps with clean social habits and with farming as a profession. Steve and I are both in our 70s now and he's still at it, albeit at a farm of his own in a different part of Indiana.

I take in the sweet smell of hay as I fork it down to uncle Harold and Steve who place piles of the stuff next to the various feed troughs spaced around the lot so that the cattle can eat without crowding each other.

The rhythm of our work is suddenly interrupted by the rattle of uncle Jack's truck full of feed bags bumping over the rail road tracks. "Ain't you fellers done yet?" quips Jack as he slings a bag over his shoulder and starts filling the troughs with a special starter feed designed to get the just off the range cattle used to the rich silage that they will be fed almost exclusively once they are transferred to the feed lots by the main barns. "I could have had me some more bacon and eggs at the Black and White", a popular eatery and gathering place in town for food and talk: the weather, grain prices, politics and other items of conversation typically seen in small town gathering places.

My arms feel like lead as I pitch the last fork of our third load of hay over to Steve who looks up at me and big grin on his face, like his dad's, says "you tard old man". Besides being a year older than me, he is bigger, stronger and more used to farm work. "I'll live", I retort as I hop down off the wagon. Steve and I glance over and see that the grown ups, grandpa, Harold and Jack, are kibbitsing about something or other, so we take off running up to the duck pen several



yards away to see the baby ducks that hatched a few days ago; uncle Harold and aunt Wanza (uncle Jack's sister) raise them for meat and eggs.

"Still got their fluff" says Steve as he picks one up and holds it while I let it peck some ground corn out of my hand. The tickling sensation of its bill nibbling at the palm of my hand makes me giggle much to Steve's amusement. We put that duck back and pick up another one for the same thing. After our fourth or fifth duck we hear grandpa yell "you boys leave them ducks alone and get back here." Which we, of course do, and in quick order scurrying back to the barn as fast as our legs will take us. We playfully crash into uncle Jack who grabs us both and lifts us off the ground with a big double bear hug and a "Damn you guys are getting too big for this. You would have to go and grow up on me" he says as he sets us down. "You scoundrels be good now, and I'll see you one of these days, probably in the funny papers" he comments as he climbs in his truck and takes off to another job somewhere.

I have no idea what uncle Jack's main occupation is. He seems to be able to do just about anything, carpentry, auto mechanics, farming, you name it. I mostly see him around our farm once in a while when extra help is needed, like this morning, and sometimes when he comes into my dad's shop in town to buy gas or to get a tire fixed or some such thing. What he and uncle Harold are both best at though are being uncles, and, as I learned later in life, when it comes to bringing in the next generation that is a much more important job than anyone gives it credit for.

"Hop in the wagon Danny" orders grandpa. "Grandma's a waitin dinner on us." In mid-west farm communities, the mid-day meal is the main meal of the day, and it's called dinner, rather than lunch. I was in college before I ever knew there was such a thing as 'lunch', and older even than that before it finally dawned on me that the phrase 'let's have lunch sometime' is more often than not a kissoff term.

The minute I get settled into the creaky wagon seat beside grandpa he hands me the reins with a "here you drive." Now I have been around teams of mules and horses enough to know the basics, like 'gee' (turn right) and 'haw' (turn left) and so on, but till now I have never driven a team myself. And, again, the fact that grandpa didn't say anything except 'here you drive' clearly means that he has a lot more confidence in me than I do.

I sit there with the reins in my hands and, I'm sure, a deer in the headlights look on my face when grandpa gives me a "well, let's go!" With an "I can do this" thought to myself, I flick the reins and give a "hup Babe, hup Bess" command with all the authority my pre-puberty voice will allow, and sure enough they start off heading straight for the fence. "Don't panic" I says to myself, "just do it". Imagine the thrill, not to mention relief, when I tug on the left set of reins with a "haw Babe" and watch the team step to the left onto the driveway. Then with a counter "gee Babe, gee Bess" and a tug on the right set of reins, the teams straightens out and we move easily through the barn lot gate by uncle Harold's house.

“I think that boy’s hungry” says grandma as I sit at the dinner table and polish off my third helping of ham, green beans, corn and mashed potatoes with gravy. “You must have worked him to the bone daddy”. Little did she know that two of the three helpings went to replace emotional energy used to perfect my skills as a mule skinner.

In the middle of polishing off that third helping of everything, I was grinning ear to ear inside thinking about the triumph of driving a team for the first time and assuring myself that it wouldn’t be the last since teams of horses and mules are still used quite a bit in farming, although even I could see that tractors were inching their way in. With these thoughts, my mind drifted back to harvest season last fall when bunches of teams from surrounding farms, as well as ours, were used to haul shocks of barley, wheat and oats to a shared thrashing machine standing in a central location. At that time my hot, dirty, and dusty job of steadying the teams at the thrashing machine by hanging onto a shank attached to the lead animal’s (the one on the left) halter is about as up close and personal to teams as you can get. The day usually ended with a lot of horse dribble on my head since these four-legged critters, draft horse breeds in particular, towered over me. But I liked the toughness of the job mainly because it was a step up from being a water boy toting water jugs on horseback to field hands loading shocks onto wagons. Steve always gave me an ‘I’m more grown up than you’ look every time I passed him the jug.

“Wanta come see the cattle unloaded Danny” says grandpa after he was convinced that I was done shoveling food in my mouth. “Sure” I rapidly answer.

As we bounce over the rail road tracks in grandpa’s old truck, I can see the cattle cars parked by the unloading ramp. Cattle just off the range have no respect for growing boys, or anyone else for that matter, so my one and only, but very important, job is to stay out of the way; which I do by leaning against the fence on the far side of the holding pens.

As the door on the first cattle car opens with a scraping sound, the red and white angus cows start lumbering down the loading ramp bawling in protest amid shouts and curses of the men prodding them on. The noisy, dusty unloading continues for about an hour or so until the last cow from the last car scurries down the ramp with loud bawls as it scurries to join the herd. Soon the chaotic noises of unloading are replaced by the crunching and grinding of 80 head of cattle filling their hungry bellies with hay and grain. In contrast to grandpa’s worry, not one head was lost in transit.

A sudden chill in the air as the sun starts to set prompts me to put on my old beat up work jacket before getting on with my evening chore of helping grandpa feed the mules. Pulling my tired body up the ladder to the loft to pitch down some loose hay which grandpa forks into their mangers is the hardest part. That being done, we both fill their grain bins with a mix of corn and oats, but unlike grandpa who does his part in silence, I carry on a conversation with

each mule as I go along ending with Babe in the end stall who I have a lengthy discourse with as I rub her nose and scratch behind her ears which she twitches with delight.

With grandpa gone to the other barn to start milking, I tell Babe goodbye and to be good till next time. Mom is coming by for supper (evening meal on a farm) then to take me back home to my routine of Sunday school on Sunday and regular old school during the week. But, it means that after school I may get to spend time at dad's shop, my other favorite place in the world.



Walter Deatline grandfather of Dan Richardson, photo from 1950s

### ***Richie's Super Service***

"Give you stubborn sonofabitch" I mumble through gritted teeth as I put all the weight and strength of my 16 year-old, and still growing, body onto the four pronged tire iron I'm using to loosen rusted lug bolts from the wheel of a beat up 1940s something Ford that's never had a tire change. All four of the tires are as slick as billiard balls. The rattle trap is owned by a distant relative of some sort who, I'm told, is Uncle Oscar to me, and who finally decided to come into dad's auto shop to get another set of tires after doing a 180 on rain slickened Jefferson Street. But not factory new ones, heaven forbid. What dad finally talked him into buying before he blew a tire or slid off the road and killed himself was a set of retreads – the cheapest tire you could buy and still sort of call it 'new'.

Like just about all my relatives, Uncle Oscar is a farmer, and, I'm told, a fairly good one. But you sure can't tell that by looking at him in his thread bare bib overalls, patched shirt and beat up work shoes.

In a previous one of these stories I mentioned about Uncle Oscar's cash flow problem in which the cash flowing in from his farm exceeds that going out by a whole bunch. In fact, the only dollar bills that escape his rather tight purse strings are for things that are absolutely necessary, like replacing billiard ball tires on his car that he uses for everything from carrying feed to his hogs to carrying his wife (aunt somebody – can't remember her name) into town to buy what few foodstuffs they can't raise themselves, like coffee. His modest farm would be a break even operation for most farmers, but for Uncle Oscar it's a virtual gold mine of surplus cash that he doesn't seem to do anything with, like buy extra coal for their stove during a cold snap. Rumor has it that he eats supper in his overcoat instead.

Through lots of straining, grunting and groaning, and cussing (Uncle Oscar as well as the wheels of his car) I finally get all the lug bolts loose and all four wheels off before Berl comes to check on me. Berl Stevens, an average sized middle-aged man with a constant smile and the disposition to go with it is one of dad's long-time employees. He had told me just to put the car on the lift and that he would be over after he finished with a customer to undo the lug bolts. "Them things will be on tighter than a bull's ass at fly time" he remarks. "Likely to take both of us to get em loose", he continues (WD-40 had yet to be invented). What I knew he meant was that he didn't think I could do it myself. So, of course, I had to prove him wrong.

"Well shit fire and save the matches" Berl blurts out, and none too quietly, as he lumbers over my way just as I am pulling the last wheel off its hub. "Hell, I'll just tell Richie (my dad) that he don't need that air driven impact wrench he was thinking about gettin. We'll just use you from now on."

I counter with some cryptic remark in the 'colorful' language common to mechanics and farmers and which I thought everyone used in all occasions, until a few scoldings from mom taught me to discriminate.

Berl and I continue talking about Uncle Oscar and how we are going to handle his tire job finally agreeing that Berl will start prying what's left of the old tires off the rims while I watch the gas pumps. With dad working in the back that should cover things until Larry, out on a service call, gets back.

Larry Moore, another of dad's loyal employees, is a couple of years older than me and a high school senior. He comes from a large family that's not too well off and he and his brothers have to work to help the family make ends meet. Dad knew the family and was more than glad to give Larry an after school and weekend job which he's been doing all through high school while still finding time to make good grades, play varsity football and date – being tall and muscular with dark hair, Larry has no problem with the dating game.

Dad has a soft spot for folks who work hard, but yet don't have a lot to show for it. Many families in our little town wouldn't have had much of a Christmas were it not for Dad buying presents and playing Santa Clause. Needless to say, he is well thought of in the community with which he's actively involved beyond our service station – youngest person ever to be president of the Lions Club.

Dad grew up in our town being Ray Richardson, the second oldest of four children and son of a master chef who ran the kitchen in Indiana's most prestigious mineral water sanitarium/resort, The Home Lawn Sanitarium, which in its hay-day, before my time, catered to the rich and famous all over the world. Unfortunately, I never got to know Grandpa Richardson since he died before I was born. But Grandma Richardson was (she passed away when I was 12) a sweet, gentle lady who loved her grandkids and was kind to everyone. The apple didn't fall very far from that tree in my dad. Grandma Richardson had a toy closet full of all kinds of toys for us grandkids which we all enjoyed. I also remember being fascinated by her real icebox for which she had ice delivered to her every three or four days. They say that Grandpa Richardson used to do ice carvings for special guests at the Home Lawn. Grandpa's talent for gourmet cooking flew over both my dad and me, but many years later landed squarely on my son who cooked at several prestigious restaurants before graduating from college and settling on a career in art history.

From high school on dad has been known to everyone as 'Richie', as the name of our shop "Richie's Super Service" attests. When the great depression made college impossible dad borrowed enough from the family patriarch, Uncle Ben Bain – the Colonel – to start a small one pump Standard Oil franchise. By the time I came along, he had expanded it into the largest gas station - auto repair shop – tire store in this part of the state which presently supports our family and two or three others. And there are now two pumps, one for regular gas and one for ethanol. Today I'm the gas jockey for these two pumps in my Standard Oil uniform with the company logo above one shirt pocket and my name (Danny as I was called in those days) above the other.

“How ya doin little Richie”, Kenny Watson, a house painter who owns his own paint store, says as he stops his pickup truck beside one of the pumps. “Big Richie around?”

“You’ll find him in the back bay working on a wagon wheel conversion.”

“Fill her up with regular and check the oil would ya while I go jaw at him awhile.”

Kenny and dad, being about the same age and successful businessmen are pillars of the community – members of the Lions Club, the Elks, the Shriners, the Presbyterian Church and who knows what else – the type of people who make up the pistons of the engines that propel small towns all across America. They are regular customers of each other, as well as good friends, and always have a jaw fest when they get together at one of their places of business.

I crank the numbers on the gas pump to zero, place the nozzle in the tank, squeeze on the handle and listen carefully as it fills. You can detect when a gas tank starts to get full by a sudden change in sound that the gas makes going into the tank. Even the most skillful gas jockey, which I wasn’t, occasionally misjudged the sound causing a few pennies of gas to spill on the ground. Thankfully within a few years we had gas nozzles that shut off automatically.

Having heard the tank nearing its full mark I give the nozzle a few squirts so as to stop on even money – \$3.00 for an even 10 gallons – without spilling a drop. I find that his oil is OK and as I am finishing up washing the windshield Kenny comes back.

“Richie’s been doing a passel of those wagon wheel conversion, taint he”, he says as he hands me a five-dollar bill.

“Third set this week”, I remark as I tell him that his oil is OK and hand him his \$2.00 in change.

As tractors and self-propelled machinery replace teams of horses and mules in routine farm work more and more gravel roads are becoming paved so farmers can more easily move their machinery to and fro. A few years ago Ora Maxwell, one of the few farmers in the county that I am not somehow related to (not 100% sure about that) was musing, actually bitching would be the more accurate term, with dad about how paved roads instead of gravel ones were making life difficult for him. “Damned asphalt tore up a set of shoes on my best team of mules in no time atall”, says he. “Guess I’ll have to pull my wagons with a tractor from now on. But I’ve been a thinken on this”, he continued. “You know Richie” he says “seems to me that what I need is I need a set of wooden spoke iron rimed wagon wheels with regular automobile wheels with tires on em. That orter do it. Don’t know where a feller could get such things as regular tires for wagons, do ya?”

With the wheels of invention already turning in his head dad responds with a “can’t say I do, but I’ll look into it.”

Being a self-taught engineer as well as a good business man who knows an opportunity when he sees one, dad soon designed and constructed a rig that enables him to cut wagon wheel

spokes down to a size that would fit and lock into regular automobile wheel rims, which are then mounted with popular 600-16 sized tires. After doing a set for Ora and a couple of other farmers, word spread quickly and dad soon had all the wagon wheel conversion he could handle.

Walking back toward the shop after Kenny drives off with his full tank of gas and clean windshield, I spot a familiar truck pulling into our lot. "Ho there Danny" the driver says with a smile and jolly chuckle as he stops his truck and gets out.

"Well hi there Uncle Harold" (my mom's brother) I reply. "What brings you in?"

"Wanna pick up our wagon wheels, which I hope your dad has tires on by now. They ready?"

"Didn't know that was your set he was workin on, but I think they're done. How's grandpa doin? I haven't seen him in a while. Steve (Uncle Harold's son) tells me he hasn't seen much of him either." I see my cousin Steve all the time since we go to the same high school. He's the president of the FFA this year.

"Oh, he's been slowing down ever since we put the mules out to pasture. Other than Babe and Bess (my favorite team) we just don't use em much anymore. Dad (grandpa) still does a good days work when he puts his mind to it, but he don't put his mind to it every single day like he used to."

(It's true that when machinery started doing the work of his beloved teams of mules, grandpa began backing away and slowing down. He died of heart failure when I was in my early 20s. They say that his pipes, cigars and cigarettes perhaps coupled with a bit of Jack (Daniels) and Jim (Beam) finally caught up with him. That could be what the doctors saw, but I think that some of it had to do with him feeling that his role in the drama of life had played out and so he gracefully exited stage left.)

"Now don't you be such a stranger" orders Uncle Harold with the usual chuckle in his voice as we head to where dad's working. "Pry yourself loose from here and come out and see us once in a while. Mules be glad to see you fur sure. They miss your carrots."

"That's on the top of my to-do list when I get my driver's license. Supposed to be next week, if the guy shows up at the license branch. I'd like to see if Babe (my favorite mule) still remembers who I am. Now, let's go see about them wheels."

Walking side by side Uncle Harold rubs my burr hair cut like he's done for years only now he has to reach up instead of down.

"Well there he is Richie the not so rich" Harold chuckles as we approach dad in the middle of bending over to center up his cutting template, a 600-16 rim modified with a center piece that fits over the hub of a wagon wheel. "Thought you'd be done with em by now" he continues.

"I am with your's, they're stacked over there in the corner" replies dad with a twist of his head toward the back of the room. "These here are for Marian O'Neal" a cousin of dad and I. 'Brought em in yesterday wanting em yesterday. I told him fat chance, but the sour old cuss left the wheels and grumbled off anyway. Here Danny, press down on this rim so I can make my marks on the spokes. NO NO not like that, put your hands on opposite sides. That's more like it. Now hold it still."

That being done I let go of the rim and dad straightens up his lanky six foot frame. "Good to see ya Harold" says dad as he pats him on the back. "It's been awhile (dad wasn't around when uncle Harold brought the wheels in), so how's Wanza (my aunt) and all your brood."

"Good, now that Nan's in school (first grade and the youngest of his four kids, my cousins) and Wanza can get out more. But how are you doing Richie, and how's Jean? I'd like to see her sometime about our class reunion, if we're still haven em."

Jean is my step mom who I was overjoyed to see dad marry a few years ago. Bachelorhood following his divorce from mom – her idea, not his – didn't suit him well, and, by extension, me either. Anyway, Jean and Uncle Harold were in the same graduating class at our high school, where Steve and I now go. Being a tall attractive outgoing red head who is well liked and sociable, she flows naturally into things like keeping up with class reunions, the goings on in our Presbyterian Church and community activities in general. It took me awhile – the divorce of my parents didn't set well with me at all – but I've come to realize that dad and my step mom are a much better match than dad and mom ever were.

"Danny, go put Uncle Harold's new wheels in his truck", dad says in a voice that sounds more like a request than an order, "while we settle up." The tires are pressurized so I roll them two at a time across the length of the shop managing to avoid tools strung out on the floor, gas buckets, stacks of tires and numerous other things that present a picture of a busy prosperous establishment. During the middle of a typical day the inside of Richie's Super Service looks like a tornado roared through, liked it and came back. Dad claims that you should never do business with an auto repair shop, carpentry shop, welding shop or any business that includes the word 'shop' that's tidy. The owners are probably too incompetent to have much business and have nothing else to do but keep the place neat.

Rolling the wheels across the floor I take in their strange mixed smells of new tires, old wooden wagon spokes and wheel hubs packed with grease that may well have been put in when my grandfather's mules that pulled the wagon they came off of were young. It strikes me that these converted wheels are a metaphor of the new mixing with the old kind of transition in farming that is currently taking place. Teams of horses and mules, the backbone of farming for centuries, are being turned out to pasture, literally, in favor of tractors, combines and other gasoline powered machinery. Gravel roads are giving way to asphalt necessitating the type of wheels on wagons that I am now rolling out to my uncle's truck. Of course, with all this



modernization farm production has markedly increased. But then it has to in order to meet the rising cost of farming. Farmers can't grow the gas, oil and parts necessary to keep their machinery running. That takes hard cash. So, is their really any gain to all this?

For my dad, yes. A large chunk of Richie's Super Service is centered on serving the needs of farmers in the on-going transition in the methods of farming. So he, rather we, are benefiting, but I am not sure that the farmers themselves are. That is, I'm not sure that mechanization is providing them with any net gain.

I guess it is suiting my uncle Harold just fine. I can see that he's as jolly and good natured as ever as he walks towards his truck in brisk energetic strides as he is tucking the invoice for the wagon wheels in his shirt pocket. "All loaded and ready to go, I see" he remarks as he rubs my burr head – again. "Now, like I said", he says with a smile while shaking a finger at me, "don't be a stranger. "Come out and see us once in a while."

"I will Uncle Harold. Tell everyone I said hi."

A few minutes after Uncle Harold's truck pulls out onto the street, Larry roars in driving our service truck, a one year old 1954 bright red Dodge pickup with Richie's Super Service and our phone number painted on both doors and merchandise decals here and there; Standard Oil, Firestone Tires, Willard Batteries, South Wind Heaters (heaters had yet to be standard equipment on cars), Good Year Tires and several others. A sign on the tail gate reads "*Invite Us to Your Next Blowout*", a reference to our extensive tire service as well as dad's famous sense of humor.

"Hi short shanks", Larry says, greeting me with the nickname he started using when I was quite a bit shorter than he – I'm now at least as tall as he is, but he's not giving up the name. "I'm dry", he says as he drags himself out of the truck, "let's have a coke".

Dad, Berl, Larry, and I gather around the coke machine. Each of us puts in a dime for a coke while laying a second dime on the counter by the machine. When we get our cokes we look at the bottom of the bottle for the city where the coke bottle originated. The one with the furthest away city wins the pile of dimes. This time it's Berl who grabs the pile with a "hot damn, another two bottles of beer." I've yet to have the honor.

"I'll get it", Larry says as we hear the phone ring. He answers with "Richie's Super Service. Well hi John. Yes. Uh hu. That's right. O.K., we'll be on our way. Have it done before dark."

"That was John Bain Richie" reports Larry. His Case tractor is sitting out in his wheat field with a flat. Danny and I can get it, if that's OK with you."

"Fine. Go. Berl and I can hold down the fort. Don't want John bitching at me for being slow on service calls."

“Well come on Danny”, orders Larry. “Start mixing the calcium chloride while I take a pee.” Being the boss’s son renders me no special privileges. Just the opposite. I’m at the very bottom of the pecking order. But pecking order stuff rarely comes up. The guys and I get along well and work together just fine.

Throwing a fifty-pound bag of calcium chloride into the bed of the truck, I’m thinking to myself “another day, another farm, another relative.” John Bain is a cousin of dad’s which makes him some sort of a cousin of mine, I guess. “I must be related to half the county”, I further say to myself. This bazillion relative thing started sometime after the Civil War, when my great grandfather on my dad’s side, John Bain senior, a Yankee soldier, returned home (The John Bain, whose tractor is sitting out in a field with a flat, is his grandson and namesake.). For about twenty or so years following the war O’ John senior went on a proliferation binge ending up with ten kids, six girls and four boys, all of whom remained in our county and several of whom eventually went on proliferation binges of their own. My grandmother Richardson, one of her sisters who became an O’Neal (Marion’s wife), and Uncle Ben who loaned dad the money to start his shop are members of great grandad’s brood. I guess the O’ fella, having experienced the trauma of war, wanted to hedge his bets so that in case such a thing happened again, only closer to home, his progeny would survive. So far so good over 90 years later.

Following the bag of calcium chloride, I climb into the bed of the truck holding a water hose with the nozzle turned off, for now. Pouring the calcium chloride into a fifty-gallon drum laying on its side, I judged when about a third of the bag was empty then start filling the drum with water while rocking it back and forth to mix the solution. This solution will be pumped into the inner tube of John Bain’s tractor tire after we get it patched. The water gives the tires weight and the calcium chloride keeps the water from freezing in the winter.

With tractors being used more and more in farming, flat tractor tires are becoming common. Problem is when one of those monsters does go flat out in a field you’re just flat SOL. There is no such thing as a spare, and even if there was, it would take three or four Hercules types to jack up the tractor, pull one wheel off and put another on. So again, using his self-taught engineering skills, Richie designed an on-the-farm tire service in which two mere mortals, Larry and I in this case, could fix a flat tractor tire on-site, meaning on the farm, without having to pull the wheel. Richie’s on-the-farm tire service consists of the “*invite us to your next blowout*” truck, tube repair equipment, tire irons, hydraulic jacks, the drum of calcium chloride and an air compressor. The air compressor is fascinating by its simplicity. It is nothing more than a valve of some sort that replaces one of the sparkplugs on the engine of the truck. The truck idles just fine with one less spark plug and the upstroke of that particular piston pumps air through a regular air hose.

Calcium chloride solution all mixed and ready to go, I grab the door handle on the passenger side of the truck at the moment Larry comes bounding out of the shop yelling “nope, you drive. I’ve got shotgun.”

Pulling out of our lot and heading south on Main Street, Larry lights a cigarette, leans back, shakes the match out, puts the burnt match on the dashboard and throws the box of unused matches out the window. Obviously, he is either not paying attention to what he's doing or he's got the most screwed up model of event sequencing I've ever seen.

"What the hells with you", I ask.

"Hu. What do ya mean?"

"Where is your box of matches?"

"Ah shit", he says as he looks at the burnt match on the dashboard like it was an expensive TV set he had just knocked over and busted.

"So, what's with you?"

"Carol and I had a fight last night."

"Who's Carol?"

"My girlfriend you twit."

"This week's or last week's?"

"Screw you. We've been going steady for over a month", he says with a tone suggesting that he thought that long of a stretch with one girl should be in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Turning his head to look out the window, I get the hint that he doesn't want to talk about it. So, I leave him be as I know he would me if our roles were reversed. (Larry and Carol eventually married and had a passel of kids; their own version of great grandpa Bain's proliferation gig.)

Driving out of town and leaving Larry's brain to sort out his spat with Carol – as best it can, not knowing a burnt match from a box of good ones – I'm soon deep in my own thoughts. Watching our town give way to rolling farm land, still pretty but devoid of the teams of horses and mules that a few years ago would dot such a landscape on any given day (except Sunday), I get a sinking sad feeling knowing that the gentle sounds of farming – the snorting of big animals, the jingle of trace chains – have been replaced by the roar of gasoline powered engines. It doesn't help any to know that I should be embracing all this for the sake of Richie's Super Service. Were teams still doing the work of farming, there would be no need for a rig that converts iron rimmed wagon wheels to tires or for an on-the-farm tire service. So, for my dad, I'm pleased that these things exist, but I'm not sure I can say that for myself.

"Where do I turn, Larry?" I half shout to jar him out of his trance.

Coming out of his trance and sitting up in the seat he answers "Turn right at the next road. John's farm will be on your left before we get to the river."

Consisting almost entirely of rich river bottom land, John Bain's farm is a high producer and he's a rich man. Every year, he buys three new Buicks, one for his wife, one for his daughter and one for himself. He uses his like a farm implement. Standing beside it as we pull into his driveway, he says simply "follow me" as he scoots behind the steering wheel.

"Holy shit, this is a big farm", I comment to Larry after we've been bouncing over rutted dirt roads beside fields for almost 15 minutes. All of a sudden we have visual contact with the tractor with the sore foot. It's standing in the middle of what will be a huge wheat field, once planting takes place, hitched to a disk and looking forlorn like a child who has been abandoned in the playground at recess.

Bouncing over plowed furrows Larry and I hit our heads on the ceiling of the truck a gazillion times before pulling up beside the tractor. Don't know how he did it, but John was waiting for us in his Buick. Rolling down the window he matter of factly says "I'll leave you fellers to it; gotta go feed. Have Richie send me the bill." That exchange between Uncle John and us was typical of business transactions in the day when a hand shake was as good as a signed contract. This was the first flat tire that Uncle John had ever had on a tractor out in the field. So, he had no idea how much the bill would be, and he didn't ask because he knew that Richie's price for that service would be fair and honest.

The TV ad '*wouldn't you really rather have a Buick*' comes to mind as we watch John bounce back over the furrows and head for his barn.

In silence, Larry and I unload the hydraulic jacks and tire tools then get to work. We have done this on-the-farm tire thing together many times, but repetition doesn't make it any easier. It remains a lot of hard physical work. We keep chatter to a minimum so as to conserve energy.

In spite of the physical demands of fixing a flat tractor tire in the middle of a wheat field, I like this particular task more than any of the others I do for Richie's Super Service. Being out of doors and working on a farm, albeit doing something other than farming, keeps me connected to my grandparent's farm that I grew up with. I nostalgically long for the horses and mules of days gone by, but just being out in the middle of a field is uplifting.

The quiet of the country, the rhythm of our work and the feeling of accomplishment when the tire is finally fixed and Larry and I are enjoying a smoke while looking at the setting sun (the Surgeon General's report on smoking won't be out for several more years) can best be described as spiritual nourishment. I muse in silence wondering if such a thing as spiritual nourishment will even be possible in rural America of the future.

**Epilogue:** When I was a teenager pumping gas at my dad's station at 30 cents a gallon in the 1950s, the idea that it would someday be \$4.00 a gallon would have been as incomprehensible as Martians landing in our town square. But it happened in 2007 – the 4-dollar gas, not the Martians. This and other events coinciding with it - dependence on foreign oil, air pollution,

global warming – stimulated a partial return to farming with teams of horses and mules. The University of Kentucky, where I taught for 40 years, has a degree program in “sustainable agriculture”. This is basically old fashion animal-based farming but with a business plan, something my grandparents never heard of. Even hobby and small operation farmers are using horses and mules more and more to do the plowing, disking, planting etc. A year or so ago my wife and I went in with some friends and bought a delightful Suffolk Punch (draft breed) mare, by the name of Amy-Babe, who knows how to plow. We don’t, but she does, and she will eventually teach us how to properly use her to garden an old tobacco field near our place in Washington Co Kentucky. Thankfully the spiritual nourishment of rural America that was so common in the 50s is still with us as the 21<sup>st</sup> century gets underway.

Richie’s Super Service (circa 1955)



From L to R: Ray (Richie) Richardson, Larry Moore, Berl Stevens, Dan Richardson

### ***Check Your Visas Kids, We're About to Enter the Bible Belt***

The term “culture shock” can accurately be defined as: “*the psychological effects of moving from California to Kentucky in 1970*”. Think about it. You’re living in a region where guys wear pony tails and gals have buzz cuts. Then a scant four days later you find yourself smack dab in the middle of a culture that has sported the exact opposite for what seems like the past millennium. And this is to be your new home!?! Prozac anyone!

Such was the situation we found ourselves in during the summer of 1970 following completion of post-doctoral training in my chosen profession, medical science, at the University of California in San Diego. In other words, having exhausted my last gig as a professional student I had to find a “real job”. We would have liked to have stayed in California, but at that time the state had a freeze on the hiring of new university faculty – a “gift” of the then Governor Ronald Regan. So, I cast my net nation-wide and soon had a great job offer from the Department of Physiology at the University of Kentucky in Lexington. It had all the things I was looking for in a faculty position, a good balance between teaching, which I had grown to love, and research; an acceptable salary with good benefits; and lots of opportunities to interact with colleagues not only in the medical center but campus wide as well. Furthermore, Lexington and central Kentucky had what we were looking for as a place to raise a family. A smaller town – we were beginning to get a bit weary of the bigness of San Diego – good schools and a nearby wilderness area to explore, the Daniel Boone National Forest. Furthermore, Lexington was but a few hours drive from our folks in Indiana, meaning that the children would get to interact with their grandparents on a regular basis; something that my wife Joyce and I both wanted for them, having had wonderful childhood experiences with our own grandparents.

All of the positive attributes of relocating to Lexington eventually did come to pass, but when we first arrived, we were hit head on with something we weren’t aware of when we decided to move there. Central Kentucky may not have been the heart of the Bible belt, but it was most certainly well within its borders – Chamber of Commerce brochures didn’t mention anything about this.

Considering that we came from California, I am surprised we didn’t need entry visas. No doubt Kentucky’s ultra conservative politicians would love to have had that requirement. Had such been in place, we would have no doubt been turned away at the State line. Our 1964 VW van had flowers painted on it, I had long hair (not a pony tail, but long), my wife had short hair (not a buzz cut, but short), and our children looked like miniature hippies in their tie-dye shirts.

We arrived in Lexington on a Sunday with hungry children and couldn’t find anything open where we could get something to eat. I remembered “Blue Laws” from my early childhood, but I didn’t think anyone, or any community, took them seriously anymore. When we lived in Florida, several years prior to Lexington, restaurants were open on Sunday, and, of course, in San Diego Sunday was just another day at the office – literally. But Lexington obviously took its Blue Laws quite seriously. After driving all over we finally found a 7-11 open way out on the north side of town. Our first meal in our new home town consisted of packaged crackers and cokes with candy bars for dessert.

Our experience with Lexington's Blue Laws was probably the impetus that started me to question the social relevance and social impact of some of the actions of Christian churches – something that I continue doing to this day. For one thing it seemed to me that Blue Laws smacked in the face of our constitutional guarantee of separation of church and state. Evidently a lot of folks in the community felt the same because Lexington's Blue Laws disappeared within a few years after we arrived.

Included in my questioning of the social impact of churches was, and still is, viewing Christian religion with a more critical eye toward its intrusiveness into peoples' individual lives. I firmly believe that one of our most cherished constitutional rights is the freedom of religion and its associated separation of church and state. But what a lot of church leaders, such as fundamentalists, and a lot of politicians, such as so-called conservatives, don't seem to get is that *freedom of religion includes freedom from religion*. They are two sides of the same coin.

We have adequate freedom of religion – the USA has a gazillion different kinds of religions and religious organizations. Something to match the religious tastes of anyone and everyone. But we are not doing quite as well on the freedom from religion side of the coin. When President George W Bush vetoed stem cell research legislation designed to provide hope for thousands of US citizens with devastating neurological diseases on the basis of his religious principles, *that's not freedom from religion*. When school boards limit, or in any way curtail, what teachers can teach in the area of biology, such as sexual function and evolution, *that's not freedom from religion*. When federal state and local governments advocate laws that deny gays and lesbians basic rights on the basis of some obscure passages in the Bible, *that's not freedom from religion*. When in 2018 the Supreme Court ruled in favor of a baker who refused to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple on the basis of his religious principles *that's not freedom from religion*.

Back to the original story. Soon after arriving in Lexington we bought and moved into a nice bungalow that would be our home for the next forty years. During the first few weeks in our new place we came up against another Bible belt deal, but one which was more charming than our Blue Law experience. We had several welcome to our town visits from folks with food and invites to join their church. Additionally, we had visits from a variety of insurance salesmen some of whom also invited us to join their church. What a great idea! Insurance for the here and insurance for the hereafter in a two-for-one package. Conversations with folks at grocery stores and the like eventually got around to “where do you go to church?” And the tone by which they asked it clearly implied that “I don't” was not an acceptable answer.

Delightful though most of these visits to our house and conversation with strangers were, they had a disturbing underlying tone. Namely, that you are nobody if you aren't a member of a church. This brings up a different, and non-political, side to the “freedom from religion” issue. Namely, it's neither morally or ethically right for folks from one religion to either condemn those who aren't a part of their brand of faith or to badger them to join their church. This is particularly true if the badgerer is perfectly content with his or her religion, or even if they have a good spiritual life without being a part of any religion at all (quite a few people I know who exemplify Christian principles in their daily lives fall into the latter category.). Having Bibles

thumped in your face, being condemned for being a “non-believer”, or being hounded to join a particular church *is not freedom from religion*. An example that happened many years ago is an attempt of Evangelical Christians in Utah to “save” the Mormons by converting them to the Evangelical brand of Christianity. What a horrendous waste of time. Mormons and Evangelicals share the same root principles of Christianity. So, Evangelicals should leave the Mormons alone and, I suppose, vice-versa.

Although religious folk may be overzealous from time to time, they are by in large good people and churches are nice places to attend, particularly for the social aspects. We started going to Crestwood Christian Church soon after arriving in Lexington, and although we rarely attended worship services, we maintain good friendships with many of those who we met there, and for many years we continued participating in church outreach activities, such as our Church’s annual Habitat build. However, I don’t see anything particularly different about doing outreach activities through a church compared to doing similar activities through secular organizations. A poor family in need of a home could care less who builds it for them; a church, the Moose Lodge or Hells Angles – it’s the same wood, same nails, same dry wall etc and ends up the same home. A secular-build Habitat home next to a church-built Habitat home could pass for cloned twins.

On that note, nice though church folks by in large may be, one thing I don’t like is the tone that some of them, particularly preachers, use when uttering the word “secular”. It’s as if any activity not associated with a church is on the same social level as a biker bar. Secular simply means non-sacred or not of a church. It in no way means non-Christian. In fact, some of the most Christian organizations in our society have no direct connection to a church, including Habitat for Humanity; God’s Pantry; Volunteers of America; Meals on Wheels; and on and on.

A gray zone between what is usually thought of as protestant churches, such as Baptist, Methodist and so on, and secular, but religious, organizations are non-denominational churches. These are usually frowned upon by the clergy for reasons that I am not clear about, other than the fact that they present a threat to their livelihood. However, some of the most devout Christians in America are non-denominational. As the Kentucky author Janice Holt Giles pointed out in several of her books, the Appalachian folks are deeply religious in that the Bible guides just about everything in their day to day lives. Furthermore, churches are the centers of social life in many Appalachian communities, but for the most part they are non-denominational and the folks who attend them go by the label of “Bible Christians”, so as to clearly distinguish themselves from “denominational Christians”. In fact, many Appalachians are strongly anti-denominational and feel that it is a sin to belong to a denomination. And they find the idea of someone – a preacher – getting paid to spread the word of God totally appalling. When the Kennedy-Johnson war on poverty workers did some of their initial surveys of the Appalachian people, they erroneously concluded that they are not religious because the vast majority surveyed did not belong to a church. The question, upon which this false conclusion was based was “What church do you belong to?”, and the majority response was “I don’t belong to no church”. But this was entirely the wrong question. What they should have asked is “What is your religion?” The majority response to that question would have no doubt been “I’m a Bible Christian”. With a



few simple follow up questions, the war-on-poverty data gatherers would have rightly concluded that Appalachian people are very religious.

To summarize things to this point, when we first moved to Kentucky from California in 1970 we were in culture shock of a magnitude approaching shell shock. Most of our “shock” had to do with what we consider the undo influence of Christian Churches on social norms and laws of the land. We were used to a lot more individual freedom of expression than what we found here – pony tails on guys, buzz cuts on girls and flowers on VW vans. But gradually over the years Lexington changed such that by the time my wife and I both retired from our professions and moved to Arizona, Lexington was not all that different from California, or anywhere else in the nation, for that matter. The Blue Laws that dominated much of Kentucky for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are gone. Restaurants, shopping malls, bars and just about anything are open on Sunday. Guys in pony tails and gals in buzz cuts no longer turn heads. Heterosexual cohabitation is accepted, and gay and lesbian married couples are as much a part of the community as anyone else. Dress is more casual – necktie wearing is the exception rather than the rule. All but gone are folks multitasking as insurance salesmen and church hawkers; as are the “church ladies” drilling you about what church you belong to. Televangelists no longer dominate Sunday TV (the NFL claimed that spot years ago). But I kind of miss them. If nothing else, they were entertaining. As the southern humorist Lewis Grizzard said of Jim and Tammy Fay Baker, “they were the best husband-wife comedy team since Burns and Allen”.

Basically, the more conservative 20<sup>th</sup> century Lexington has adapted and blended in quite well with the more liberal 21<sup>st</sup> century world. But it didn’t come without a fight from the fundamentalist churches. One thing that Christian churches have been consistent in doing since their creation almost 2000 years ago is to impede social and scientific progress. In Lexington, they opposed literally every step in the “modernization” of Sunday – the doing away with blue laws; the opening of restaurants; the opening of retail stores; the serving of liquor by the drink on Sunday and finally, the opening of bars on Sunday. And with every step their argument was always the same – to keep the Sabbath holy. But in a nation where there is separation of church and state you must ask “which Sabbath”? The Islamic Sabbath is on Friday. The Jewish Sabbath is on Saturday. And the Christian Sabbath is on Sunday. I even heard of this coffee table religious group that has their “Sabbath” every other Tuesday.

Considering that we have separation of church and state, you can’t just recognize one Sabbath. You either do all of them or none of them. And if you do all of them, there wouldn’t be any time left over during the week to buy or sell anything, at least not legally. Meaning that everything from baby formula to bourbon, the national drink of Kentucky, would have to be black marketed. Fortunately, cooler and more rational heads have always prevailed in Lexington’s march into the 21<sup>st</sup> century; dragging the fundamentalist Christians with them kicking and screaming. As a result, Lexington remains a great place to live. It was our loving home for several decades. The place we raised our children, the place where we have great neighbors and the place where we made life-long friends. We loved it then and still do, although we don’t get back there very often anymore.

Along with the Lexington community as a whole, the main-line churches in Lexington also evolved to fit in better with 21<sup>st</sup> century society, and, in my opinion, have moved closer to true Christianity. For example, just about all churches have outreach programs that at one time were nonexistent. I have mentioned about building houses for Habitat, an activity which several Lexington churches from a variety of different congregations participate in by pooling financial and manpower resources to get the job done. There is a great church sponsored outreach program called “Room In the Inn” where several Lexington churches collaborate to house and feed the homeless during the winter. Taken as a whole, the cooperation among Lexington churches for social good means that they focus more on their commonality (Christ’s commandment to love thy neighbor) than on their differences. Also, by in large, churches have become more accepting and welcoming of who worships with them. Homosexuals, single moms and liberal democrats are rarely turned away at the door.

But that doesn’t mean that all’s well in the land of Bluegrass. While it is true that Lexington has come a long way, the state of Kentucky, as a whole, remains a bastion of religious based conservatism. This is most obvious from the fact that the creation museum is located in Kentucky. This means that the creationism vs evolution issue is alive and well in the land of the bluegrass. Another example of the liberal-conservative tug of war is the different interpretations of Genesis 1:26, man’s dominion over the earth. The liberal view is that God intends for us to preserve and protect the earth and its creatures as he/she made them. The conservative view is that he (note the absence of she) gave us the earth to use however we see fit. The latter is what we mostly do – use and destroy without replacing. THE prime example of this in Kentucky is strip mining, including mountain top removal - *Mr. Peabody’s coal train done hauled it* (Mhlulenberg county) *away*.

But there are lots of other more subtle examples. Consider the following in the realm of outdoor recreation. Several decades ago two groups of people, one in Scott and one in Anderson County, tried for permits to get pastoral settings in secluded rural sections set up as a private clubs for nude recreation. They got nowhere in spite of the fact that their activities would be peaceful, quiet and would preserve, rather than destroy, the environment. On the other hand, a group of Kentucky citizens with too much money and little or no sense of social responsibility had no problem in obtaining a permit to convert a perfectly good pastoral rural setting, with a lovely pond and all, into a noise polluting, air polluting, traffic congesting private “park” with a track where members would be able to drive their overpriced gas guzzling sports cars as fast as they want. I am not sure that this obscene venture ever got off the ground, but the point is that the proponents of this “recreational” activity were able to breeze through the permit process in spite of the destructive and dangerous nature of the proposed activity. Whereas, the proponents of the non-destructive and safe practice of outdoor nude recreation got absolutely nowhere in obtaining permission from the courts. I am not sure how much, if any, churches were involved in these actions (church goers don’t tend to either drive fast sports cars fast or participate in nude recreation), but conservative Christian footprints were all over this issue.

In summary, it is unlikely that a family moving to Kentucky from California today would experience the culture shock we did in 1970. In spite of its political conservatism, Kentucky is really not all that much different from California these days. The bible beltishness of it is not nearly as obvious as it used to be; you can not only find a good restaurant on Sunday but you can have a bourbon on the rocks before dinner as well. Strangers are much more likely to say “how bout them cats (UK wildcats)”, then “what church do you go to”. And, most importantly, you don’t need a visa to get in.

### *The Dog Ate My Computer: My Life of Science and Science Teaching*

I got into science quite by accident (sort of). When Joyce and I got married at a too tender of an age to suit our parents, or most anyone else for that matter, we decided to escape to Florida where we had just a scant few relatives, her mother and brother, as opposed to the hordes of my relatives described in the first essay of this memoir. In planning our move down there we decided on Gainesville, FL as a place to settle. It was far enough away from Jacksonville, where Joyce's mother and brother lived, to give us some room to establish our own family but close enough for visits. Furthermore, with the University of Florida being located in Gainesville I could continue my college education (my first attempt at college right after high school didn't work out).

We moved into a small but comfortable one-bedroom cottage on the outskirts of Gainesville. Shortly thereafter Joyce and I both got jobs at the university. She became a secretary for a Dr. Archie Carr in the Department of Biology whose research had to do with sea turtles. It was through this contact that I first became acquainted with research in the biological sciences. My job was in the machine shop of the university's department of physics where I became an apprentice machinist learning to make equipment for physics experiments using things like lathes and milling machines. It was satisfying work which allowed me to take a few courses on campus. But more importantly I was able to see what physics research was like.

One project within the physics Dept that I became acquainted with was radio astronomy – investigating stars and planets by analyzing electromagnetic waves emanating from them. My job was to maintain the antenna farm, a rather large array of clothes-line like wires that received radio signals from outer space. The “farm” and associated shack housing the recording equipment were located on a few acres not too far from campus. My job included cutting the grass around the antenna and instrument shack. Usually mowing a lawn is a fairly straight forward job. But this particular lawn had a few unique mobile obstacles in the form of alligators that hung out in or near a pond on the property. Makes sense considering that the mascot of the Univ of Florida is an alligator, so why wouldn't they hang out there. When I found one of these guys on the lawn, I attempted to chase it back into the pond, but for the most part they ignored me. I guess to them I was a green beanie freshman while they were upper classmen. So, I just had to wait until they had enough of starring at a green beanie freshman, or whatever they were doing, and decided to waddle back into the pond. Made cutting the grass a much longer job than it otherwise would have been.

Between making repairs of the antenna and waiting for alligators to clear out of my way so I could mow, I hung out in the instrument shack and chatted with the grad students who were collecting and analyzing the data. Different teams of professors and/or grad students spent scheduled time in the shack working on particular projects. I remember conversations with this one team who were looking for signs of intelligent life from distant galaxies. I don't know if they ever found any, but the idea of it and the technology they were using were fascinating.

So, indirectly from my wife's work in the Biology Department and directly from my work in the Physics department I developed quite an interest in science and technology. With these interests

in mind, Joyce and I collectively decided that I would pursue a BA degree in mechanical engineering, a good background for getting into a variety of scientific fields. The physics folks allowed me to keep my job in the machine shop with fewer hours. It was along about then that Joyce got pregnant and soon gave us our son Luke, meaning that for the foreseeable future she would be a stay-at-home mom. To save money as well as time by eliminating the commute to and from campus, we moved into married student housing, a converted WWII army barracks in which the rent was cheaper than the cottage.

We were making ends meet financially and all seemed well. But, as a full-time student I was required to take certain peripheral courses, such as physical education, which had nothing to do with engineering but which cut into the time that I could work to make money. So, all of a sudden we weren't doing so well financially. Finally, I got so frustrated with the whole deal that I said "oh the hell with college", I'm now a skilled machinist, so I'll scrap this college gig and make that my profession hence forth.

The problem with this plan was, of course, finding a full-time job as a machinist. Not being much of an industrialized state, Florida didn't hold much promise. So, after much thought on the matter, we decided on Indianapolis, IN, a town in the industrial mid-west that I knew a lot about but one that was not within shouting distance of my hordes of kinfolk in and around Martinsville, IN. Furthermore, we had housing available in Indianapolis. Joyce's grandmother owned a small duplex on the east side of town one side of which happened to be vacant. So, we loaded up a U-Haul trailer, hitched it to our car (can't remember the make or model) and headed north with a six-month infant bouncing in our lap. This was well before the days of car seats for children.

The move from Florida occurred sometime in mid-winter, which was OK in Florida, but quite cold for us further north. We stopped somewhere in Tennessee and bought our son Luke his first, last and only snow suit. It was just like the one in that Christmas movie, the name of which I can't remember, where Ralphie's younger brother can hardly move after getting stuffed into one of these things. I felt sorry for Luke, who at the time was still in the rug-rat phase, being ensconced in this contraption with less wiggle room than a strait jacket, meaning that he couldn't even do his rug-rat thing with that monstrosity on. But at least it kept him warm. However, to this day I don't know if that was good, bad or indifferent. We might just have delayed him getting adapted to the cold. And this might have had something to do with the fact that as an adult he preferred warmer environments in which to live – Florida, Arizona and Italy were his top places to hangout.

Finding a job in Indianapolis turned out to be harder than I had imagined. After much searching, I finally got wind of some openings at the Indiana University Medical School and Research Center on the west side of Indianapolis. Given that we were living on the east side it would be a bit of a commute, but well worth it, as it turned out, since I landed a great job which ended up being the beginning of a life-long career in science research and teaching.

The job was as a technician in the research lab of a Dr. Paul Johnson, a professor in the Department of Physiology, who in a few years was to become my career mentor in the field of health science. But to begin with my main job was to work in their machine shop making

research equipment for Dr. Johnson (Paul as he soon became known to me) as well as other physiology faculty. Having experience as a machinist no doubt was why I got the job, but I don't know for sure if that was the case. Regardless, within a short time I was also assisting in experiments aimed at discovering the mechanisms of blood flow regulation in body organs and tissues. Within a few months that became my main task which I was quite enthused about owing to my introduction to science at the University of Florida. Eventually I took on more and more research tasks until I was designing and carrying out experiments on my own. That is, I was functioning more as research associate than a lab tech. It was during this period that I became co-author on my first journal publication (*Circulation Research* 15: 523-544, 1964). To this day, I've not had an ego boost quite like that one.

Although I was introduced to the profession of science while at the University of Florida, I never got to really know the professors who headed up the various research projects. On the few occasions that I did get to meet one of them it was always in a rather formal setting. Thus, I left Florida thinking that college professors in general and science profs in particular were a rather stoic bunch with little or no sense of humor. My job at the Indiana Univ Med Center (IUMC) quickly proved how misguided my perception from Florida had been. The IUMC gang of well educated (MDs and PhDs) folks had an equal, or higher, density of nut jobs than could be found in just about any profession, and this has been the case in every academic establishment that I have been associated with since then. For instance, one day while working in Paul's lab I heard this rattle-rattle coming down the hall. I stuck my head out the door to see this guy in a lab coat sitting cross-legged on a lab cart smoking a cigar while being pushed down the hall by some giggling lady, also in a lab coat. The guy in question turned out to be the Chairperson (Head) of the Pharmacology Dept and the lady was one of his grad students. Both of them seemingly had been sampling too many of their own concoctions. Another chap of similar rank introduced me, and many others, to the delicacy of spiked watermelon. What he did was to fill a 50cc syringe with vodka, attach it to a long hypodermic needle and dispense the hooch into a large watermelon at various spots. Vodka laced watermelon got to be a lunch time staple.

It wasn't just the faculty that had the collection of nut jobs. Equal to the task were any number of students, lab techs and so on, the lady pushing the Pharmacology Chairperson down the hall being one of them. Another equally dingy dude was this grad student in Biochemistry who was known as the vampire because he had an aversion to daylight. All of the various buildings on the IUMC campus, including hospitals, labs, dorms, dinning-rooms and so on, were connected by tunnels which the vampire always took from one place to another. Rumor had it that he had not been outside in years. In addition to this guy, the prof who provided us with spiked watermelon got the idea from a lab tech of his a few years back. These are but a few examples of the many "interesting" folks that I had the privilege of knowing and working with at the IUMC.

The presence of a considerable number of women working at all professional levels at IUMC brings to mind another, and perhaps more serious, misconception derived from my experience at Florida. This being that science and technology are mainly guy things. The machine shop I worked in at Florida was all guys, and well over 90% of the students in the science and engineering courses I took were men. However, at the IUMC women occupied a sizable fraction

of the faculty, students and techs. And this was in the 1960s, meaning that these women were light years ahead of things like the “me too” movement of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. From my IUMC experience forward women have been a normal part of the science environment in which I worked, be they faculty colleagues or students. Accordingly, my perception from Florida that science was a guy thing couldn’t have been more misleading.

But I am getting a bit ahead of myself. Back to my lab tech days in Paul Johnson’s lab. After getting to the point where I was carrying out experiments on my own, Paul asked me if I would like to enter grad school and work on a doctoral dissertation under his mentorship. I quickly said “sure I would, but won’t I need a BA degree first?” For which he replied, “humm, I hadn’t considered that, but yes I’m sure that you do”. So, with Paul’s blessing and a goal of getting into grad school I started taking evening courses at the Indiana University (IU) extension in downtown Indianapolis. I admit to have been a bit skeptical about the quality of the courses that I would be taking in a college extension facility, but the profs turned out to be some of the best teachers that I ever had. The thing they had in common was that they were semi-retired from the main IU campus in Bloomington. Their talent for teaching and dedication to quality education prompted them to continue in the profession, albeit at a part-time level, long after most professionals in any field had taken down their shingles. The example of these dedicated educators was, I’m sure, one of the reasons I continued teaching part-time after my retirement as a college prof and still do off and on at age 80 plus.

This is an aside, but an “interesting” story nonetheless. Purdue University in West Lafayette IN also had an extension in Indianapolis. Ultimately the two (IU and PU) merged to become the third largest university in the state under the rather dubious name of Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, or IUPUI which to this day is affectionally known as uiepuie.

Back to our main story. At the time I was taking courses at the IU extension you had to complete at least two semesters on the main campus in Bloomington. As I would still need a bit of an income to do this Paul arranged a part-time lab tech job for me in the Physiology Department on the Bloomington campus working for a renal physiologist by the name of Howard Rostopher.

As a married student with a family Joyce and I were eligible to rent an apartment in married student housing on the Bloomington campus called Hoosier Courts. These were a bunch of converted WW II army barracks each divided into several two-bedroom units, much like those we lived in on the Florida campus. While still living in our one-bedroom place in Indianapolis our daughter Amy was born. Being a bit crowded we were delighted to be moving into a two-bedroom place in Bloomington.

Hoosier Courts had a very welcomed positive effect on our daughter Amy. Within a few days after Amy was born, she developed GI problems which ultimately cleared up but in the meantime she was quite uncomfortable and as a newborn cried a lot. Amy was a few months old (beginning her rug-rat phase) and still a bit fussy when we moved into Hoosier Courts. The new place so enthralled her that she suddenly quit crying all together, and didn’t cry all that much ever again for the remainder of her childhood even when she fell off of a teeter-totter and broke

her arm at age three or four. She whimpered a little bit, but quit that when her mom put a band aid on her arm before taking her to the emergency room.

Prof Rostopher welcomed us to the IU campus and seemed delighted to have me as part of his research team. Furthermore, he was a kind man and a good teacher who helped me a lot in scheduling courses that would enhance my chances of getting accepted into grad school. The work in his lab was quite interesting and considerably expanded my knowledge of human physiology both in terms of research techniques and the understanding of body functions.

After being on the Bloomington campus for two years I graduated with a combined BA degree in chemistry and physics with a minor in math. Indeed, as prof Rostopher predicted, that set me up well for getting into grad school as a doctoral candidate in Physiology. Additionally, I was able to obtain a coveted pre-doctoral fellowship from the National Institutes of Health that enabled me to continue my studies without having to draw a paycheck from part-time work somewhere.

So back to Indianapolis we moved and back to Paul Johnson's lab only now as a grad student rather than as an employee. As a grad student I vowed not to be like the vampire and exclusively use the tunnels to get from one place to another on the IUMC campus. I would make a point of going outside even if it was raining or snowing.

Upon moving back to Indianapolis, we rented a nice three-bedroom duplex on Audubon Road, which was on the east side of Indianapolis but a bit closer to IUMC than our previous one-bedroom had been. The owners who lived on the other side of the duplex were a delightful couple in their late 80s. I remember being impressed with their high level of activity given their age. In particular the husband (wish I could remember their names) walked two blocks to the city golf course carrying his clubs several times a week. Did a round of golf, while carrying his clubs and walked back home, still carrying his clubs. Makes today's golf cart riders seem like super wimps, which no doubt many of them are (I've never cared for golf, or as my dad called it "cow pasture pool"). Many years later when I became bio-science director for the doctoral program in gerontology at the University of Kentucky I remembered my landlords on Audubon Road as examples of what successful aging can be.

As a family we experienced several firsts during our time on Audubon Rd. Luke and Amy got their first pets all for themselves, a couple of turtles that they kept in the bathtub and a hamster that got loose and "escaped" down one of the registers. Joyce rescued him by cutting a hole in a heat duct and coaching him out. He was covered with suit, changing his fur from brown to gray, and he sneezed a lot. But he survived and went on to be a delightful pet.

We bought our first brand new car while on Audubon, a VW Beetle. This peoples car (volks-wagon) had a space behind the back seat which Amy quickly claimed and always rode back there with her dolls whether we were going just a few blocks or all the way to Florida to visit Joyce's family on holidays. Amy called her little private space the back-in-the-back. As with Luke when he rode in Joyce's lap as an infant, this was long before children had to be encased in car seats. I wonder if anyone has ever looked into just how safe (or not) child safety seats really are. I am reasonably sure that a few deaths due to a child being strapped into one of these things in the back seat then forgotten and dying of heat stroke could have been prevented. When a child is



bouncing around in the back seat, or beside you in the front seat, there is no way you are not going to be aware of their presence.

Our final first while on Audubon Rd was that we started camping and canoeing as a family, often skipping church on Sundays for an outing; something that Joyce and I don't at all regret. Our children grew up with a love of and respect for nature that they otherwise wouldn't have had. Amy, now in her 50s, remains an excellent fisherperson. Try as I may I've never caught more than she has. She can also start a campfire much quicker than I can. Likewise, Luke grew up to love nature and animals, particularly horses. By age nine or ten he was as good a horseman as any grown up. And, as a grown up, Luke owned a delightful thoroughbred, who became a family pet, and won several ribbons with him in stadium jumping.

Life as a beginning grad student in physiology at the IUMC consisted entirely of course work for which Paul Johnson, and other IUMC faculty who I did tech work for, were now my profs, a switch that, for me, took a bit of adjustment. Mainly this involved a psychological shift from fellow workers to student teacher relationships, which was more a figment of my mind than Paul's. My study desk was in his lab, and his attitude and interactions toward me didn't seem to be any different than they were when I was his full-time tech, and I continued assisting him with experiments from time to time. So, any psychological/behavioral shift in our relationship was more of an imagination on my part than a reality.

Of the courses that I and my fellow first year grad students took, some were medical science courses taken along with first year med students, while others were specialty courses for grad students. The latter included medical instrumentation, how to operate and repair research equipment, and bio-statistics, how to statistically design as well as analyze life science experiments. Both of these courses provided valuable concepts which I have used not only throughout my science career, but throughout my life as well, up to and including the present day. The instrumentation course taught us not just the nitty gritty of fixing things, like polygraph recorders, but more importantly, how to identify, analyze and solve a problem. These are steps that can be used to solve social issues as well as fix most anything that's broken, such as the many repairs of lawnmowers that I have done over the years.

The bio-statistics course covered the exceedingly valuable concept of Type I and Type II errors. As applied to statistical analysis a Type I error is the rejection of a correct hypothesis; whereas, a Type II error is the acceptance of a false hypothesis. When you design a scientific experiment to test a particular hypothesis you must first decide which of these two types of errors you want to avoid. This is quite difficult to do and requires not only knowing the error concept but years of experience in experimental design before you become competent in this procedure. On an entirely different level you can use the error concept without labels to make a variety of choice decisions. For example, most people asking for money on street corners and such really do need it to survive, but a number of them don't. So, when a street person asks for a handout do you give it with the chance that he or she might be scamming you, or do you refuse with the chance that the individual really does need your support? Once you have given the money, or not, you'll most likely never know which is the case. So, you have to decide a-priori which error you would be willing to live with. The same goes in the larger context of supporting welfare, or not, as well

as an enormous array of other social decisions, such as should immigration laws be strict or lenient and so on.

Our second year of graduate study was devoted to taking advanced level courses in body systems, such as cardiovascular physiology and renal physiology, along with related courses in immunology and genetics. Each of these came with the caveat that none of these subjects work in isolation. Rather the body operates as an integrated whole. To demonstrate your understanding of this, toward the end of the second year you took qualifying exams, a two or three day series of written and oral exams designed not only to test your knowledge of physiology, but more importantly how the different body systems work in unison.

The course phase of graduate studies in physiology sounds like a lot of very difficult work, and for a science novice I suppose it would be. But in general grad students, myself included, come into science programs with some experience in their fields of choice. In my case I had several years of experience as a lab tech in two different physiology labs, Paul Johnson's and Howard Rostopher's. And each of my classmates had similar experiences. So, for us, the course work, while being quite time consuming, wasn't as difficult as some of the courses we took as undergrads. For me such a course was physical chemistry taken on the IU Bloomington campus. My exam scores in that course averaged 48% out of a possible 100, and I got the highest B in the class. The A's started at 50% and no one got over 60% (these were the students destined for graduate work at places like Cal Tech and MIT). To rationalize this, our prof said that he knew what we knew, he wanted to find out what we didn't know. He sure as hell succeeded in that!

But I digress. Upon passing qualifying exams, you then became a dissertation candidate. Your first task at this level was to form a dissertation committee composed of four or five faculty with your mentor, Paul Johnson in my case, as chair of the committee. Under their guidance, you designed your study, conducted the experiments, then wrote a dissertation describing the study, emphasizing what you found and how it contributes to our knowledge of physiology. The investigation-dissertation process usually lasts several years, three years for me, 1966-1969.

During the dissertation proposal process, Paul Johnson was offered the Chair of Physiology at the newly formed University of Arizona School of Medicine in Tucson, AZ. He asked me to come along with him which I readily accepted. Shortly thereafter, the VW was packed to the gills and with two small children and a hamster we headed west. Sadly, the hamster didn't make it (he was quite old by then), but the children gave him a nice burial along the way.

Upon arriving in Tucson, we moved into married student housing on the UA campus, again a series of converted WW II military housing this time in the form of quasit huts each divided into two apartments. If you were to take a giant tin can, split it down the middle then divide each half into two sections, that was basically what these things looked like. Each section was a comfortable furnished two-bedroom apartment with a swamp cooler for air conditioning. Although, we were quite cozy with this arrangement, having two children we qualified for a larger furnished apartment in a defunct retirement complex, called Christopher City, that the University had recently purchased and turned into much needed married student housing. This complex was situated at the edge of town more-or-less out in the desert giving the children their

first taste of rural living which they, as well as Joyce and I, found quite enjoyable being away from the noisy city and being visited by what for us were novel critters in the form of coyotes and road runners both of which could be seen roaming through the complex in the early morning drinking out of the sprinklers. However, we never saw a coyote chasing a road runner. They seemed to have had a live and let live attitude toward each other, at least in Christopher City.

We lived in Christopher City about two and a half years and really enjoyed it. Had a lot of very good neighbors there, all UA students of various levels and all interesting folks. One guy in particular was a former sheep herder in Utah who, when he could no longer herd sheep, became a potter then a grad student in fine arts specializing in ceramic arts. A huge pottery jar that he gave us because it had a slight flaw in it is still our cookie jar some 50 years later. Another guy who was a doctoral student in English composition, taught me more useful “tricks” of successful writing than I had learned in any of the composition courses that I had taken. I used many of these tricks throughout my academic career and still find them quite handy today.

Christopher City also turned out to be most enjoyable for the children. Amy, who was four or five at the time started pre-school and helped her mother operate the nursery for infants and toddlers who Amy loved taking care of. Luke did second and third grade while we were there and had some great teachers. In addition, for him there were a couple of riding stables nearby where he and I could rent horses and go on rides together. It was here that he first showed his innate talent for riding and handling horses, something that he spent quite a bit of his life doing. During the winters that we were there we obtained permits from the forest service to cut our own Christmas trees in the national forest. The first one practically took up our entire living room. They don't look all that big when they're among other trees in the forest. But we all had a good time decorating it, and it was a most enjoyable and memorable Christmas. The most enjoyable part for me was that it was the first time I was able to spend the entire holiday season with my own family and didn't have to bounce from one household to another between divorced parents, in-laws and so on.

In a larger context, the move to Tucson introduced Joyce, the children and I to the desert southwest and all of its openness. Whenever we could we would load up in our VW and visit a different part of the state such as Organ Pipe National Forest, Sedona and the Grand Canyon as well as doing hikes in the Mt. Lemon wilderness area. The later also introduced Joyce and I to backpacking something that we did off and on for many years thereafter. Basically, we all came to really like Arizona. The first big thing that Amy did after high school graduation was move back to Arizona (from Kentucky) where she has been ever since (she is now in her 50s). Shortly after our retirements from our respective professions, Joyce and I moved back to Arizona where we have been ever since.

In addition to the many pleasantries of living in Tucson, our relocation to the University of Arizona was the most important pivotal move in my entire career because it resulted in finding my niche in the field of science and academia, that being classroom teaching. At the time I started at UA, the Medical School and all associated departments (e.g., physiology) were brand new. Accordingly, during the first year of operation the physiology department consisted of three people, Paul Johnson, Doug Steward (the first faculty hired by Paul) and me, and the three

of us taught the inaugural course in medical physiology. I thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of the teaching process; researching a subject, putting together lectures, delivering them and interacting with the students, several of whom were older than I was. Before the course began, I thought that the students might object to being taught an important course like physiology from another student. But the opposite turned out to be the case. They seemed to appreciate and enjoy being taught by someone who was essentially one of their peers.

By the time the second year of operation of the new medical school rolled around, the Physiology department had several faculty and a few post-doctoral students resulting in my role in teaching being reduced. But the hook had been set. I wasn't sure how much scientific research I would be doing throughout my career, but I knew (or rather sensed) that I would always be active in science education. And in retrospect that turned out to be the case.

After being at UA for a few years I had completed my research project, written my dissertation and taken a few advanced science courses. Now it was time for Paul and me to fly back to Indianapolis for my dissertation defense at IUMC. Which fortunately was a successful trip.

Now as a new doctoral graduate (PhD), I had to figure out what my first career move would be. After much searching and consultation with Paul we determined that my best first move would be to take a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of California-San Diego (UCSD) in the department of bioengineering working for a Benjamin Zweifach in the field of microcirculatory physiology – the physiological regulation of the small blood vessels that control blood flow to tissues and govern blood-tissue exchange of substances, such as oxygen. But, and this was the good part for me, in order to provide an income to support my family, I taught a course in cell physiology and gave lectures in Medical Physiology to the freshman med class at UCSD.

It was the latter teaching experience that gave me my first large scale encounter with dyed-to-the-wool, card-carrying California hippies of the 1960s. These folks were all very brilliant but a bit on the “unusual” side of life. For example, several of the guys had shoulder length hair while many of the girls had buzz cuts. However, their uniqueness can best be described by the following: When the freshmen med students at Arizona were to have their first encounter with patients in the hospital, we just needed to remind the guys to wear ties and the girls to wear skirts and nice blouses. For their California counter-parts, we had to remind them to wear shoes and be satisfied with that.

My interaction with hippish med students at UCSD provided me with valuable experience in teaching students who have an interest in science. Scientists, like artists and musicians, tend to be free thinking non-conformists some of whom may not wear shoes to class. Free thinking non-conformity combined with imagination and intelligence are the hallmarks of scientific achievement. Accordingly, as a science teacher you must allow for a bit of dinginess in your students and always be careful not to let social norms, that your students may or may not follow, influence what you teach or how you teach, but more importantly how you look upon and interact with your students.

The teaching aspect of the job at UCSD provided me with a good income with which we could rent a three-bedroom apartment, but not anywhere near campus. That was because UCSD is

located in La Jolla, CA, one of America's more expensive and upscale residential towns where hardly anyone associated with UCSD could afford to live, was included. Our much more modestly priced, but quite nice, apartment was located about 10 miles up-beach (north) from La Jolla in the small town of Encinitas, CA which turned out to be a great place to live. It was near the ocean where we frequented several beaches some of which were nude, our first experience with that type of outdoor recreation. Additionally, Tory Pines State park was nearby, a great place for family picnics and hiking. But more importantly, Encinitas was in a good school district where Amy completed first grade getting her off to a good start with her education, and Luke completed fourth grade keeping his streak of good schools started in Arizona going.

Two or three of my bioengineering co-workers at UCSD also lived in Encinitas and rode motorcycles to and from campus. Seemed like a good plan to me, so I bought a bike and joined them. Our rides home would often take us far afield, 50 to 100 miles, on back country roads. Most enjoyable, and by then my hair was getting a bit on the long side and I was sporting a beard. With those things along with my motorcycle I was beginning to resemble my hippie med students more so than your stereotypical college teacher. Which was fine by me. I didn't then, and never did, particularly want to look like a stereotypical college prof, which I have always been able to pull off since there is no such thing as a stereotypical college prof. The notion that there is, is simply a myth.

At the same time that I did, my family got into the hippie thing as well. For some reason, I can't remember why, we traded our VW beetle for a VW van which had flower decals on it, our kids started wearing tie-dye T-shirts and Joyce started sporting short shorts as well as tie-dye T-shirts and, I think, tank tops as well. So, in just a few short years we had morphed, at least in looks, from button-down Midwesterners to free-style California hippies.

But alas, all good things must come to an end. During my tenure at UCSD the then Gov. Ronald Reagan put a freeze on new hiring at all the University of California campuses, meaning that I could not get my contract renewed. Accordingly, after being at UCSD for only one short year I had to now find a "real" job. So, after cleaning myself up a bit by cutting my hair and shaving the beard, I set out in search of an academic position at a college or university. I knew that I wanted to teach and I knew that that was my strength, and so I emphasized that aspect in my applications. By and by and after a few trips for interviews, I was offered the exact type of job I was looking for, an assistant professorship with considerable teaching opportunity in the Department of Physiology at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, KY.

Once again, we packed up the VW with all our belongings, including children, but no motorcycle (I sold it). Only this time it was our VW van with the flower decals, and we headed east instead of west. Rather than take the shortest distance from Tucson, AZ to Lexington, KY, we decided to make a longer road trip out of it and headed for Stoughton, Wisconsin to visit Joyce's dad and his third (or maybe fourth) wife. I only met him once and had never met her. Joyce hadn't seen her dad in several years and he had yet to meet his grandkids. And so, a visit sounded like a good idea. But what we were unaware of is just how socially and politically ultra conservative her dad and his third (or maybe fourth) wife were (they would have made Donald Trump look

like a liberal). Imagine their shock when we showed up in a VW van with California plates plastered with flower decals, with his daughter and her two children decked out in tie-dye T-shirts accompanied by her scruffy looking husband (my hair and beard had grown out a bit). They couldn't have been more distraught if we had shown up in a flying saucer from Mars, which they well might have thought was the case. They eventually accepted us enough to be hospitable and enjoy their grandkids, but for the remainder of the years that we knew them there was always a cool distance between us that shouldn't have been there with family.

Although I had visited the University of KY for my interview it was only for a couple of days. Accordingly, I didn't get to see all that much of Lexington, but it seemed like a nice place to raise children and we liked the fact Joyce's and my hometown of Martinsville, IN was only a three-hour drive, thus enabling the kids to have a relationship with grandparents. Eventually we got to love Lexington and Kentucky itself, and ended up spending a delightful 40 years there. However, our start was a bit rocky. Coming from liberal Tucson, AZ and San Diego, CA we weren't prepared for the social conservatism of Kentucky at that time, 1970. Our introduction to this culture and its gradual shift to left (liberal) over the 40 years we lived there are described in exhausting detail in the section of this memoir titled "*Check Your Visa Kids, We're About to Enter the Bible Belt.*" So, I won't say any more about that at this point.

Accepting a faculty appointment at the University of Kentucky signaled the end of my formal education and training in science, a process that had been going on for about 10 years during which time Joyce continued to support me personally and quite often financially. Now that I had a good paying job, it was time for us to switch roles. So, after a year or two of learning the city, adapting to the culture and in general getting our feet on the ground, Joyce enrolled in UK and started working on a BA with the aim of eventually getting a master's degree in clinical social work. Her interest in becoming a counselor (psychotherapist) stemmed from volunteer counseling that she had been doing at Planned Parenthood of Lexington. At the time of her college start Amy was in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and Luke was beginning middle school. Wanting to be at home for the kids as much as possible, Joyce took courses mostly on a part time basis such that by the time she graduated with her BA, Luke was in college and he and his mom took a few classes together. I assume that went OK, although neither one of them ever said one way or the other. Unlike her BA, Joyce's masters work was full time. Following graduation from that she became a licensed clinical social worker, and hung up her shingle following which she spent over 25 fulfilling years as a counselor/psychotherapist dealing with everything from parent-child squabbles to people bent on trying to kill themselves.

An amusing side effect of Joyce pursuing a professional career is that when she was still an undergrad, we had this new faculty hire in physiology who was, and still is, quite a bit on the conservative side of life. One day he asked me if my wife belonged to the faculty wife's club. Having no idea that there even was such a thing, I explained that, no she doesn't because she is working on a college degree and doesn't have time for such things. To which he responded, "well perhaps she should". To which I responded, "you tell her that, but let me know when you plan to do it because I don't want to be anywhere near that fan when the shit hits it."

While Joyce was pursuing becoming a professional, I was spending my time trying to get the hang of being one as a member of the physiology department at University of Kentucky. The Department of Physiology was located within the college of medicine, but it had teaching responsibilities in several colleges including Arts and Sciences on the main campus, about a half mile from the medical center. Although I was given a fully equipped research lab and expected to maintain a research program in microcirculatory physiology, Fred Zechman, the department chair (my boss), made it quite clear from day one that I was hired more for my teaching skills and experience and would be expected to do a considerable amount of classroom teaching. Accordingly, teaching occupied over 50% of my overall job during my first few years, an exceptionally high figure for a newly hired assistant professor who was also expected to carry out a research program. And it grew from there such that by the time I retired some 40 years later, my teaching distribution was around 95%, with the other 5% being research in health science education, so essentially science education occupied 100% of my time. In the way of contrast, I knew a guy in a different department who was essentially hired exclusively to do research. His teaching commitment was usually less than 1% which boiled down to giving a couple of lectures in a team-taught course once a year.

As a point of clarification, the terms department head and department chair are often used interchangeably, but there is a difference. Although both are in charge of a particular department, a department head is hired by the dean of the associated college with or without faculty approval; whereas a department chair is hired by faculty of the department with or without approval of the college dean. Fred Zechman was the chair of the physiology department, which was to have three more chairs before I retired, and as a faculty I was involved in the hiring of all three.

During my first year at Kentucky my teaching responsibilities were relatively easy consisting of lectures on the cardiovascular system in several different courses. But by my second year I was off and running with teaching being the major component of my job. In this context, the main reason why I took the job at Kentucky was because of the relatively large variety of courses that the physiology department offered. These consisted of four general physiology courses ranging from freshman to senior levels in addition to a variety of specialty courses for physiology graduate students.

Of the various courses that I taught; the most challenging ones involved directing one of our team-taught courses. Directing a team-taught course involves chairing several meetings with course faculty (who were assigned by the Departmental Chair) to decide on things such as when to schedule the course, which text book to use, how many lectures to give for each topic, who, including the director, would teach what, designing exams then finally determining grade distribution (who got the As, the Bs etc.). Although the meetings with course faculty were necessary, and usually helpful, dealing with independent head-strong faculty each with their own ideas often presented the most challenging part of directing a team-taught course. For example, deciding when to offer a course was often a nightmare because with about any time you picked, at least one of the team had a conflict. Accordingly, this process usually took several rounds before we settled on a time and could get the course scheduled. I remember this one instance in

which finally after much to-do, we settled on a time slot (12:00 to 12:50) only to have this one rather gold-bricking faculty (we had those) say, “but that’s when I eat my lunch!” As calmly as I could muster, I explained to him that there simply were no other times available and that he would just have to eat his lunch some other time, or not at all. What I felt like saying, but didn’t, was, “you show up for your lectures as scheduled bud, or I’ll eat your damn lunch, and I don’t mean the food!”

In retrospect, the variety of my teaching experiences not only helped me in obtaining tenure, and its associated promotion to associate professor, but more importantly it allowed me to understand physiology as a total body experience, and not as a collection of isolated organ systems, as most text books at that time present it. The course that was most valuable in this respect was our 200 level course the entirety of which was taught by one person. However, since the demand for this course was quite high we usually presented it in two separate sections during a given semester. Normally I taught one section while a part time faculty by the name of Barbra Burge taught the other section since few of our regular faculty had the time or inclination to take on a whole course. As would be expected, Barbra and I coordinated with each other to make sure that all of the students were getting the same material, had similar exams, etc. I really enjoyed teaching this course and interacting with students who were still shopping around for a major.

The longer I taught at Kentucky, the more solidified my understanding of the body as an integrated whole became. When viewing the body in such a light it becomes quite evident that there is no such thing as an isolated organ system, as many text books and courses, ours included, would have you believe. The divisions of the body into functional organ systems is simply a construct of those who write physiology text books, of which I admit to being guilty having authored text books on the cardiovascular and cardiopulmonary “systems”.

My learning curve on how the body really works, and hence how physiology should be taught, began early on in my career when I talked with colleagues at annual meetings of the American Physiological Society who also questioned how physiology was taught as well as what was taught. The American Physiological Society (APS) is a rather large organization divided into sections in accordance to members interests. Since my main interest was in teaching physiology, I joined the teaching section of APS whose members were not only interested in teaching, but as well how health sciences could best be taught.

The education related activities that my teaching section colleagues and I engaged in for many years generally fell into two categories: 1) what we teach, and 2) how we teach. The what we teach involved gradually moving classroom teaching and text books away from the rather simplistic organ system approach toward the more complex, but accurate, interaction and integration of all body system and components. The how we teach aspect was based on a simple mantra – “teaching does not occur unless the student learns”. Accordingly, a major effort of educators in all disciplines, including physiology, has for many years been to determine how students best learn. To summarize decades of research on the learning process, it can be shown that the more involved a student is in their own learning process, the better they learn. Accordingly, my own education research, as well as that of many others, has been in the area of



what is known as “active learning” which basically is anything that involves the student doing more than just sitting and taking notes during a lecture.

The statement in the above paragraph of “my own education research” is a bit misleading, because I rarely did any of this stuff alone. Quite a bit of my activities in this realm were collaborative in nature involving working with teaching section colleagues, in particular a group of us who organized under the self-named banner titled “the Physiology Education Research Consortium”, or PERC for short. We called ourselves “percolators”. In addition to having a good time contributing to health science education, we percolators became life-long friends who still keep in touch on occasion.

Although I remain friends with the percolators, I no longer do much, if anything, in the area of how we teach. By contrast the what we teach component of my career in education is still keeping me occupied as I am now into my eighth decade of life. A rather dubious milestone if there ever was such a thing. For the past several years I have been giving presentations to senior citizens in the Phoenix metropolitan area, known affectionally as “the valley”. These have included various topics in human biology (a more modern term for physiology) in which I strive to bring my audiences up to date on current understandings of how the body works. However, this requires that I keep up with current developments in human biology, something that I enjoy doing and which keeps my aging mind from going to mush.

To get back to my life at the University of Kentucky, the teaching opportunities that I found there extended well beyond the Lexington campus. The first of these occurred in the 1980s when I was asked to take the place of a retired faculty who had been teaching a section of our 400 level general course given to masters level nursing students at the Mary Breckenridge school of frontier nursing. This small, but high-quality school was located in the Appalachian coal mining town of Hyden, KY situated about 100 miles south-east of Lexington. These students all had nursing experience in remote parts of the world including several African countries, and Native American nations all over the west including as far away as Alaska. They were attending the school of frontier nursing to work toward a Nurse Practitioners degree, which would allow them to continue frontier nursing somewhere with much more independence and flexibility. Because of their experiences in the health profession, and because they were older than most students who I had taught up to that point (late 20s to mid 30s), we interacted more as colleagues than we did with the usual student-teacher relationship.

My experience at Hyden lasted for several years and allowed me to fine tune my teaching skills, as well as enhancing my ability to interact with challenging students. These skills were to prove quite valuable, when one day I got a call from a former grad student, whose father was a missionary doctor in South Africa, asking me if I would, and could, spend at least six months teaching the inaugural course in Physiology to the first class of students at the newly developed Medical School at the University of Transkei in the town of Umtata, South Africa. His timing couldn't have been better. I had a sabbatical leave coming up for which I had not yet made plans, and so I immediately accepted.

At that time, the late 1980s, South Africa was at the height of its apartheid wars in which the majority black native South Africans were rebelling against the segregation policies of the minority white government. Under the apartheid laws native South Africans were segregated into homelands the regions of which were based on historic tribal lands, Zulu, Xhosa, etc, similar to how Native American (Indian) reservations are set up in the United States. The blacks were deemed citizens of their respective homelands and not South Africa proper. Although they were given some autonomy, such as tribal governments and their own police force, in general the homelands were under the thumb of South African government, who provided such things as education facilities including the University of Transkei in the town of Umtata within the Transkei homeland of the Xhosa people.

Sensing that this was a unique once in a lifetime opportunity, Joyce joined me for this adventure. We arrived in Umtata in August which is winter time in the Southern Hemisphere. But it wasn't all that cold. In fact, the weather was quite nice, much like winters in Phoenix. The University of Transkei was to provide our housing, which for our first few months was at the local Holiday Inn. During the time we were at the Inn we met Jinny and Criss McConachie from North Carolina who ran an organization called African Medical Missions located on the grounds of Umtata General Hospital. Criss was a surgeon and Jinny a nurse who operated the long-term care facilities. Joyce went to work for Jenny in the TB ward where the Xhosa patients remained for the entirety of their daily treatment mainly because they lacked the means of getting to and from their villages every day. After their first few days of treatment the TB patients generally felt fine, and Joyce's job was in the realm of occupational therapy organizing activities to keep the patients busy. Although Joyce spoke very little Xhosa and her patients spoke very little English, they managed to communicate just fine and get a lot of things done, among which was to make crafts which they sold to provide the patients with a bit of income.

The McConachies operated several housing units on the hospital grounds for visiting doctors and such. When one of these became available Joyce and I moved in for the duration. We got to know the McConachie family quite well, Chris, Jenny, their two boys and their big Newfoundland dog who could splash most of the water out of their swimming pool in one jump. Although we frequently had meals with the McConachies, we did do some of our own cooking which required grocery shopping. This enabled us to interact with ordinary Xhosa people. In particular, we enjoyed buying fresh vegetables from farmers, mostly ladies, who sold them from sidewalk stands outside the supermarket. They were a warm and friendly bunch who were a big help in getting us familiar with things such as the South African currency, the rand. Frequently we would hand them a five-rand bill for something that costs less, but we couldn't figure out exactly how much. As we found out after becoming familiar with the rand, they always gave us back the correct change.

While still at the Holiday Inn, I got well into my teaching stint at the university. The course for which I was hired to teach was medical physiology for first year students. My teaching partner for this course was Vince Knight who hailed from Wales in the United Kingdom. Vince and I were from but two of the 15 or 16 countries represented on the University of Transkei faculty. Truly an international endeavor. I got to know quite a few of them during morning tea time

which occurred daily at precisely 10:00 AM in the faculty lounge. This was a British tradition as were most of the social aspects of the University. Daily chats with my international colleagues at tea time was a most enjoyable part of my status as a visiting faculty. Most of them expressed admiration for the United States and our President, who was George HW Bush at the time. I wonder what they would have thought of Donald Trump as President.

Vince was the head of the physiology department, and hence my boss, but we were a good team who got along just fine. Our class, the first for the new school, consisted of 24 native Africans, mostly Xhosa with some Zulu and about 50-50 male-female. Classroom presentations by Vince and I were initially lectures in which we presented information and students took notes, because that was the only type of learning that any of them had ever been exposed to from first grade on. But as time went on, we were able to incorporate a few active learning procedures in the classroom which complemented their hands-on learning in the student labs. The active learning exercises along with the labs enabled us to get to know the students quite well and vice versa. Almost daily I was bombarded with questions about the United States, including where (and what) is Kentucky?

Although the subject matter that Vince and I taught, physiology, was quite ordinary, the atmosphere in which we taught was anything but. This can best be conveyed by describing what our students were up against. As mentioned, this was during the height of the apartheid wars, in which bands of armed blacks were fighting the South African army. As such guns were everywhere (Joyce and I had them point at us a time or two) and the university campus teamed with armed guards in military uniforms.

However, most of the native Africans opposed the white government by non-military means. These included frequent strikes of the Transkei students in which the student leaders forbid anyone from attending classes or even study in the library. I can't claim that these strikes were peaceful, because frequently the students had clashes with the campus guards many of who were part of either the Transkei police or South African army. Additionally, the student leaders who called these strikes ruled with an iron fist, and any student caught breaking their rules (e.g., openly studying) was usually beaten.

In the midst of all this chaos, our med students, much to their credit, stayed as much out of the fray as possible. Additionally, many of them found hiding places to continue studying, often in my office or Vince's. We made a point of staying with them in case our protection might be needed. Admittedly, neither Vince or I would have been much protection against battle hardened 20-year-old "enforcers". We were counting on our status as college professors to calm any confrontations. Fortunately, it never came to that.

In spite of having to learn a difficult subject such as physiology within such a hostile environment, our students studied hard, even when they had to hide to do it, and never once did I hear any of them complain. Needless to say, I grew to admire these students very much. However, my admiration for them had a down side when I returned to teaching at Kentucky. Namely, I tended to turn a deaf ear to complaints from African-American Students, most of

which I thought were quite trivial in comparison to what my African students went through without once complaining.

After our stay in Umtata was up, Joyce and I went back to Kentucky, but returned to Africa a few months later for another semester at the University of Transkei for me and more in-patient therapy work at the hospital for Joyce. It was during this second stay that apartheid finally ended, Nelson Mandela was released from prison (we were there the day that happened), open elections were held and Mandela became the first majority President of South Africa. That total year (in two parts) that Joyce and I spent in South Africa was the most meaningful experience of our lives. We are both thankful that we had the opportunity to do it.

Soon after our adventure in South Africa, I was invited to participate in an education conference on teaching medical sciences in predominately black universities. The conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya and sponsored by the African and American Physiological Societies. Several of my teaching section buddies, including a few percolators, were there, and we got a lot done besides having a good time.

My teaching experiences in South Africa along with the Kenya conference gave me international as well as national recognition as an educator. With this recognition, I felt that it was time that I give up laboratory research in circulatory physiology and devote the remainder of my career to classroom teaching and education research, the latter of which I had been doing on the side for several years with PERC (the percolators). To expand my teaching experiences, I lined up opportunities to teach courses outside the College of Medicine. In addition to providing me with more teaching opportunities, the colleges in which I would be teaching would reimburse the department for my time, thus enabling me to continue contributing to the department coffers as I had been doing through research grants.

One of my first outside jobs was to serve as the associate director for biosciences in the then new doctoral program in gerontology, the study of the aging process. The director of the program, Graham Rowles, and the associate director for social sciences, Jan McCulloch were both sociologists. Accordingly, the program was heavily slanted toward the social sciences. But the three of us got along well and I really enjoyed teaching courses and mentoring graduate students with them.

Up to this point I had only considered how the human body itself operates as an integrate whole. I soon learned that considering the individual human body in and of itself is similar to studying an isolated organ system separate from the body. Actually, as I learned by considering physiology and sociality together, all of life is tied together in an integrative manner from single cells to societies to ecosystems.

What we have learned just over the past few decades is that the entirety of living entities, from single cells to ecosystems, operates in a coordinated integrated manner. The mechanism for this coordination is thought to be electromagnetic like signals which extend outside the body where they mediate extrasensory communication and coordination from organisms to societies to entire eco systems. The nature of these signals and how they might mediate integration up and down

the hierarchy of living systems is a subject of ongoing research, and I hope I'm still around to see the outcome.

As the saying goes, that's probably more about penguins than you really wanted to know. But, the possibility of coordination and integration of life from cells to ecosystems is a fascinating subject that I became aware of while working with the gerontology program at Kentucky. An entirely different area of class-room teaching outside the college of medicine that I most enjoyed doing was presenting basic human biology (i.e., physiology) to non-science majors.

The rationale for such courses was that to obtain a BA degree in about any subject, a student had to take so many hours of science, so many hours of humanities, so many hours of foreign language and so on. To address this requirement, programs were set up for students to take basic courses in subjects outside their major area of study.

I presented a course in human biology in two of these non-major programs. The first of these was a senior level course in the honors program. These were bright A students who were on the verge of graduation, but otherwise quite an admixture of personalities ranging from serious button-down to wild-child types. I remember two of the latter. One was a lady who smoked a lot. When we got into that issue during the course of the course, I asked her if she intended to quit, or at least cut down. She said no because the way medical science is going, she figured that by the time she needed new lungs or a heart, they could just swap out her old ones for new ones, much like replacing fuel injectors in an old car. I told her that it wasn't that simple, but I think my words fell on deaf ears, which she might have some day if she keeps smoking. The other wild-child was this guy who was an English major. When asking him what he planned to do with his degree. "Oh, nothing with that", he says. "I plan to own a bar. I'm just getting a degree because my parents wanted me to have one, and, who knows, it may come in handy someday." The last I heard he indeed did own a bar near campus.

Interesting though the senior honors course was, I only taught it a couple of times. The other non-major program I taught in was for first-semester freshmen just out of high school. I dearly loved teaching this course which I did every fall semester for the final 10 years of my academic career at Kentucky (2001 – 2011). The class was your usual admixture of students from the very bright to those who needed a lot of help. Coming right out of high school, at least half the class in a given semester had not declared a major. Those who knew what their major subject would be ranged all over the map from theater, to music, to journalism to education to business and economics. One of the satisfactions I got from this course was that by the end of a semester a number of the undeclared students stated that they wanted to major in some form of science or health care.

The students in my senior level course all had a major and were taking my course in order to fill out a requirement. As such, they were OK, but not particularly into the subject matter. By contrast, the freshmen were very curious about the subject matter of the course (human biology), readily participated in discussions and consistently came up with thoughtful questions. Most impressive was the fact that they worked hard to understand difficult subjects, which a lot of physiology is, and in particular would be to a theater major. I got a lot of deer in the headlights

looks a lot of times. When this happened, all too frequently, my years of experience would kick in and quickly enable me to find another way to explain something. In meetings of program faculty, I learned that this was a common problem which we brainstormed on different ways to explain things for second and third times. I found these meetings and our faculty brainstorming to be quite helpful. On this note, one of the things I enjoyed about teaching in this program was getting to know and work with faculty all over campus. Additionally, I enjoyed that these classes took place on the main campus, not at the medical center where most of my classes had taken place. The campus atmosphere made me feel more like a “real” college prof than did the med center environment. I enjoyed not just being on campus, but as well, frequenting the coffee shops in the student union where I held most of my one-on-one conferences with students. I found this setting to be much more conducive to relaxed and open interaction with students than the usual, but stoic, environment of an office, which wasn’t going to work with this bunch given that my office was at the med center, about a mile away from the main campus. But for me, the walks from the med center to campus and back turned out to be good exercise.

An aspect of both the senior and freshman level non-major programs was that grading was by way of essays written outside of class. We did not have such things as multiple choice exams because, as lots of studies from educators have shown, multiple choice exams produce multiple choice minds. We wanted these students to be able to research a subject and write about it, not pick answers from a list of possible choices. All the latter ends up doing is training students in testmanship, which falls short of them actually learning anything.

The students in my senior level course were all pass masters at essay writing, and most were quite good at it. So, while they learned quite a bit by researching a subject and writing about it, their essays were fairly easy to grade. I occasionally gave a B on a paper for lack of effort, but the quality of their writing was always first class. As such I am reasonably sure that I only gave “A”s as final grades to this bunch.

The students in my freshman level course were another matter. They all seemed bright enough to be in college but after their first essay I found that they were all over the map in not only writing skills but also in their use of basic English grammar. Some of them, which I christened the “Pulitzer Prize” bunch could write better than I could as well as better than any of my seniors. While others hardly knew the difference between a subject and a verb, if even that much. Accordingly, much to the chagrins of the Pulitzer Prize bunch, considerable class time was spent going over basic writing skills, how to adequately research a topic and how to properly do referencing. It turned out that even the Pulitzer Prize bunch didn’t know all that much about research and referencing. For example, one of them asked if you could reference Wikipedia. That led to a discussion about the difference between primary and secondary sources, Wikipedia being the latter. So, if a paper called for primary sources, no you couldn’t use a secondary source like Wikipedia, but otherwise that was OK so long as you let the reader know that your source came from a secondary source.

Since by 2001, when I started teaching the freshman class, the world was getting into the information age, the vast majority of University of Kentucky students had computers or easy access to one, such as any number available in the main library. Accordingly, students were

required to submit essays electronically via a program provided by the university for just such things. However, like any out-of-class assignment, these essays did have deadlines so grading could be done and grades recorded before the end of a semester. Deadlines for assignments in both the senior and freshman programs were arrived at via common agreement between students and faculty. Nonetheless, we inevitably had students who didn't make deadlines and all too frequently had rather bizarre excuses. One of my fellow teachers in the freshman program said that he had one kid whose grandmother died three times in the same semester. But the piece-de-resistance in the excuse department came from one of my students who over coffee at the student union tried to explain to me why he missed the deadline. I asked him if he had done the essay electronically. "Yes I did", he says. "Well why couldn't you send it", I asked. "Well you see", he says, "I wrote it on one of these new miniature computers. I think they're called tablets." "That's right", I responded. "But you can send stuff from a tablet", says I. "So, what was the problem?" "Well you see", he says again, "we have this new puppy at home (he still lived with his parents) who loves to play with squeaky toys. I had the speaker on my tablet turned up to where it made noise just about any time I touched it. The puppy became quite fascinated with it, and so I couldn't finish the essay because (are you ready for this) *the dog ate my computer.*"

