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Eight Ways of Saying Infinity: A collection of friction poetry and friction stories

Wayne D. Hetzler

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**EIGHT
ANOTHER WAY OF SAYING
INFINITY**

A collection of friction poetry and friction stories

Wayne D. Hetzler M.B.A., M.Ed.

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Lindenwood University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Fine Arts

ABSTRACT

This culminating project contains sixteen friction poems and sixteen friction stories. The format places the poems first, followed by the story. The story and the poetry are matched. The poems are not written to tell the story. They are written to strike an image, a friction image. The reader supplies lubrication as required.

The stories take the reader on a trip that lubricates the story to filet out the imagery. The author writes about incidents that have occurred during his life. Simple stories, about eating a potato chip, or rolling up your senile grandmother in a carpet. The writer solves several of the mysteries of life. Why there are ten hotdogs to a pack and buns are eight to a pack. If you are from Wright City how do you ask an attractive young lady where she is from. Is a human female able to pee forty feet with any accuracy? Does fresh snow lie? Why Charlie Manson smells so bad.

The collection features stories about birth and death and everything in-between. The writer covers birth in a skinny Persian hospital. In one story we meet the plate glass preacher in a hospital burn center. In another we attend a Scottish funeral and wake.

World travel is written into the stories. The writer discusses sperm counting techniques in a military hospital in Japan; the repercussions of "whoring" while armed with bad whiskey in Ubon, Thailand; the staffing of harems in Persia.

The stories are told from the viewpoint of a four year old and ramp up along a spectrum of fifty years some dealing with a grouchy peckerwood character. In all of the stories the reader will be presented with learning. Either the main character is learning something or is attempting to pass on acquired knowledge or skills. The writer explains new concepts: merge learning, and myth merging. The writer also covers every day subjects. What the hell is an acre? Why is George Washington called *the link*? The writer promises his readers that they will learn something. He does not promise what it will be or when it will happen.

Many questions are answered by the writer in this collection. Is haggis really food? How agile is an elk? How do aviators get down? Why men have two hands? Why a baby's first word is usually "baba."

The number eight is the theme for this culminating project. The writer's lucky number is eight. The writer's unlucky number is eight. It's a number that works both ways, positive and negative. It's a lazy eight. This is easy to visualize think of two writer's hammocks facing each other joined by two other opposed facing poet's hammocks. That wasn't easy to visualize. Take a minute and draw it out. How about the symbol for infinity it appears as an eight on its side taking a writer's pause. The lazy eight, without the writer/poet lying in the hammock.

If any of the resulting friction poetry and friction stories are so well matched that the reader can't determine which came first, the poetry or the story, or the story or the poetry, the writer got lucky using his number, which of course is infinity.

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COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY

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Adjunct Associate Professor Glenn Irwin

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Gerry Brodeur our family writer and poet was my inspiration to become a writer. Gerry's early poetry was written on the ceiling in student apartment clusters outside of the University of South Florida.

We served together in the United States Air Force. The countries and places I visit in my stories, Gerry was there. We shared many adventures, and learned from each other. He could create beautiful poetry. He captured images, impressions and feelings from the simplest parts of life. He was a "Capture Poet." We were very competitive at work, in sports, baking the perfect loaf of bread-everything. I didn't compete with Gerry in writing.

Gerry became a member of our family when he married my sister. He became my brother. The insidious disease cancer killed Gerry.

At his funeral one of the testimonials was; *when Gerry borrowed something from you it came back better*. I borrowed thoughts from Gerry in my writing and I worked with them. I tried to make them better. Gerry would be a gentle judge.

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INTRODUCTION

The first word in this Culminating Project is “eight.” The last word is “eight.” Readers like to know that the writer has established a logical system. Eight is my system. Is the order set up with the first and early stories as the start? No. Is the logic behind the arrangement of these stories and poetry themed? No. It is friction writing. Friction is not a bad thing. It will warm you up.

The writer is a good friend of the number eight. All of his children (three) were born on the eighth. The writer joined the USAF on the eighth, got out on the eighth, got married on the eighth. Sometimes, it’s not so good. The writer got divorced on the eighth, and was laid off from his favorite job on the eighth. When the eighth rolls around, he is ready.

The poetry featured is lean or skinny friction poetry. To obtain the imagery and flow in the poetry just add in any lubrication words as required to obtain the result desired.

The stories in this collection are what the writer calls “Friction” writings. The stories will rub the reader in such a way that generates the warming effect of friction.

As a writer I’m not totally satisfied with my style of writing. I’m presenting to you the reader *what I got*. These stories all have a basis of truth to them. When I talk about Japan, Thailand, Germany, Iran or any country, I was there. I

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wasn't on a tourist bus passing through. I lived and worked with the native people.

In several of my writing classes the Professor stated, "Write like you speak." I wrote these magic words on the cover of my class notebook. I write like I speak. If you wish to confirm this, stop by and hear some myth merging in Boschertown.

My favorite writers are (ODG) old dead guys. I enjoyed reading Isaac Asimov because you always learn something. I enjoyed reading Harry Harrison because he was the first humorous science fiction writer. Hemingway was a hell of a fisherman so I like him. Faulkner was a great storyteller that didn't use very many periods, so he is a favorite. My favorite poet is unknown, his name is Gerry Brodeur. He was a capture poet. He could watch a fish swim and capture the total swim-by. I don't read as much as I used too. As I was sliding down the back side of the reading bell curve I jumped to the writing curve.

The first story and matching poem was written about a communications misunderstanding between a father and son. The story starts with a young lad being chased by a large and aggressive chicken. His only safe haven is the barn. His mother's solution to the problem is death to the chicken. The father accepts the crime and hides the killing of *his* father's favorite chicken. He shows his son that all is safe when you're with dad. This creates a problem for the son because the chicken has been eliminated plus the added attraction the son knew he was

safe in the barn. The father feels that the dark depths of the barn are scary to his son. The son pulls away from his father's hands in his first show of manly strength.

The son returns to the barn as an adult, which he now views as a work of art and opportunity to make some quick money. The father does not share this view. The father burns down the barn (if you do not know what a firestorm is you should read about General Curtis LeMay or about Dresden, Germany) rather than sharing in the art and future money. The son never questions his father's decision, and helps him solve his current problem of roasting hotdogs in a firestorm.

"BaBa" is a story that takes place in Iran. The writer spent three years in Iran and this story depicts the differences in the thinking, religion and mores of the Persian people. The main character in the story is a confused young lad who has overheard his father telling stories that he was switched at birth. He refuses to stand up for the American flag in high school assembly and is expelled.

The father relates the story as best as he can remember. The mother is shown as just delivering a baby. The father thinks his baby could have been taken but is unsure. The mother knows she had a baby, and is not leaving the hospital without one. She doesn't care about the sex or origin of the wiped up body fluids of the newborn, she just wants a baby. The father faces a system and people he doesn't understand armed with an inability to speak their language. He then attempts to

bond with a child the hospital selected to shut up the screaming American woman that wants a baby. Any baby will do. He doesn't know if he is the father, he doesn't know if his wife is the mother.

In the "Plate Glass Preacher" we learn about a preacher of pain. The writer has a 1/3-1/6-666 theory about Preachers. About one third of them are actually God fearing good people. One sixth are womanizers, one sixth are sexual perverts, one sixth are thieves, the remaining one sixth are preachers of pain. This story is about a preacher of pain, "The Plate Glass Preacher."

Pain preaching is a retirement type of job. The stereotype of the successful pain preacher is someone who has been a professional sinner for thirty years. He realizes that he is headed to hell, so he decides to change his life style (truck driver) and settle down. He buys a Doctor of Theology Degree from a web site approved program. The new Ph.D. of Pain visits the local religious book store and buys the master set of sample sermons and services. He gets the deluxe version with actual sermons on CD's, each sermon comes with the recommended prayers and songs to sing as you pass the offering plate. It's tax free.

Pain brings out the true strength of the human spirit. The preacher of pain is not the main character- pain is. The preacher of pain amplifies the pain cycle for Jimmy, who has lost his six year old son after a stupid gun shop explosion. He is told by the medical staff that his son's death is a natural re-enactment to the trauma of the event. The preacher of pain sings a different death song to Jimmy.

The death tidal forces in the poem, "Tidal Death Dance" take everyone except Jimmy's best friend with the next lunar cycle. He fights on, loses his friends, and fights on. The story is told through his older brother. His older brother protects him from the preacher of pain and the nurse of pain. The story ends with the protecting older brother refusing to help his injured brother in a simple but painful task

"Potato Chips with the Cooties," was generated by a class requirement to write about early memories. The writer remembers picnics as a young lad at his grandfather's. In an area called the low grounds. The writer attempts to tie together a string of events where his main character's two grandfathers could have met, but didn't. Both of these grandfathers had been war veterans and both of them had been hungry in their life. The Scottish grandfather had been at risk of starvation, but he was good at rock fishing.

The grandson meets a cootie, who knows about starving and survival. The cootie shares his precious food that he brought with him in a slow and deliberate manner that places a value on each shared item. The young lad believes that he knows about sharing, as he wants to get his brother and cousin in on the potato chips. He doesn't understand the cootie, but he will. His grandfathers can explain it to him.

"Fresh Snow Don't Lie" and "Wright City" were pieces that were fun to write. The writer worked in the woods as a woodcutter (peckerwood) for two winters.

These are the types of characters (Yahoos) that you will meet if you decide to cut wood to pay your bills. The showing of the "tittie" and the miscommunication involved gave the story a good place to end. The writer didn't select the easy route.

This story is about a young lady that learns a lot about herself and life value systems. She is mentored by a very unlikely person "The peckerwood." The peckerwood teaches using little stories with a lesson, as he makes the long drive to the cutting site. She spends an entire day alone in the woods with the peckerwood. Her graduation ceremony from Screw U. the peckerwood school of hard knocks takes place at the Wright City Tavern. The peckerwood is fully paid for his training.

"Haggis is sweet." This story is about the success of a young man who was starving, using rocks to fish with. He became a rock farmer, and then worked his way to power plant engineer, then manager. He never returned to his birth country, Scotland, because it tried to kill him. His wife brought the symbol of his origin, Scottish national food, "Haggis", to him. Scotland's haggis was dangerous and not his friend.

"Pontoon Poker" is the result of camping out in a little pup tent in the side yard as a young lad. Interesting events happened in the neighborhood while the other kids were indoor sleeping. Fred is shown as an interesting character, with good hands. He hopes to be accepted into the neighborhood girls' card party,

while their husbands and his wife are at work. He promises good hands for everyone.

The writer has a wooden canoe collection, a Thompson Bros. and two Old Towns. The writer is a canoe builder. He uses five different native woods in the construction. The canoe is called the "Custom Curley," named after his grandfather, a renowned canoeist. He also made the sassafras "Expedition" canoe paddle for the 2004 Corp. of Discovery that toured the country with the 1804 keelboat replica. "Good Entry Place" is about a seduction canoe trip. The main character hopes to thaw out the ice queen with natural paddling. He warms her up, makes a vow, and reaps his chosen reward. She wants to remember the "Good Entry Place." He knows it will never be the same.

"Smart Girl Today" shows the learning abilities of young ladies. This writer develops a rapid learning technique he calls, "Merge Learning." The author is an educator, has taught company schools, foreign adults, high school students, and at the University level. Using the merge learning theory, the teacher must present (merge) new material to the young learner to match their attention span. Their attention span is based on their age. Ten years old, ten minutes. Two years old two minutes. In the story the writer covers a sample training "Merge Learning" session with an 18 month old baby girl.

"Tavern Courtesy Lap" and "Myth Merging in Boschertown," are written about the interaction between three bar patrons (regulars) and a peckerwood

(woodcutter) who appears every day for one beer and attempts to educate (bullshit) the three regulars. He thinks he is a successful teacher, but he never is.

“Full Moon” and “Agile Elk Dances” were brought together by a crazy dream the writer had. He combined this with parts of an actual happening, on devil’s knob hill. “Full Moon” was written first, just the first four lines. The writer expanded the next two stanzas in parallel and discovered that the poem could be read up and down, left to right and sideways. This poem is the first poem ever written by the writer.

Agile Elk becomes a moon light dancer, but he doesn’t understand it. He finds out that his dance is appreciated. He removes himself from the moon rays and returns to reality hoping for more appreciation.

“The Strong Aviator” is a story written with an attempt to conceal the fact that it was about a goose. After numerous rewrites, the voice of the critics called the goose “Wilbur.” He became a goose. The end result still has a generous portion of aviation lingo in it. The writer is a certified aircraft mechanic, electrician and commercial and instrument pilot. His aircraft was sold because Elizabeth Dole as Transportation Secretary hired 10,000 lawyers to ruin private aviation in the United States. The writer still admires the “Victor” formation mid-air shifting as the Canadian honkers capture the sky.

“Family care” is written about a father caring for and raising his family, compared to a rural river people who are caring for the mother of their house and

family. The mother had selected the stones that build the house and cemented them in place by hand. Her caretaker son does not know that she is suffering from Alzheimer's. He provides her with his best care techniques.

The other father is faced with how to handle a situation with a very scary trespassing thief that "Looks like Charlie Manson." He wants to do what is correct as a lesson in life skills for his family. But this is not what is suggested by the police. His son shows that he can make family decisions. The father lowers his standards to protect his family from the thief and coward Charlie.

In the "Perfect Funeral" the poem is about a Scottish woman's funeral. A perfect day is created so that her grandsons could carry and personally bury her instead of the earth gouging, yellow rusting case backhoe lurking in the background. The viewpoint is that of her oldest son, who can't/won't help and stays at the cemetery chapel. Cemetery diggers become sensitive enablers as they supply the grandsons with ropes and shovels, making each one an equal participant.

The story about the "Perfect Funeral" takes place at the wake after the funeral. We learn what happened. We also learn that Angus and his much older sister had a relationship that was much closer than the normal brother and sister. Angus has suffered through seeing his sister, in a way that he never wanted to. This is affecting his memories of his sister. An ex-member of the family is at the wake, to regain items off the wall of the deceased. Her ex-husband realizes she is out of

control and requests help from the grandsons. They have proven that they can step into leadership positions in the family.

“Dengue Fever” is a story about the adventures of a young lad, a war fighter, given his first opportunity to become a serious sinner. The writer has spent five years in the orient. His first exposure was as a young two striper (E-3) in the Air Force, stationed at the then secret base in Ubon, Thailand. His adventures include, illegally crossing the Makong River into Laos. Attending a rocket festival in a communist village in northwestern Thailand. He was shuttled out of Camh Rahn Bay, Viet Nam on a C-130 with two bad engines (AAA hit on takeoff) on the same side. The undesirable troublemaker is returned to Thailand in a wing low skid. It became his lucky day; he arrived at the base on apple day. The Thai women love apples. They would do anything for an apple. Their cultural mores (Buddhism) require that they burn a few candles if they are sinning. The writer kept them supplied with apples and candles.

The young sinner has contacted a strange disease. He can't eat. He is very hungry, but can't eat. He goes to the chow hall daily for all three meals. He begs the cooks for additional food. He sits and looks at his food. He can't force one mouthful down. The young lad has always had a powerful appetite. The doctor after five days and the lad losing ten pounds diagnoses, Dengue Fever. The doctor warns the young airman that he is leading a bad lifestyle and needs to

change. The writer takes the reader back to how it all started and how an all American boy got in such a bad situation.

The personnel at the base do not know he exists because he never signed in. He starts his serious sinning immediately. He spends the night with a hooker in the worst part of the off-limits area. This "A" frame area is off-limits because when hookers get horrible diseases and wish to pursue their chosen trade, they work the "A" frame. It cost twenty five cents to gain exposure to their hidden diseases.

The young sinner survives unaffected by the early warnings, and is thinking about more sinning. The next warning is issued with a death touch from the grim reaper. The young lad understands the warning, and celebrates life with more sinning. He is permanently marked by the grim reaper, so he keeps the marking modified, as he continues to sin. Dengue Fever becomes his next life style warning. It is probably not going to work for this serious sinner.

"Hands" is about an event that everyone thinks, "That's the problem?" The "Hands" man has an opportunity to solve a complex aviation problem and reap the rewards of his logical thinking. This is too easy a solution and the "Hands" man has too much fun with his hands showing the simplicity of noticing that our hands are the same but different. The other people in the story learn how to use their hands. This erodes the fun factor. This story was also a way to end the culminating project with a "handmade" lazy eight.

Safe In A Barnstorm

Safe, I didn't need
To hold father's hand.

Safe in a firestorm,
Sacrifice---accepted.

Safe, we
Fed and drank.
The barnstorm tamed,
Earth and air our ally.

Big Chicken

What I remember about the big chicken was that he was bigger than me. I was so young that I walked a lot like the chicken. I was slightly faster in a full run. My escape route from the yard rooster was to run into the barn. The barn was not a part of the rooster's domain. I was safe.

My mother's solution to my being chased by the yard rooster was to team up with my aunt Christine who was a North Carolina red dirt runner (she was from the lowlands, red dirt, scrub pine) and kill the rooster. Mom was armed with an axe. My aunt had a bow and arrow. She was the long range silent killer. The end result was my mom pumping an axe at the swinging chicken. The chicken was tied by its legs to the clothesline with an arrow sticking through it, eye dodging the axe. Dad came home and introduced mom to the benefits of a chopping block. He also buried the rooster, its head and the arrow. The bird was too tough to eat. It was my grandfather's prize rooster, meaner than our yard dogs.

My father thought that I was afraid of a chicken. Dad took me by the hand and led me through the yard, showing me how safe it really was. Our tour ended in front of the barn. The barn was a two-story garage with two bays and lean on type structures on three sides. It was built of white oak boards twelve inches

wide, one inch thick and two stories long. This was old growth timber, FAS lumber, cut with a circular saw. I didn't know this at the time because of my youth. I do remember that this was the only time I ever held my fathers hand. They were rough and calloused, strong. He could loosen screws with his fingernails. I felt safe.

I returned as an adult and pulled a loose board off the barn. The wood had a gray crystallized patina. I ran it though the neighbor's (Culp's) planer. The wood was beautiful. I made a dashboard for a 1960 MGA out of it. I took several pieces of the wood to a Connecticut artist, (ex-brother-in-law). I asked him about making barn paintings on them. He informed me he would buy all the barn boards I could bring him. I asked him to make me a painting of my barn. He didn't seem too interested in painting a tall garage with attached rabbit pens and chicken coops.

I talked to my dad about buying the old barn. Not for sale. It was ready to fall down and was too dangerous to use, but he wouldn't sell it. He said that he would rather pull it down, burn it and roast a few hotdogs and drink some beer.

The next day, from my brother's house I spotted a fire above the trees at dad's place. It's about a quarter mile away. I ran down. The barn was a furious fire fueled with virgin dry oak. Dad had a thirty-foot long hotdog stick complete with impaled hotdog. He advanced on the fire wearing a welding mask and gloves. As he moved closer the hotdog started to swell, then split, then disappeared/explored.

Dad retreated, removed the mask and wanted to know what the hell happened to his hotdog.

I answered his question and asked him "Where in the hell did you find a hotdog stick thirty foot long?" It took several exploding hot dogs to figure out how to cook them. When the fire trucks arrived we were both lying on the ground side by side advancing our hotdogs through the cool air that was feeding the "Firestorm." We cooked our hotdogs by rotating them as the top cooked, or upside down. Dad ran off the firefighters, we were both safe.

I never asked my Father why he burnt down the barn. I knew that his father had built it. I remember that's where I told him- as a kid- he didn't have to hold my hand anymore, but never told him why.

We discussed firestorms and societies most perplexing puzzle: Why there are 10 hotdogs to a pack and buns are loaded eight to a pack.

We sat, on the ground, with a cool wind bracing our backs, facing the firestorm and drank fast. No one likes hot beer.

BaBa Baby

Childbirth, In a skinny

Persian, Hospital

Two women, birth speaking

Mother talk, child birth chatter.

Mother's lamentation,

Rings true.

"I'm not leaving

Without a baby"

Mother, admires feeding breast.

"He's a good eater"

Father admires breast.

"That's my boy"

"Look at him go"

Head butting

Increases the flow.

Ba-Ba

“Baba is a Farsi word. In the Middle East it’s the universal word for Father.”

Fatherhood started in a one stall, one urinal, men’s room in the medical clinic at Yokota AFB, Japan. I was paying thirteen dollars to have a sperm count performed. I arrived amid all of the dependents with snot-dammed by upper lips, trying to get out of school. Young mothers everywhere. I was told to hand my paper work to the receptionist and ask for a sterile container. Professionals would handle everything.

I had asked the Doctor if I could perform the sperm check functions in the comfort of my straw home and bring the results to the clinic. I let them know I lived two minutes from the gate.

“No.”

“Could I bring my wife with me to the clinic for a little help?”

“NO.”

“Look at my hand Doc., its not friendly any more, it’s mad at me since I got married, it used to be my best friend.”

“NO.”

“Okay, but I’m risking carpal tunnel and zits.”

The first thing the girl at the desk said was. “What are you here for?”

“Read the note.” I said. “I’m supposed to ask you for a sterile bottle.”

Nurse in a loud voice. “What size? We have different sizes.”

I had all the young mothers’ attention in the room. They all wanted to know my test size.

“Extra large.” I proudly announced. This comment earned me a few snickers from the other nurses.

The nurse announced, “Sperm count. You’re here for a sperm count, you don’t need extra large, but you might need this.” I left meekly scanning for the hallway restroom with my little sterile bottle and a copy of Playboy magazine in hand.

I could hear the snot sniffers asking their mothers, “What’s a sperm count?” I should have brought a Playboy from home; the good pictures were stuck together in the clinic issue.

The men’s room was occupied. Someone was locked in the lone stall, moaning and groaning, then singing to his manhood. Sounded like he had some serious problems. I locked us in. The occupant of the toilet stall demanded some privacy.

“Sounds like you got cooperation problems, do you want to borrow the playboy I got out here?” I said, as I contemplated the semi-boxed-in urinal and one-hole sink.

“Hell No. I want privacy; I have to pee in a bottle for a urinalysis. I can’t do anything with you out there breathing bad.”

“Open up and give me your bottle, I’ll solve your problems in ten seconds.” He opened the door. I grabbed the bottle from his hand and returned it with a good amber load, topped with a velocity-induced head.

“Here you go partner, this will pass any test.”

I entered the stall and set up my Playboy presentation. Since the Doc told me to abstain for one week I was ready to go. I actually bargained him down to three days with the acorn that turns into the mighty oak guarantee.

I returned my bottle to the lab area where I was greeted with, “Is this all you got?” as the desk nurse displayed my very essence to all the frowning lab nurses.

I had to explain to them that I was out of position, the bottle was too small. I got excited and bumped my crazy bone and missed. They liked the last excuse the best. I offered to produce some more, if they needed some to rub in around their eyes to eliminate wrinkles.

I became certified as a producer of high quality, top notch little wiggle tails. I had good body fluids going for me. I was now prepared to do my part as a Father.

For my bride to get pregnant she had to get a shot to ovulate, and chart her temperature every day. I was instructed to hit it on the temperature rise. At the critical moment I yelled out to the racing wiggle tails, “It’s a boy.” Of course I was right, since the male determines the sex. I had done my part; the wife could

now take care of everything else. When the lad turns sixteen, I buy him an old pick-up, load it up with beer, and throw in a hooker. He has a weekend to wreck the truck, get laid and drunk, or drunk and laid. My training for a son is based on American Indian Coyote learning.

When my bride decided she wanted a second kid, we were in Iran. She started the temperature chart routine. She used a rectal technique for checking her temperature. She shouldn't have fallen back asleep while checking herself. I gave her the old rapid roll and claimed my marital rights early one morning. I was really proud of myself as her screaming mounted. I was motivated; I had finally hit the right spot.

It was not a bad medical situation; the Middle East has the best proctologist's anywhere in the world. (Muslim men have some interesting issues on how the next prophet will be conceived.) My wife did something with goat yogurt to her backside to solve this medical problem.

The baby doctor's name was, Doctor Americas. He had changed his name to attract American customers. It was a tough delivery; the baby was lodged in the sunny side up position. The doctor was a busy guy. An Iranian woman was giving birth at the same time. Finally the doctor and several assistants using forceps, a suction cup and some pushing, popped the little joker out of its lair.

Early the same morning the Iranian woman was leaving. I happened to be standing by the elevator as she turned the corner. She had a baby all wrapped up

within her chador. I made the goo goo goofy sounds that new fathers make and pulled back her chador. She backed up. She didn't want me to see the baby. She moved fast for a woman who had just dumped a kid. She stepped into the elevator that I had ordered and disappeared with my blonde headed, blue eyed, baby girl. I knew the baby girl was mine because at the critical moment I had yelled, "It's a girl."

I hadn't seen our baby. I hadn't talked to my wife. I rushed to her room, woke her up and asked if she had seen our baby. She hadn't. I told her I thought the Iranian woman delivering the same time as her had stolen our baby. She started screaming, "I want my baby, and I want my baby. I'm not leaving this hospital without a baby."

I ran down eleven flights of stairs faster then they had ever been run. I was swinging across and over, across and over. I was only hitting about two steps. I arrived in the lobby, a foreign Father, looking for a baby. I ran out into the street. I saw black chadors everywhere. I ran back inside, saw black chador's everywhere. No one to hear my cry, "Help." Persian baby thieves in black chadors don't speak English.

I baby-watched the elevator for a while and then trudged up the steps. I admired my parallel footprints slammed in the dust. I hadn't figured out what to say by the eleventh floor.

I stepped into the wife's room. She was cradling a Persian eating machine.

“You got one.”

She said. “They brought me a baby.”

“What did you end up with?”

“A boy, he’s a good eater.”

“Damn, that’s *my boy*, look at him go.” He had already discovered he could increase the milk flow by head butting his mother’s breast.

“Let me hold my Son, if you can pry him loose.”

“I want to go home, get us out of here.” I picked up my family unit, still hooked up, and carried them to the car. I left the Tupperware-tuna salad, in the little refrigerator that cost an extra 100 rials a day.

Our new son’s first words were, “Ba-ba.” I think that our landlord caused this; he came to visit him every day. He kept telling me my son was an Iranian baby, and whispered, “Baba” in his ear. My landlord owned five houses and a business. He always greeted everyone with, “I am a poor man.” This is because he had five daughters. The daughters and mother were weaving Persian carpets on six looms. Day and night labor building a carpet dowry to marry off the oldest daughter. She was bone ugly. Her dowry was at four hundred thousand dollars in carpets with no takers. Silk highlights wouldn’t help that girl.

I asked the landlord about Iranian women giving birth to blonde haired blue-eyed girls. He proudly stated that Iranians weren’t Arabs. They were Aryans. He also told me that blonde hair/blue eyes were very rare and desirable. The girls

could be sold to rich Saudis for over 140,000 dollars. The younger they were the more you could get. They would spend their life in a harem, well maintained.

My son is an Iranian and an American. He has dual citizenship. I have warned him to never go back to his country of origin where they would put him in the Iranian Army.

I'm sure that I'm his father since he called out "Baba" as his first words, but I'm not sure who his mother is. I hope my baby girl is doing okay. I'd go back and look for her but black chador's all look the same.

Tidal Death Dance

Gun shop explosion

13 gunners slung in snow

2 die, 11 live-- slow

Dancing, synchronized

Riding ripples in the tide

A son sinks, dies

One moon later

Death tides high

6 fade, 6 die.

The father lives

He's strong, opens

Cardboard milk cartons

With softball hands.

Plate Glass Preacher

Preaching Pain

Family phone calls that pull you out of a company training class are not good. The news that your brother and his son are probably going to die is a painful message. I flew home to Ohio from Texas. My brother's son didn't make it through the crisis reenactment, he was six years old.

The human body after a traumatic experience relives that experience twice. The first reenactment is 24 hours minus 2 minutes after the event. Tidal forces control us. The second re-enactment of the life-threatening event takes place 28 days later.

The nurses had told my mother and sisters all about the twenty-four hour cycle. They explained that doctors and nurses were all in attendance witnessing the death reenactment. They then told her that her son would face the same experience in a month and if he survived he would probably recover. I told my mother it's not a month it's four weeks, or twenty eight days. It's a lunar thing, a natural function of nature. Nurses say a month and mean four weeks. Two days are not forgotten.

Thirteen people were in the gun shop when it blew up. My brother, his son and my brother's best friend Denny were the farthest from the epicenter of the explosion. The dumb ass that started the explosion, using gunpowder as an ashtray, and his closest friend were vaporized as the walls blew down and the roof disappeared. Five more hunters and my brother's son died twenty-four hours later re-enacting the trauma. The four remaining had the hospital staff in attendance as they did their dance of death 28 days later. My brother and his best friend Denny danced together in time, my brother in Cleveland and Denny in Buffalo. The other two didn't complete the dance.

When I arrived at the Burn Center, I was warned that I wouldn't recognize my brother. He was allowed up for the first time to greet me. "That's your brother." A mummy approached with a swollen head, two small beady eyeholes, a mouth hole and huge white wrapped hands gripping softballs. I was warned but not ready. Jimmy knew what to do. I gently returned the hug to the burnt polar bear.

"Thanks for coming."

I coughed up, "I'm here."

"Help Mom and our sisters, they're not doing too good."

"Ok."

I returned to the glassed in partition area where my sisters and mother were waiting. My brother Donny had joined the family unit. I confessed that I

couldn't think of anything to say to Jimmy. But I knew that it was Jim, fluid swollen and wrapped.

I told my Mother, "Jim is concerned about you instead of himself."

I found out that my mother had only been able to see him once in the burn clinic section. There was a preacher in the room with my brother when my mother went in. He was a perched praying mantis on my brother's chest. When my brother saw my mother, he said, "Get this praying son of a bitch off of me." The preacher of pain grabbed his bible off of my brother's chest and exited the area. My mother did not tell me any of this before I saw Jimmy. My brother Donny chimed in, "That's why I wasn't here to see Jimmy. I was looking for that asshole preacher."

I said, "What in the hell did this asshole say?"

Mom said, "He was praying on Jimmy's chest, thanking the Lord for taking Jimmy's son, and that Jimmy was a serious sinner and needed to die."

"He's no man of God. Me and Donny will take care of this."

My bother Donny and I deployed from the seventh floor. "Preacher hunting." Anyone dressed in a stiff collar and carrying a bible was about to be faith tested to see if the Lord was with them. Our intentions were to have a "Preacher toss." I grab one arm my brother grabs the other arm and we fling the preacher into one of the floor length plate glass windows.

We visited every room starting on the seventh floor; saw a lot of interesting blurred scenes before security nabbed us on the third floor.

* * *

My brother Jimmy told me that the most painful period of his recovery was the daily saline soak and skin pull. Jimmy was strapped to a chair and lowered into a saline solution tank up to his lips. This softened the burnt skin, little ends would peel out. The burn nurse grabbed these skin curls and ripped them off with special stainless steel skin pliers. One nurse seemed to like using the skin-ripping pliers. I had her transferred after a talk with the burn Doctor. The same Doctor told me to not help my brother do anything when he ate. If I helped him he would get muscle atrophy in his hands and they would turn into claws. This happened to his buddy, "Denny the Claw."

The most painful period for me was when, Jimmy asked me to open a milk carton for him. I wouldn't do it. I sat and cried watching my brother fight cardboard with his burnt bandaged hands.

In any bad situation you hope that something good can be born. Out of the ashes of a burnt gun shop, the Cleveland hospital system has a new policy. A Preacher's identification is checked, they are not allowed to freely roam any areas. They sign in for the patient they are visiting. They obey the visiting hours. Preachers are banned from the burn clinic area totally. The only visitors allowed are family and friends.

Cootie Chips

"Ever eat a potato chip?"

The cootie asked.

No.

OK

Have

One.

He showed me,

Too big

Cuts your smile.

I remember

Eating potato chips

With the cootie

One chip, then

One chip.

Potato Chips with the Cooties

My Grandfather, Curley Hetzler was a dapper man. My other grandfather didn't like him; they did however have mutual respect for each other. Our family did not unite for any holidays or events. The annual Cootie picnic was hosted by my Grandpa Curley in the low grounds. The low ground had been a natural salt lick when first bought. Curley could sit on the hill under the big elms and watch all types of critters licking for salt, but the depression driven "Hoover" diggers dug out a new channel for the creek and ruined the salt lick marsh. It became the site for the Cootie picnic.

At the far end of the field is a large stone picnic fireplace, built by my grandfather for 100 plus people picnics. It had large kettles of turtle soup brewing over steel plates. The big pots for corn were built-in on each side. They were also used for the frying of the pikes from Lake Erie. Sometimes he had to buy big tins of fish if the fishing was bad. People still remembered he had fed them carp in bad years. They were actually mad because that didn't know it was carp.

The shack was my favorite place at Grandpa's. It was an open sided Adirondack type of building. We, my brothers and cousins were allowed to sleep out in it during the summer. We felt like seasoned outdoorsmen.

The cootie menu was turtle soup, corn on the cob, fried fish, boiled new potatoes. Grandpa supplied everything. He grew the potatoes, he caught the fish, and he grew the corn. The turtles were caught by the tail out of his canoe up Eagle Creek. He was a silent paddler. Grandpa would catch four barrels of snappers every year and sweeten them up with corn. I would climb up the grape arbor, which shaded them and toss in some grapes.

I didn't know what the cooties were all about until years later. I knew it had something to do with the VFW and the 40 and 8. During WW II prisoners of war captured by the Germans were loaded forty to a layer and eight high in the boxcars and hauled off to die in concentration camps. The survivors were half dead and bug infested; they had, "Cooties."

On the day of the cootie picnic I was meeting a lot of cooties. When I told them who I was they all had several Curley stories to tell me. I don't remember any of these stories, because of my youth, four almost five. They were probably about him standing on his head on bridges, or catching turtles by the tail. What I remember is eating potato chips for the first time. I wanted to get my brother and cousin involved; they were the best tasting picnic item on the menu.

One of the cootie friends had shared chips with me, carefully because they broke easily, one chip at a time. He ate all the large chips. He said they would cut my smile. Then they were gone.

One-year turtle hunting was slow: Grandpa Curley went down to the local power plant on the Mahoning River. They had a dam and below it a large flat rock area where turtles would sun themselves. They didn't let anyone on their property. The plant Manager was Angus Macaulay. He was a Scottish self-taught engineer. He had migrated from the Outer Hebrides, Isle of Lewis, Scotland, at the age of 17, because he was tired of starving.

Curley somehow got his canoe upstream through the rapids. He was a strong paddler and after snapping turtles. He started stalking and diving after big snappers. The plant guards notified the plant manager they were arresting a trespassing turtle thief if they could catch him. Angus Macaulay asked the guards, "What did the turtle snatcher say he was doing?"

They said, "He said he was getting turtles for the cooties."

My two grandfathers did not meet that day on the turtle rocks. Curley never knew who issued him a pass for all the turtles he wanted. The guards had been told "That's Curley Hetzler he makes a fine turtle soup, that he is willing to share with people who have been hungry in their life."

Fresh Snow Don't Lie

Spark-plug girl

Pelvis down

Squats---aims

Thrusts a round

Forty feet

Who would know.

Collects her bet

Honest, yellow snow.

Wright City

The last twenty-four hours of her life had been exciting enough to get her de-engaged and thrown in jail. Now she had to beg a ride for the pitiful job she had as a wood hauler. She had called in from jail trying to get her peckerwood boss to bail her out. He seemed interested in the story but wouldn't do the dollars. He told her if she was at the Flying J truck stop in the morning he would pick her up for work. He advised her to call relatives. They would help, even when they shouldn't.

Her sister dropped her off at the Flying J. She knew her peckerwood boss would be running later, he was always late. He pulled in with the smaller four-wheel drive loader truck with the huge winch. As he gassed up she asked him where the rest of the crew was. He didn't know. He hires a new crew every day. He calls the people he hires Yahoo's. He works their asses off all day and pays them in cash at the end of the day. On the way back, they always ask him to drop them off at some in route bar. They run in yelling "Yahoo." The next day they never show up, probably stuck to a bar floor in their crusty booze vomit, outlined in wood chips.

Her and her ex-best girlfriend had answered the peckerwood's ad. It read, "Hard work low pay." She was one of the few that ever repeated the wood hauling experience. He wanted to know how her truck driving girl friend was doing with

her bad back. She knew that he really liked her girlfriend. She was big, strong, ugly, and a hell of a truck driver.

When they called the peckerwood and asked if he hired women he had said. "I hire people who work. I don't care how they pee. I do have a company policy- advising employee's not to eat yellow snow." His next line was "Yeah, you don't have to be able to carve your name in fresh snow to haul wood." Her ex-girlfriend did all the talking. She said that she could pee with the best. She claimed forty feet with deadly accuracy. She practiced in her neighbors horseshoe pit, rusting out the stake. They got the job. When she told the Peckerwood she could drive a truck it was a crowning bonus.

The place where they were cutting was 500 acres of tops. If you haven't been around woodcutters, tops are the ends of the trees that the loggers leave behind. Woodcutters that cut tops are at the low end of the wood cutting social order; they "peck" around in the scraps left behind. They are called, "peckerwoods." The high end of the social order of woodworkers is the, "Bull Dick." The Bull Dick is the chief grader at the log yard.

She had made the mistake of asking the peckerwood why the top grader was called the Bull Dick. He told her how they had to scale and grade each log from the small end. The Scribner or Doyle log scale they used was originally scratched out on a Bull Dick walking cane. The Peckerwood said that he was going to make a Bull Dick cane but couldn't get any bulls to answer his ad.

The peckerwood was a walking talking wealth of knowledge about everything dumb. If he was so smart why was he out cutting wood instead of watching football on TV? She was learning a lot about things she didn't need to know.

Her ex-girlfriend's driving skills were tested her first day. The peckerwood asked her if she could keep up with him in a ¾ ton Ford with positraction. He had a 4/4 hardbody from hell with a 10,000 Lb.-worm drive winch on the special welded front pipe bumper. It was obvious that the winch was way more than needed. (It later broke the frame and pulled the truck apart) The peckerwood was very proud of his winch; he would say, "I like my winches and my wench's extra large."

"So what happened to your truck driving girlfriend?"

"Her back was never bad. I caught her in bed with her husband and my fiancé when you dropped me off early yesterday. That's why I called you from jail."

"Well, you wasted your money on that call. Why did you get thrown in jail? Is it against the law to not join up with a three way? To even it out." The peckerwood then offered the suggestion that perhaps they were doing some type of new wave team back massage calibration techniques.

"No, I told him I was out of their shit nest and was taking my TV with me. They didn't want to lose the TV. My ex-fiancé stated that the TV would not be going through the door as long as he was around and he was staying. I ran for the TV, grabbed it, and threw it through the big front window of the shitbox trailer we

shared.” She managed to smile knowing they wouldn’t be warm and cozy watching her TV.

“Good move.” Do you need some donuts for power before we blast out of here?

“No, I don’t need anything.”

She was a captive listener for the peckerwood. “Those three-way boys are losers. They are on drugs. What in the hell do you think was going on as they crisscrossed the country in their big rig.” One of the guys was always driving. Your girlfriend never drove. She was bugging the other driver in their mile a minute bedroom. You were engaged to someone in a three-way circus and you were the sideshow. Let’s go cut some wood. It soothes the soul.

The peckerwood was on a ten-mile roll of what a group of assholes her ex-friends were and had offered to kick their asses at least fifty times. They spotted a carload of teenage girls on the side of the gravel road. The girls had a front wheel drive Dodge Daytona off the curve and pointed at a bad angle. The Peckerwood slowed and rolled down his window.

“You girls picked a lousy parking spot. Is everyone ok?” They had run off the road on their way to school. They were concerned because their parents would be along shortly and they would be grounded for the rest of their lives. The peckerwood let the girls know that grounding is the stupidest punishment in

existence. He had never grounded his kids. Why torture yourself slowly, blast the dummies immediately and get on with life.

The peckerwood took over. He had everyone get out of the car, checked the brakes, put it in neutral. Hooked up his winch to the inside bumper bracket and pulled the car on to the road. The peckerwood was working the girls like an auto driving class. He explained everything he was doing and why it was important. He questioned the driver about her speed. When she didn't know he advised her to set up a progressive driving test program to calculate the top never exceed speed for the curve. Towards the end of his dialog, he detected in his thick head that they didn't understand why he was doing the training. The peckerwood explained that he had a daughter that was their age but he didn't have the opportunity to teach her.

She started thinking the peckerwood was a sweet and sensitive man. This is good because she would be in the woods alone with him all day.

As they slowed to forge the first gravel bed creek the peckerwood started on the same old story of winching out the jokers that sell the Watchtower newsletter. Four of them were stuck in the center of the creek with water swirling around their car. They asked for his help though open windows. The doors were still keeping the water out. The peckerwood said he could winch them out but someone would be getting wet feet and it wouldn't be him. They offered many solutions involving prayer for his feet to dry quickly. No one would leave the car.

The Yahoo with the peckerwood said he was having a bad year and if they all prayed for him he would wet walk in and hook up the winch.

The peckerwood warned the Yahoo about working all day with wet frozen feet. He let him know that they wouldn't be leaving the woods until the work was done. The Yahoo wanted the prayers bad. The peckerwood took over. He ordered the Watchtower people to render their prayer for this young dummy in advance. "Get to praying." He started grabbing big flat rocks and throwing them in a stepping stone pattern. They built a stone walkway to the car in about 5 minutes. The dry Christians were in prayer frenzy as the water started seeping into the car. The peckerwood handed the hook to the Yahoo. The winch was on free wheel. The Yahoo couldn't find the bumper bracket under the swirling water. The peckerwood said if he hooked it to the bumper that the bumper would be pulled off. The prayers shifted to finding the bumper bracket then the Yahoo fell in the creek and got totally wet.

That day the peckerwood worked the Yahoo so hard that his clothes were steaming all day. He kept informing the Yahoo he was saving him from frostbite, gangrene and maybe even hell, since the Watchtower crowd had quit praying for him. The peckerwood was happy because he had got ten bucks from one of the passengers. The other passengers had offered him prayers. He said, "No, cash spends better." He didn't trust them. They might shift to bumper brackets and then he would be getting wet or going to hell.

The peckerwood shifted to quiet, they had to cross through the creek three more times and then climb up an ice-covered hill. She began telling the peckerwood her complete story of betrayal. The peckerwood gave the trucker girl some weak defense. "She never got my truck stuck, and she peed on a stick forty foot away in fresh snow. I didn't get to see her do it, but fresh snow don't lie.

The day of the peeing wager, the peckerwood had jumped on everyone's ass when he came back up the hill and nothing was done. He pointed out in the snow that they had all went over and smoked and joked on a log. The next time the peckerwood went down the hill, the trucker girl picked out fresh snow for her pee shot. The easiest twenty bucks she ever made for dropping her pants. The Yahoo's had to work two hours for the ten dollars they each lost.

Finally, they arrived at the worksite. Fresh untouched snow coated the treetops. The peckerwood picked a new untouched area. "If we make one unnecessary step the snow knows. Whatever we do today the snow will show." He decided to spend the entire day educating her in life. He explained that men are stupid, and women are crazy. It creates a balance in life. The crazier she acts the more stupid men will like her.

Later in the day the peckerwood was looking for some thanks for helping build up her strength by throwing wood. He explained he had beefed her up. This had enabled her to chuck the TV through the window. "Who wants to live in

a skinny box, watching a buzz box with three way dip shits? You're smarter than that. Use what you got to improve your life."

"Let's get the hell out of here and go drink some beer." The peckerwood was getting uncomfortable spending the entire day with a very attractive young lady. (Twenty years younger) He told her he was getting a case of blue beak and needed a hug then they could get to beer drinking.

The peckerwood had been so nice listening to her story and offering free advice all day that she decided to give him a big hug. The peckerwood seized this opportunity by grabbing her left breast under the sweat shirt and wrapping his other arm around her and making bear hug grunt sounds. This was easy to do because she was wearing nothing under her sweatshirt.

She broke free and the peckerwood explained that everything was okay because his first wife only had one tittie and that's how he always had to hug her. When she was prepped and being rolled in for surgery, he had kissed her right tittie good bye. The surgeon wanted to know what else he might want since they had to re-prep her operation area with fresh purple antiseptic. "He suggested that they move her remaining tittie (not purple) to the center of her back for good hugging. If the Doctor had put her tittie where I wanted it, I would be used to a more conventional hug." The peckerwood explained.

En route to beer drinking the peckerwood told her all about breast reconstruction. His ex-wife had chosen the hot tit over the cold tit surgery. The

cold tit had poor circulation, nothing but skin over it. The hot tit had a thin layer of stretched out muscle over it. Good blood supply. This meant that he had to massage her tittes twice a day for fifteen minutes to keep the muscle elastic, or her titties got hard. So when he grabbed a tittie his hands were trained and under Doctor's orders. When they pulled in the parking lot for the Wright City Tavern he was explaining how doctors rebuild the nipple erectial tissue.

The Wright City Tavern goes through a name change every year. It's the place next to the Elvis Restaurant that has the pink caddie out front. The owner is the crazy guy who dresses like Elvis and sells real estate.

She asked the peckerwood if he was going to dust off the sawdust and wood chips before they went in. The peckerwood informed her that he used wood debris and mud blocks from his logger chalk boots to mark his spot at the bar. He then reached in his watch pocket and pulled out a tooth. "It's time to load up my going to town tooth." He thumb pushes his tooth in the left top front, and gives her a gapless grin. She was getting smarter. She didn't ask him about the tooth.

The Peckerwood advised her to do whatever he did and said and the bar regular jokers would remember the night the woodcutters hit the bar.

The Wright City Tavern has a J shaped bar. The top of the J is where the entry door is. The bottom of the J faces several sitting tables and two pool tables. The pool tables are not the standard small tables that the balls fly off of during a

hard break shot. These are seven footers. They take their pool serious in Wright City.

The peckerwood headed right to the heel of the J. "Best seats in the house. We can see the door. We can turn and watch the pool shooters. If they had a slinky barmaid, I could be watching her bend over fetching beer. What we got here is some grouchy old guy." The peckerwood jerks his thumb at the old barkeep and yelled, "Hey, what the hell do we have to do to get a beer, start the bar on fire?"

The peckerwood watched the pool game and shortly announced. "Do you shoot pool?"

She started up with some awkward statement. The peckerwood took over. "Let's shoot partners and kick the living be-Jesus out of those guys." The peckerwood challenged the manhood of the two shooter's, they immediately pushed all the balls in the pockets. The peckerwood set up an unbreakable rack. A trick he learned from his Father.

The peckerwood was in his element. He circled the pool table, soft center shooting and explaining what he is doing. After the first game a circle of wood chips marks his domain. They never lost all night; several of the locals decided to get him drunk. His shooting improved as the night drinking crowd moved in. She liked shooting with him; it felt good to be a winner.

A male signal erupted from the bar. The peckerwood missed it. She had raised her sweatshirt on the right side and showed her right breast to the old guy sitting at the apex of the J. The entire bar was excited. So was she, her nipples were small biscuits pushing through the gravy. The peckerwood asked the old guy at the end of the bar what happened.

He said, "I'm 72 years old and she showed me the prettiest tittie that I have seen in forty years. I don't think anyone else actually saw her, they saw what she was doing but she did it for me."

The peckerwood asked him, "What did you say?"

The old guy said, "I asked her if she was from around here."

As the evening progressed every male in the tavern was asking the sweatshirt girl various combinations of do you live around here.

The peckerwood retired from pool lessons. The sweatshirt girl was conducting pool-shooting exhibitions with male admirers. Men are really stupid. Several of them had fallen to the floor yelling "Snakebite" and trying to look up her sweatshirt when she bent over to shoot. The word was out about the bare contents of the sweatshirt.

The peckerwood was still working with word combinations seeking the reason for the sweatshirt opening. He called the sweatshirt hottie over. "What did the old guy ask you?"

She said, "He asked to see my right tittie."

The peckerwood exhales: "Whoaa. Well. What he really said was. Are you from Wright City?"

"Well that explains why everyone has been asking me where I'm from."

The peckerwood says, "My beer tank is full, I'm blasting out of here. Do you need a ride?"

She smiled her answer, "I can get a ride from anyone in here, to anywhere I want to go."

The peckerwood left.

He returned and stood by the door.

She walked the length of the bar and stopped. The peckerwood said, "I'd like a hug good bye. She laughed and told him to extend his arms out and keep them there. The peckerwood said, "I can do that."

She did a walk in and rubbed herself all over the peckerwood. He lit up like a Viking at the flame dance. She turned. The entire Wright City Tavern was smiling at her. She claimed ownership with her smile.

Haggis is Sweet

Macaulay motto,

“Danger is sweet”

Haggis is dangerous

“Haggis is sweet”

Haggis is Sweet

"Danger is sweet." The MacAulay Clan has the best motto; I know because I read the entire Scottish Tartan book. The symbol on the family crest is not so impressive. Centered in the medallion is what looks like a baby's bootie. Closer historical investigation reveals that it is actually a studded war boot. The implication is that MacAulay's are known to seek out and ride to sweet danger.

In the opening scene of the movie, "The Highlander." The McLeod's were fighting the Morrison's, not the Fraser's. Then the MacAulay's rode in for the rescue. This battle took place on the Isle of Lewis, in the Northern Hebrides of Scotland. I know, I was there, I could feel the battle. I'm a Macaulay.

"Hollywood" doesn't tell a complete or accurate story. The giant immortal, "Kurgan" forget it, there are no people called Kurgan's. Scythian burial mounds are called Kurgans.

My Grandfather, Angus MacAulay left the Isle of Lewis at the age of seventeen. He was tired of starving. He started each day by wading into the frigid waters of the North Atlantic. He didn't have a boat, rods or nets, however he did have rocks. Angus slowly waded into the opening of a small cove, carrying large rocks. He put down the larger rocks first to build a base for his seawall. He fit the smaller rocks into the top to block the cove. He hoped some fish would swim in during the high tide, to feed.

Angus didn't have a watch, he was on moon time. He shifted his labor two minutes each day with the tides. The receding water escaped through the rocks, squirting out the small baitfish, Angus ate the trapped larger fish. Angus was a rock fisherman. Whatever his rocks caught that is what he ate. Angus then would remove his rocks to allow new/hungry fish to swim into the cove with the rising tide.

A farmer from Canada offered him the opportunity to work sixteen hours a day in rocky soil for a "free" passage to Canada. He became a rock farmer, and he never returned to his homeland.

* * *

Haggis is a traditional Scottish food. Scotsmen and tourists are the only people that will eat Haggis. Haggis is made up of all the parts of a sheep that would normally be thrown away or drug off by the butcher's dog. To make Haggis: you would first grab your least favorite sheep. This is the one with ticks or the one that bites. Second, insert hooks between the anklebones, hoist off the ground and hang from your sheep-killing tree. Next, cut the sheep's throat and catch the blood in a metal bowl. Then, extract the stomach, lungs, eyeballs, brain and body organs. Mix and grind everything except the stomach. Match an equal amount of (steel cut) oatmeal. (Scotsmen are very picky about their oats.) and blend. Add the blood bowl contents, and then season to taste. My favorite technique is to allow an observer to add a few seasonings. Then you can blame

the failure on them. Knead this mixture into a bloody mass and pack it into the sheep's stomach. Open all the windows in your kitchen, and boil the haggis until it floats.

On Robby Burns's night the Chef, under crossed swords, carries the haggis out of the kitchen. The host or speaker recites "Ode to a Haggis," a poem by Scotland's, "Bard" Robbie Burns. Stabs the haggis with a dirk, then cuts it into wee pieces and serves it drowned with single malt whiskey. All those who seek danger will have a wee piece of haggis. Haggis was *once* served to the Queen of England at Balmoral, her summer castle in Scotland. She arrived unannounced and stated she would eat whatever the kitchen staff was eating. She executed the chef.

Angus Macaulay was a precise and modest eater. Dinner was served at exactly the same time every day. He served the food to everyone from his kingpin position at the head of the table. We passed the plates all the way around the table until you got to keep yours. I was always surprised at the small amount of food grandfather saved for his plate.

Thanksgiving was the biggest meal of the year for our family. Grandpa broke from tradition and did not serve everyone their plate meal. He did make a great show of carving the turkey at the table. We would eat ourselves into a stupor. The wee cousins had to take a walk, and let food escape from the stomach. We then committed to the final stomach stuffing of dessert, pumpkin and mincemeat pies.

Grandmother had a great surprise for Grandpa one Thanksgiving. I didn't know what it was until the final moment when grandmother opened up the kitchen windows after dinner for the entrance of the haggis. She had talked a close friend into sacrificing her home for the haggis boil. She wanted to surprise grandpa.

My grandfather had not eaten any haggis since he had been in Scotland years ago. Grandmother always thought they would go back and visit their relatives after he retired. She wanted to visit her relatives in Edinburgh. Grandfather wouldn't go. He said, "Scotland starved me, it tried to kill me." Grandma decided to bring Scotland to him.

Grandpa sat in his big chair to light up a King Edwards cigar. He was called back into the dining room for the big surprise. Grandpa ate the whole bloated white haggis.

He went back to his last cigar, after stating, "This is the best Thanksgiving I ever had." The haggis started its journey in grandpa's stomach. The bloodied haggis oats started mixing with the turkey's oatmeal suet stuffing, and other holiday fare. The haggis was trapped. Anything dangerous, then trapped becomes even more dangerous. Angus MacAulay died of a massive heart attack on Thanksgiving Day.

The ambulance pulled up in front of the house, as we were returning from our walk, talking about who would be lucky and get the cigar ring from Grandpa.

Haggis is dangerous. It killed my grandfather. Maybe my grandmother felt she killed him, bringing him a bit danger from Scotland. It could have been Thanksgiving. It could have been the cheap cigar. The cigar ring had been carefully removed; it was resting across from the still smoking cigar in the large amber glass ashtray. My brother looked around, leaned over and took a puff.

Pontoon Poker

Pontoon poker

Anchored midstream

Card dealing breeze

Neighborhood dream

Invitation only

Reserves your tube

Hands are rigged

You won't lose.

Pontoon Poker

She came out of her beauty shop on to the small porch. Her husband had built the shop for her in the front of the house. The beauty shop side of the house was painted pink. She was a stout red head with huge knockers. She had the superstructure that could support the burden. She also had the wide steel braced bras that she had caught Fred's boys next door inspecting on her clothesline. Once, she had tried to hang two of her bras on the clothesline at the same time. The bras and clothesline sailed into the Fred's yard. Fred kept one. She had heard rumors that he used it as a rain hat while coon hunting. She wasn't really a red head but she kept trying.

One of her clients came out to join her as she lit up a Chesterfield. Both of them watched Fred, next-door working on the front of his wife's Dodge Ram. "Wonder what Fred is up to now?"

Big Red knows, "Fred's replacing the lights on his wife's car. She busted them out making a high speed run down to the river last night."

The client waved to Fred. Big Red said, "He won't wave back, he's on yard restriction after the pontoon poker game last night."

The hair client leaned back against the rail and stated, "Okay, I want the whole story and don't leave anything out."

Big Red states, "Fred's real good with his hands."

"Yeah I've heard that said about Fred."

"See his house over there. He built it entirely by himself, laid every block.

The screened in porch took him about five years to build. He sleeps out there all summer. Mac, his wife, doesn't mind. She says that Fred stinks, and puts tracks in her sheets. I don't mind the man smell. They all stink good to me, some better than others."

"One night I snuck over but Fred was out cat fishing on his pontoon boat.

But I didn't know that. I slid into his stinking lair and mounted his twelve-year-old son who was sleeping there. The lad had some wild dreams that night, he kept yelling for help, thought he was being suffocated."

"I watch for the pontoon boat now, Fred made it out of steel barrels. He used my husband's welder and Mac's coat hangers to build it."

The client with the big rollers in her head says, "That's where you play poker, on Fred's home made pontoon boat?"

"Yeah, first time last night."

"How did this get started?"

"Have you noticed the top of Mable's pine tree is broke?" Red says, as she points at it. Well, me and her and Gert, whose husbands all work second shift, get together and play cards every Friday night."

"I take it Mac is not one of the players"

“You got that right, she works nights as a waitress, so that means Fred’s sniffing around while Mac’s at work.”

“We started using the upstairs sunroom in Mabel’s house next door for the poker games. Fred was climbing up the pine tree and looking in through the limbs. He told us later he was playing the hoot owl game, trying to scare us. We heard the hooting but he gave himself away by leaving beer cans in the tree. So the next week, with the first hoot, we all went over to the window and showed our tits. He broke out the top of the tree and damn near his leg, as he hooted all the way to the ground.”

“So Fred’s good at hootin.”

“We nursed him with whiskey, and he has become our fourth card player. I like being his partner. He has good hands.”

“Fred volunteered to host a poker game on his pontoon boat in the river. Fred anchored out in the channel and had inner tubes for everyone. He made some giant floating cards out of white foam. The pontoon boat was loaded down with booze.”

“But Mac came home early last night while our poker game was going full blast. Mac would have thought Fred was out smelling like a catfish, since the pontoon boat was gone, but she could hear us calling for cards, echoing the big game.”

“Mac cruised down to the riverbank with her lights off and observed the inner tube silhouettes. She hit her lights.” The silent movie with black crème filled donuts and doe eyed poker players, waited.

“What the hell did Mac say?”

She said: “Deal me in you son of ah bitch.”

“Wow that’s great, what did Fred say?”

“Fred offered her an inner tube. She said, she didn’t need one, she would be right back.”

Mac drove up to the road to build up speed for her launch into the game. As she got closer to the river, light bounces picked up inner tubes churning, and some good poker hands mingling downstream. The high-speed vibration broke out first one headlight then the other. The light show ended.

The roller headed client said. “Whew, I’d like to get into one of those poker games, but I don’t have a bathing suit”

“Bathing suit! What the hell are you talking about?” Big Red looked across the yard at Fred. He had looked up and was smiling, but she knew he didn’t hear a damn thing. He was figuring out how to stack the deck to give everyone good hands at the next pontoon poker game.

Wood Canoeing

Get her wet

Beaded brow

Lick her dry

Make a vow

Good Entry Place

The first time I saw my future bride, was at a Halloween party given by the Texas Air National Guard. She sat in one spot all night. I never saw her dance, or stand up. I thought maybe she was a cripple. I did notice that all my buddies had hit on her and determined that she was the Ice Queen. I figured it was my turn. I announced my intentions to the Budweiser crowd. "Well boys, I'm going to show you how to put an Ice Queen into the melt down mode. Wish me luck, lads."

I gave her the full body scan on my approach path, five foot eleven, 160 pounds, strong lower torso, hottentot syndrome, and no atrophy from not walking. She looked like a country girl.

The band was playing one of those Texas Country Western songs where everyone lines up on the dance floor and yells, "Bull-Shit." I think it's called the Cottoned Eyed Joe. In between the "Bullshit" I asked her if she could, "do that" and pointed at the dance floor.

She said, "No, I can't dance."

I sat down next to her and asked her if she would be interested in some chair dancing. She said she had never heard of it but was willing to try if she didn't have to get up. I did the chair scooting boogie to face her, grabbed her chair and

in a show of beer strength slid her into position. I had her place her arms in the proper manner and I demonstrated a shoulder bop and weave. I told her, "First time for me too."

We exchanged daytime numbers by the end of the next song. I told her to just say her number once, because I never forgot a good-looking woman's number. (A cheap memory trick that impresses females).

She called me and invited me to lunch in the rotating restaurant in downtown Houston. I let her know I would meet her for lunch on a park bench and we could share some yogurt. The place didn't matter. I just wanted to be with her. We shared blueberry yogurt. The fruit was in the bottom.

I found out that she had just been on a canoeing adventure with friends, on the Guadalupe River jumping rapids. I suggested a canoe trip with me in my ninety-year-old Thompson Brother's wooden canoe. I also let her know I would make her a paddle. I picked a small creek I had seen from the air flying into Houston International. Texans don't seem to know it exists.

She had excellent upper body strength for a woman. I had been synchronizing my paddling with hers. We entered the water together; I used a compound angle for a silent entry. I'm sporting an extra large blade, hand made from Sassafras. I was grabbing deep and pulling hard. I lifted her with each stroke. I gave a J-stroke kick with my paddle and maintained the exact center of the creek. I pulled my blade out timed with hers and added a feather technique, just above the water.

A slight drizzle slid into the paddle vortex, silently. I was practicing silent paddling techniques, she couldn't hear me. She felt my power add to hers with each stroke.

I was watching sweat bead up across her shoulders, divided by the tank top loop. I spotted a good entry landing at the only sandy beach on the trip. I brought the canoe in for a perfect landing. I helped her out. She wanted to know why we were stopping.

"I've been watching you while we paddle. I don't ever want anyone else sharing this canoe with me except you."

She said, "That sounds like a proposal to me."

"It is"

She turned, smiled and said. "What can I do for you?"

"I'd like to lick the sweat off your shoulders and neck."

I assisted her as she turned. She said in a lower octave voice. "Go for it big boy."

I set up a central lick pattern that radiated outward using vertical strokes. I balanced out my area coverage with alternate strokes. I moved up and into each bead of sweat.

I heard erectile tissue humming and whispering. "Lick me, big boy."

Getting in a wooden canoe requires empathy. The bottom of the canoe gains its strength from the water. The water has to be deep enough to not displace and

let the bottom hit. You also need to keep your weight low and step into the center because it has a round bottom and will roll on you.

I admired her entry. She said, "I want to remember this place." She scanned the entire sandy area.

I made my silent entry while pushing off at the same time. This maneuvered is reserved for canoeing experts. I don't like to jam or push my paddle into anything. My first stroke set up vortex swirls that loosened sand. The beach started its journey to a new place.

Smart Girl Today

Smart girl today

Smarter next

Months old

Changes fast

Food, food,

Hand stirring

Jaws marching

She hungers

Create her world

Feed her world

Arm nested view

Protected and fed

She has devoured

Small square books.

Merge Learning

Recently I had occasion to take care of a petite young lady about 18 months old. She is actually 14 months old. I lied because girls are smarter than boys and she's a very smart girl. She is learning so fast she seems different every time you see her. I enjoy reading books to her, those little square books for kids. My childhood favorite is the story about the bear that climbed the honey tree and the bees chased him as he sought shelter in a nearby stream. He ended up with an extra large nose as the bees strafed him in his submerged water position, nose snorkel high.

Kids are still interested in the same books. She's too young to communicate in words any disagreement. She gets what I read.

Not too long ago in an elderly lady's basement being prepped for a yard sale. I found a metal bucket full of old square books and different sized balls, everything a visiting kid would need for play. These were first editions of the old classics, like "Little Black Sambo" written by some Scots lady. My mother is a Scots lady but she never could explain to me how the tiger turned into butter. She said it didn't matter because we ate Blue Bonnet margarine. I should have asked my grandmother. She was Scottish and ate real butter, she knew.

I was tempted to steal the play bucket, and rob the elderly lady's future generations of the metal can readers.

I also noticed that the attention span of the 18 month old is very short. They need to change the subject as fast as their learning pace. The theory that I developed is one minute for each year on the planet. Her attention span is one and a half minutes. So every 1.5 minutes I entertain her learning with something new. The technique that I developed is called, "Merge learning."

As I read to her I merge in a new book and new adventure every 1.5 minutes. She thrives on this technique. I have been filling her brain with all types of usually meaningless fragments of information. I have built in a 30 second assimilation period as I shuffle around getting the next adventure lined up.

Here is a sample of a reading session. The adventures of Hansel and Gretel; the first page creates a problem. I need to stop and get her a cookie. Since it's not my favorite cookie, the oatmeal chocolate chip, I decide to read to her about the three bears and Goldie Locks. This will put some oatmeal in the cookies. I can't find the correct square book. I decide instead to tell her the stories at 1.5-minute intervals.

Okay, listen up kid. There were these oatmeal-eating bears. They are Scottish highland tartan bears. A good Scotsman has porridge for breakfast. So now she wants some porridge. I explain the difference between porridge and oatmeal. Oats are feed for horses. Porridge is made from steel cut oats and is cooked over low heat in a double boiler. Porridge is served with the creamy oats in one bowl and your milk in another bowl. The Scots porridge eater gets a half spoon of

porridge and submerges it into the milk bowl and slurps up the oat island. Baby girl refines this technique with the finger squeeze out, oat-encrusted fist, and milk swabbed face wipe. Porridge and milk are transferred to her frontal area. After a good oats soaking, it is wiped off.

After clean up we continue our merge learning. Goldie Locks was a dwarf human who wanted to become a wee Scottish bear. Her parents caught her before the overly protective bear parents knocked her head off and ate her with their porridge. All the stories have a good ending, "Everyone goes to Disney World."

More bears are what the wee human wants. Okay. Listen up kid; there is Smokey the Bear. He does not want any one cooking oats over a wood fire. He thinks that a controlled burn is not nature's way of burning up the undergrowth in the woods. He believes in no fires in the woods. So every 40 years tourists, or firefighters wanting some overtime pay, burn down another California forest. Smokey is a tough bear. He whipped Paul Bunyon, lumberjack and Big Blue the skidder, or log hauler. Paul wants to cut down all of the woods in the world. Their last great "Champion of the Woods" fight took place at Yellowstone Park. Smokey is another oatmeal eating bear. He lost his teeth to big Paul's ax. Big Paul turned into an oatmeal eater after their battle when he realized how tough it made old Smokey.

Big Paul spotted Mary and her little lamb. After rack of rib and leg of lamb slow cooked over hickory, what's left? Point out to baby girl her leg and tickle

her in the ribs. She says something, not sure what. "Okay kid. Why hickory?" You use hickory because it gives the lamb a good flavor and burns evenly during its fire cycle. Cherry, apple and sassafras are other good woods for lamb cooking.

Scots are known for being thrifty. The Scottish bears suggest haggis for the lamb gut pile. Bear oatmeal, is added to the lambs blood and everything pooled in the lamb's pelt becomes stomach pudding. Haggis is the perfect solution to a lamb's demise. It uses everything. Eyeballs, brains, lungs, blood, all boiled, until it floats. As you rattle off all the horrible stuff in haggis you point and poke the baby girl in the belly, ribs and in the eye. Merge learning takes place.

Happy ending: Mary, her crooked staff and the lamb's blue ribbon go to Disney World. Hansel and Gretel pay for the trip with a bake sale. The Big Bad Wolf keeps saying he will get Mary another lamb as long as he can tear its throat out prior to delivery. Hansel and Gretel declare another fund raiser bake sale to buy lambs. Big Paul heads to South America to help kill the rain forest. Baby girl says "Ba Ba." I let her know that her words are Farsi and they mean "Daddy." I'm not her daddy, but I sure like her.

Tavern Courtesy Lap

Wood debris'd worker enters

Glances at competition, sits.

Gloves placed to grip, left.

Goggles placed to glare, right.

Bar wench armed,

Red bar flag in hand.

Wipes wood chip offerings,

“What--ill it be?”

Courtesy lap ends,

Warm-up-- --ends.

All entrants are prepped,

Gentlemen, start your ----bullshit-----.

Myth Merging in Boschertown

The Peckerwood takes his customary seat across from the three Don's in the Boschertown Tavern. The bar is U shaped; the TV is elevated and positioned at the right leg of the U. The three Don's like to set where they can see the TV, the door and the bar maid fetching beer from the cooler. They await the Peckerwood. He always orders Coors. Larry the owner stocks the Coors in the deep recesses of the beer locker. He doesn't want the, "Bud-Lite" date chaser spotting a non-union beer. The three Don's drink Busch but like the Peckerwoods choice because the 4'11 inch, 90-pound barmaid has to climb into the cooler. The Peckerwood likes it when the 200-pound barmaid takes the dive. Wide track view, for a penny a pound.

The dwarfed out bar maid says, "What will it be?"

The peckerwood says, "I was thinking of getting a Budweiser, the King of Beer."

One of the Don's says, "Get him a Coors, or we're going to kick his ass."

"I'll take the Coors here and the ass kicking across the street."

Dumb Don says, "How much land you got over there, about an acre?"

"If I told you, none of you dumb asses, would know because you don't know what an acre is. I know, George "the link" Washington knows and surveyors know. You guys haven't got a clue."

“Damn, do we have to turn down Hank Williams to hear this?”

“Hank! That’s his son Hank Jr., Hank died in the back of a Cadillac with Jim Beam as his closest friend. Rough roads in Ohio were his demise.”

“I’m in.” says Big Don, “let’s hear it.”

“An acre is ten square chains. A chain is 66 feet. This is the longest chain that George “the Link” Washington the father of our country and the head surveyor could carry through the woods. So one acre is 66 feet by 660 feet. 660 feet is also one furlong. That’s the distance a farmer would plow in one direction before turning to give the mules a new view.”

Don says, “So you’re saying that mules determined what an acre is.”

“Hell no, a furlong is how far a farmer could plow and still hear his wife yell in case of an emergency or attack by heathen Indians.”

Don says, “So you’re saying it was the Indians.”

Little Don says, “No, dumb ass, it was the women.”

“Did any of you knuckleheads ever notice that a furlong is used in horse races?”

Smart Don pipes in, “I got it, they were plowing with horses.”

“Let me try another approach, an acre is 160 square rods. A rod is the longest hickory staff that George “the Rod” Washington could carry through the woods. It comes out to 16.5 feet. There are four rods to the chain.”

Donny boy says, “So a square 40 by 40 rods is an acre?”

“Dummy, that’s 1600 square rods.”

Another Don says, “What the hell is wrong with the mile? Wasn’t it invented by the Romans?”

“Ok, let’s talk about the mile. This is the distance the Roman soldiers covered with 1000 paces. There are 640 acres to the square mile. Thirty-six square miles is a township. This is how our country was sectioned off.”

Smiling Don, “I didn’t even know the Romans were over here.”

Short Don, “You can’t fool me. I know that there are 5280 feet to the mile. Who cares about rods and chains?”

The Peckerwood says, “Ok, smart-ass, what’s a foot?”

“12 inches.”

“Wrong, it’s based on the barleycorn. There are thirty-six barleycorns to the foot.” The Peckerwood smiles his response.

Bad tooth Don, “Bullshit, barley is used in beer. I want to know how you can make accurate measurements with a rod and chain. You need to use inches.”

“All this explaining is making my throat dryer than a popcorn fart.”

“Yo --Bar wench, pull me another Coors.”

The three Don’s brace themselves for the cooler dive. “The reason Big George is called *The Link* is because our measurement system is based on the length of our founding father’s male member. The chain is divided into one

hundred links. Each link is 7.92 inches, or 23.666 barleycorns as measured by Martha. She wasn't putting up with a one-inch finger like the English Queen."

The bar maid came to attention inside the beer cooler, her vision impaired by the new lump on her head.

"Damn, you're pretty smart for a Peckerwood."

"Yeah, I'm pretty, and that's Mr. Peckerwood."

The barmaid got in the last word while rubbing her noggin. "Don't talk like that about our founding father when I'm in the beer cooler."

Full Moon

Hill dance	spring leap	She smiles
Feeds two	swoop low	he prances
In the mood	male reserves	new for him
In the nude.	Go, show Go	moon shared dances

Agile Elk Dances

I don't remember how or what happened that led to the hilltop positioning of the Nissan hard body from hell, -my 4/4 pick-up truck. I do remember that it was a warm summer night that featured a full moon. I would imagine that I had inadvertently aligned the hard body from hell in the maximum flux alignment area. Or it could have been the forty-four double D's seeking a lunar tan. It could have been the Devil. Everything was culminated in a nude co-mingling of male and female musk's. There were witnesses, some continued to chirp, some didn't. All present would testify that the male exhibited a professional approach to the comforts of the female. This required that the passenger door side was the point of entry and had to be left open.

If you check the topographic charts the hilltop location is a three thousand foot stretch, cresting at 100 acres. Another thing you will notice is the map contains the numbers 666 at the hillcrest. This is the elevation of what could be called, "Devils Knob." So everything could be blamed on the Devil. If the bifurcated tailed evil one was watching, no one cared.

I had a dream about a similar event with an Indian maiden. She gave me the name, "Agile Elk." I asked her if she was authorized to give out Indian names. She said that I had earned it. It was one of the best dreams I ever had.

I'm actually a fat old man with a bad back. As a younger man I was gifted with strength in the upper one percent of males. I threw this away, on another moon lamped night, along with a bad wife. The cop showed up answering the complaint. "Naked man throwing out a perfectly good woman." Ping! I'm now the man with a bad back, blown lower lumbar disk.

But, Old Agile Elk can dance. Agile Elk celebrated his second moon lamped climax with an impromptu nude dance in the amplification headlights of the hard body from hell. He leaped; he pranced, he performed a male prowess dance. Yes, poetry was created.

The female watched the dance from inside her comfort cave, she smiled. After the dance, Agile Elk did a walk around strut. I--Agile Elk-- gathered my clothes, dressed, and drove off the hill. Nothing was said.

The drive down the hill was slow and creaky. The moonlight was gone. The roof was a tunnel canopy of tree limbs gripping and merging with each other. The driver's side border was an unclimbable hill. The passenger side faded into a steep drop off. The headlights only showed the path ahead.

The female said, "I loved your dance."

Agile Elk's reply, "First time for me."

"Me too. What's next?"

"Let's head over to your place for a full body tick inspection."

Strong Aviator

Father was the lead aviator.

Flew out of his strength envelope

Augered in quietly.

Father, tits up, spiraling.

Watched the formation regroup

Wingman gapped the spinning V

His mate is honking

He doesn't hear.

Death's a peaceful filter.

The Strong Aviator Gets Down

“Wilbur Wright was not the first to fly, but he flew the furthest.”

He was a strong aviator, his name was Wilbur. His father was renowned as the strongest aviator that the flock had produced. His father had flown the longest known leg in the apex position. He led the formation pilgrimage almost to the second waypoint on the Hajji to their southern Mecca. Wilbur had watched his father auger in from his lead position at the apex of the V. His father did some impressive strong flying even in his death spiral. He went into a hard departure stall, faded into a lumps kibloc, recovered into a flat spin, exercised emergency procedures, blew every accumulator he had and inverted his flat spin. He could watch the victor shape while dead. The strong aviator and his mother maintained formation.

It was a year later and Wilbur was going to lead the formation the next day on the exact route that had killed his father. He was stronger than his father, at least that's what he thought. He would make it to the second waypoint.

The formation leaders of today's flight were in their glory, the eligible females had them surrounded and were cooing and commenting on their flying expertise. The bachelor lads would make their selection soon. Wilbur predicted they would take a night flight to some lonely hill with the males doing the moon

dance. He noticed one extra large female was also observing from a distance. She was a strong looking female aviator, her name was Nicole.

Wilbur had no experience with females. He concentrated all his energy into flying. After his flight as the formation leader he would have his pick of the females. He had asked his father about the birds and the bees. His father had told him all he knew about were the birds. He didn't know much about the bees, bees didn't fly that good. He assured Wilbur that his instincts would kick in and answer his questions.

The next day they made their take off as the sun joined up over their left wing. The Victor formation was formed, everyone flew in his or her position. The aviators had to harness up the wingtip vortex of the flyer in front of them. Meanwhile, the aviator behind them was drafting them. The combination of lift increased the efficiency of each flight member. The wingtip vortex is stronger than the drafting effect so the V formation is the optimum shape. The flight leader works the hardest because he is creating the wingtip vortices rolling off his wings for both legs of the V formation. Wilbur was feeling strong tucked into his apex position. He could make it to the second waypoint.

The flight leader was the point of the spear for the V formation. Wilbur thought that he might end up with a bad case of "blue beak" in the crisp morning wind. He was flying low to prevent this problem. He knew that for each 1000 feet of altitude the temperature drops three degrees. He had several episodes of

“blue beak” in his youth. It was a slight cool blue coloring along the leading edge of the beak due to excess cooling from boundary air and lack of skin effect. This was followed by a dull throb that spread through the entire airframe. (i.e., his body.) He had strain sensor advisory emissions monitoring all in the, “green for go.” The throbbing was the worse when he followed a female aviator. He tried not to think about it.

He had asked his father about “blue beak” and was told, “Once you choose a mate she will take care of the blue beak condition.” He mentioned to his dad that some of the single guys had formed a self-help club and they never suffered from blue beak. His dad let him know this was improper conduct for a strong aviator. “Males getting in circles warming their cold beaks on the male in front, what a bunch of jerks.” His father also assured him that he wouldn’t go blind, or get feather zits from rubbing his cold beak in his shoulder pit. Wilbur concentrated on his flying. He could see with remarkable clarity, miles away, the second waypoint was in sight.

The second waypoint is an extra large sycamore tree with the top blown out from a lightening strike. It sits in the center of a horseshoe created by the winding of the Big River. If you look on a WAC chart you will see the horseshoe. If you look on a St. Louis sectional you will see a little “x” and the numbers “666”. This shows the elevation. Local aviators call this area “Devils Horseshoe.” People that live across Highway Y say- Devils gold- is buried under the center of the “x”.

It is close to the final nesting place of his Father. He would do a fly by in his honor.

Aviation chatter increased as they approached. Was he really stronger than his father? Would he fade and stall. Nicole must be on a cold mic setting. He didn't hear her. He was still feeling strong, but had a throb pulsing with his heart rate through his entire chest. Then he saw his father, nested in the top of the waypoint, wings up. This father had turned the waypoint into his memorial. Under his father was a large abandoned nest in the broken crouch of the tree. It had to be an eagle or blue heron nest. The winds aloft had mummified this father, and he was above the ant line. He would be a marker for years.

The extra large female Nicole keyed her mic and advised him to shift and drop back to her six. He could be her wingman. His wingman made his move into the lead. He was no longer the flight leader. He faded into a position behind Nicole. He could now regain his strength, as she put out a huge wingtip vortex. He felt good. The throbbing remained constant. He noticed that Nicole cut a fine path through the wind.

As he was watching and drafting her he noticed her neck getting larger. She flared out her neck to its fullest size for him. He could see the down underneath her fine neck feathers. It was the first time for him, first time for her. He let out a rumbling honk of appreciation. This increased the flare of her down. The

boundary air couldn't contour her down in the air stream. He wanted to break formation and aerial dance for her. She knew.

He requested her to attend his hill top dance. She advised him that males never pick their mates, females do the selecting. She had picked him. She also told him to knock off the honking and save his energy for the dance and egg making ceremony to follow. He knew she was right. His father had told him that he was born jumbo and jumbos were the strongest aviators. He wanted some jumbo sons really bad. He felt a new pain as the blue beak tingle began.

Nicole's mother had briefed her about males during a preflight check when she complained about an itchy neck. Her mother said that she needed to stay strong. The itch would be cured when she selected a mate. She also advised her to never flare her neck down in front of anyone except her lifetime mate.

The neck down is the best insulation that nature provides. It's full of microscopic air pockets. A problem does occur, as you get more mature, a form of micro-orgasm moves in and thrives in the down follicles of the females.

Wilbur landed. It was a zero airspeed full flare landing. Nicole did a fly by chandelle, unloading airspeed. He figured she would skid to a soft field landing beside him. She rotated in a full stall and dropped facing him. Damn, that girl could fly.

Wilbur was thinking of the aerial dance box he was about to create. These thoughts were interrupted with an increasing frequency throb. He was developing

a stronger case of blue beak. Nicole approached; she had a down itch that needed to be scratched. She flared her tormented neck, full of little friends, instincts kicked him and the Strong Aviator got down.

Writer aviation notes for the non-aviation type of reader

Hajji	The aviator's southern Mecca is Sun and Fun in Orlando, Fl.
Auger in	slang for dead-man's spiral
Death spiral	slow spiral that tightens as you reach terminal velocity
Departure stall	hard fast high angle of attack stall, usually at take-off.
Accumulator	emergency accumulators are the piston type and give you five additional movements of your flight controls
Waypoint.	Visual Navigational aids not on the WAC or Sectionals
Moon dance	Poem by local poet Wayne Hetzler
Victor	aviation call sign as in A is alpha, B bravo, etc.
Drafting	made famous by Junior Johnson, the last American Hero.
Vortex	a rolling lift effect off of wingtips,
Boundary air	thin layer of air next to fuselage during flight
Skin effect	stickiness of skin working with boundary layer
Cold mic	you can hear but can't speak until you key the microphone
Preflight	going over your airframe and log books prior to flight

- Six behind you.
- Full flare stalling at zero airspeed just as you touch down
- Slip sideways technique to lose altitude and energy, not a skid
- Chandelle depleting your forward energy with a stall and direction reverse
- Aerial box all air shows are performed within an aerial box in the sky.

Grandma Went Camping

Grandma went camping

Primitive style

Found by the creek

Damn near two mile.

Grandma's back, not talking now

Must be sad, or mad as hell.

Grandma's secure

Wrapped to her head

Carpet enclosed

Also her bed.

Grandma's old

She did her share

Sorting rocks

Now carpet care.

Family Care

I came off the 90-acre hill on my Ford 801; I had been brush hogging for two hours. It was too damn hot for hogging. I was as dry as a canned popcorn, and heading for cold beer. I broke out in the lower pasture and mowed up to the gravel bar beach. As soon as I stopped a cloud of dust and debris caught up with me. I had broken the first rule in brush hogging, never stop.

The kids were on the beach shooting 22's at anything that moved. I moved away from the tractor looking for the cooler. "Where the hell is the cooler?"

The kids approached and said. "Charles Manson got your beer. He also got the bratwurst, hotdogs and pop."

"Sounds like he got the cooler. You boys are both standing here with guns in your hands and someone snatches up the cooler. Tell me what happened."

My son says, "This guy that looked just like Charlie Manson showed up with a skinny blonde girl and some bad-toothed blonde skinny assed punk.

"Watch your cussing, Son. Everyone appreciates a good cusser your cussing needs some definement."

We told them you were on the hill and didn't want anyone on your property. They wanted to do some swimming on the gravel bar. He said he didn't really care what you wanted but would give us a couple of bucks to stay. They finally left and took the cooler with them. He grinned as he picked up the cooler.

“Let’s go find them. Charlie is probably munching on my bratwurst right now.”

We headed out to the next landing, Brown’s Ford, about four miles away. The kids were grumbling about what a mean looking guy Charlie, the cooler thief, was.

We spotted their ten-year-old loco-mobile station wagon, in the state park lot. I pulled in and gave the kids some instructions. Don’t stand by my pick-up. I don’t want them to know what I’m driving. We scouted around and located them downstream with a little fire going, cooking bratwurst and drinking beer.

“Okay boys, here is what we are going to do. You lads jump in the ravine and hide. If Charlie Bratwurst leaves, know the direction. I’m going to call the police, and then get our cooler.”

I returned up the road looking to use a phone. The first house was vacant, the second house was a medium sized house made from river rocks and had about six or seven vehicles stashed around the yard. As I got closer I noticed that they had a log skidder made from an old army ton and half ambulance. It had half of a ford axle welded on the back-- PTO driven. The rims had all been reversed to gain clearance. Someone was stone and wood handy.

I knocked on the door, a man answered; it would be tough to tell his age. He had led a hard life and didn’t know from dentists.

“Do you have a phone I could use?”

“Yeah, come on in, I’ll see if I can find it.”

The house was totally occupied with stuff everywhere. He had a hold of the phone cord and was cold tracking the phone. He pulled the phone free from a dirty clothes pile and handed it to me. I dialed 911.

The officer that answered the phone wanted to know if anything else was gone besides a cooler. I said, “no.” He said that he would send someone out when he could.

I advised the officer to look at his watch, “In fifteen minutes I’m going down to the gravel bar and get my cooler, I’m armed and feeling fairly dangerous.” He was saying don’t do it, but it faded out as I hung up.

I turned to leave and noticed an elderly woman’s head sticking out of a rolled up carpet on the floor. She had a case of bad hair and was pointed at the TV. It was buzzing and not showing her too much.

“That’s Grandma, she’s okay. We keep her in the carpet. It’s working good. Once a day, me and my son carry her outside. We roll her out and give her a good squirt with the hose. She gets up and runs around a little bit - gets dry. We catch her and wrap her up again. I carry her head end, my son is only twelve.”

“Sounds like you got a good family plan. I’d keep her on a low ash diet. It will save wear and tear on the carpet. She doesn’t seem to be complaining, but you ought to get an antenna for her TV.”

“We tried that, but since the cat doesn’t like the buzzing, it stays out of her hair. That cats a good mouser. We got to keep him.”

“We think that she wants to become a camper. We don’t know, she is mad as hell and quit talking to us two years ago. She hasn’t said one word to anyone.”

I said, “She’s a camper.”

“Yeah, last time she got loose, it took us two days to find her. We finally located her down by the creek sorting stones.”

I said, “So she didn’t have any camp set up, no fire, and no thunder hole.”

“No, she is a one hundred percent primitive camper. She spent her time picking out some nice house building rocks.”

“Well, thanks for the use of the phone. I figure a cop will be blasting down this road any minute.”

I returned to the riverside access parking area. I went over to the ravine and called the boys out. “How you boys doing? Any snakes down there?”

I let the boys know the cops were on the way. My son asked me. “How come you didn’t go down and get your cooler, Dad?” When my bike got stolen and also when my motorcycle got swiped we went and got them. You said that the cops don’t get anything done.”

“How come we had to stay in the ditch?” my nephew asked.

“This is a family issue boys, I want you both to remember this incident. I figured some ditch time would be thinking time. I could have taken you with me;

if Charlie had skipped out we would all feel bad. You guys are doing your share to help. You both did a good job.”

The cop cruiser rolled quietly in, no sirens to enable Charlie to make his break.

I went straight to the cop. He advised me to keep my hands in view. He also advised me to never tell a cop that you are armed and dangerous. I let him know that my gun was in the pick-up.

The cop took over. He went down to the river and retrieved the Charlie Manson gang and the empty cooler. He had the three gang members stand in the three-sided latrine, soaking local odor, while he talked to the two ravine boys. He then checked each of the punks out on the cop computer.

He came over to me, “I got some bad news for you, the guy that looks like Charlie Manson, is one very bad person. We know that he has killed at least three people. He has never worked. He lives the life of a thief and killer. If you press charges he will go to jail for six months, for taking your cooler. I’m advising you to let this go. He is a truly dangerous man. Your son will have to make a positive identification if you proceed.”

“Let’s proceed.”

The cop called and pointed to the latrine trio, “come over here.” He fine tuned his pointer to Charlie, “You.” Close up he even had the same crazy eyes. He was

a double hard looking man. The cop asked my son, "Is this the person who took your cooler, you had to have seen him do it."

The cop had stopped Charlie about ten feet away. "That's good. Stay right there, you don't smell too good."

My son said, "Yeah that's him."

The cop says, "You realize you will be putting this man in jail."

My son says, "Jail time will do him some good. He can get a free hair cut, take a shower with friends, and eat someone else's food."

Charlie growls in a low voice, "When I'm out, I'll come looking for you."

I jumped in the conversation and towards Charlie, "Speak up punk, don't threaten anyone in my family. You step on my path again and I'll shoot your dumb ass. I'm buying a couple of bags of lime tomorrow and will be waiting for you. You come on my property, and you will be staying there. The only reason I didn't shoot you today is my son and nephew are with me."

The cop kept my cooler for evidence. I got it back six months later, when they released, "Charlie with the bad ass." from jail.

I was very proud of my son and nephew. They stepped bravely up to the plate. On the way back to our property I explained to the lads how cowards operate. A coward will never return to face resistance. He will take the easy path, the easy victim. You lads did good putting him in jail. He probably likes it

in jail. Everything is provided, the TV works, and there are no cats shitting in your hair.

We were rolling past the Stone house, I told the boys about grandma in the carpet. I told them that she didn't have a clue of what was going on, but every time she had a chance, she still did her share. When younger, she had picked out all the rocks that Grandpa built the house with. They wanted to know what I was going to do about the old lady in the carpet.

"Nothing"

My son says, "Did you tell them she is senile and needs professional help?"

"No, didn't need to, she is being cared for by her family."

Perfect February Funeral

Diesel, hydraulics chip away

Solid lifeless clumps.

The earth is tricked

It comes to life.

Bagpipes flow in tears.

'Amazing Grace' will never

Sound the same.

Lower her with ropes,

Hands pack her

The cold returns

Live earth dies

With the Scotswoman

Perfect Funeral

My uncle, Angus George MacAulay was probably a mistake. He was sixteen years younger than my mother. Maybe he was Grandpa's idea, because Angus became his namesake. My mother took her little brother with her everywhere she went. Everyone thought she had a beautiful baby, but wasn't she, "young" for these responsibilities. Maybe these aren't the reasons, but my Uncle Angus and my Mother were very close.

When they both became adults, their closeness united her side of the family and Angus's side of the family. They talked to each other everyday of the week and Angus always came over on weekends to visit his sister.

There is an old wife's tale that the Lord gives each person one last good day free of pain as a gift before death. My mother was 78 years old and suffering from various illnesses that required her to have a rotating pill organizer. (I believe you can get these at Tupperware parties.) She called me and let me know that she was feeling good and had decided to call all of her children. I was the oldest of five children and got the first call. She had already talked to Uncle Angus.

I got a phone call that night from Angus at her hospital. He let me know that she had had a heart attack and it didn't look good. They were performing emergency heart procedures on her as we spoke. She had called my brother

Jimmy and complained about chest pains. She was in cardiac arrest when he arrived from three miles away. Angus met them at the hospital.

The doctors asked Jimmy and Angus if they wanted to talk or say anything to Mom as they worked on her. Neither one will talk about this experience of seeing Mom on a gurney with her chest split open and a young doctor elbow high in blood squeezing her heart within the gaping hole.

I knew she was dead before Jimmy got to her house. The doctors were performing some meaningless cruel work and making a lot of money in the process.

I drove in for the funeral. I thought it would be a tough drive, since it was mid February in northern Ohio. But on the day of her funeral it was 70 degrees. It broke all the temperature records as the warmest February day in known history. The funeral was beautiful. She was a Scotswoman and it was a Scottish burial. We had a bagpiper pipe everyone in. A tribute was held at a small chapel at the burial grounds. "Amazing Grace" will never sound the same again. The bagpipe's echo is still drifting through the limestone life markers.

The Case backhoe had done its job in the frozen ground. We were expected to leave the cemetery and let the gravediggers finish the job. The grandsons were the pallbearers and said that they wanted to bury their grandmother. I told them they didn't have to ask anyone. They had been provided with the perfect day.

The grandsons became tractors and carried her to the crest of the hill. The gravediggers supplied three ropes to lower the casket, and six shovels for the thawed dirt chips. The family was very proud of Mom's grandsons.

At the wake at my mother's house it was so hot that the garage door was kept open. Angus and his family were gathered around some folding tables. Angus would not go in Mom's house, where he had spent many hours at Mom's kitchen table. He sat out in the garage. If you sat with him he would talk. This is where he told me about the Doctor's asking him and Jimmy if they wanted any final last words with Mom. He shouldn't have crossed behind the curtains. He didn't want to remember her like that. Jimmy has never talked about crossing the curtain line to anyone.

My ex-wife showed up from Texas. I don't think she liked my mother very much but she did like the Hummel ceramics from Germany that we had given mom while we were in Germany. Her intentions were to fly back to Texas burdened with suit cased Hummel's

She in fact was the burden. My relatives picked her up at the airport. My cousin loaned her a car and a place to stay. She ate at my Mom's. The only thing she paid for was the ice cream cake she bought herself. I always hated ice cream cake. It's not a cake. Its ice cream topped with sugar icing. You have to nurse it to keep it from melting, a pain in the ass, temperature sensitive-non-cake.

She offered a piece of her phony cake to me in the kitchen. I declined, and asked her what's with the ice cream cake. You know I don't like it. She informed me, "I guess you still forget, today is my birthday."

"Are you crazy, passing out birthday cake at my mother's wake. Get that damn cake out of here and make sure Uncle Angus doesn't see it."

"I already gave him a piece."

I looked at my son. My face displayed the one-eyed look of pain, "Take care of your Mother's cake."

I went out and down the four steps into the garage and looked in Angus's direction. He was sitting at the head of the folding table with a piece of floating icing on a paper plate staring at him. The heat had killed the phony cake; it was starting to drip on the table but the icing still spelled out a distorted, "Happy."

The Grim Reaper Don't Knock

Thailand 65

“000000000000000000”

Whoring till broke

Drunk and dumb, hooked tight

Little brown machine, ride the night

Shutter awake, bamboo burnt

My dark mate, red coal glow

Damn time, for “wah” to go

Floats in dark shroud, no legs slow.

“A” framed, bone face

Black clock scythe

Time not moving,

Death ----- standby

Hand is slow, extends to me

Too long, bone, closer see

“Ah shit” crunched last words

Time is up, screwed up good

Bone to nail, Slight death touch

Cheap booze, hookers--had enough

Dengue Fever

“What the hell is Dengue Fever?”

The Clinic doctor looking up from his deskbound medical edition of *Dreaded Diseases of the Jungle*. “It’s a disease you get from eating fly shit or drinking bad water. Congratulations, you are the first reported case in South East Asia.”

“I guess I’ll drink nothing but beer and eliminate one source of this heinous disease.”

Doc says, “Are you allergic to antibiotics?”

“Hell no, I’d be dead if I was, load me up good because I’ve build up a terrific immunity to cures.”

I was on a path of self-destruction that started when I stepped off the C-130 after a five-day flight from MacDill AFB in Tampa Florida to our secret destination at Royal Thai Air Force base in Ubon, Thailand. We were warmonger mechanics, supporting the aircraft that bombed the be-Jesus out of Viet Nam.

My buddy Emile Dubose spotted me on the ramp. We were lined up for base in processing. In the military you do everything by rank. I was dead last in line.

Emile said, “Let’s get the hell out of here.”

“Can’t, I need to process in. Is there a crapper around here? I’ve been five days vibration packing a hell of a load.”

“Follow me, there’s an officer’s two-holer just off the ramp.”

I never did process in. We headed to town looking for action. I was moving fast and hard minus five days of boxed meals gone bad.

Emile was from Rhode Island. He had this lamentation about some concoction called a coffee cabinet. It’s a fountain sundae made with coffee ice cream and then blasted with some soda water. It is only served in Rhode Island.

Emile had been in Thailand three months. He spoke fluent Thai, which meant he could order beer and hookers, and knew the correct price.

We headed to Indian Joe’s. Emile introduced me to the embedded Thai hookers as a, “Cherry Boy.”

I didn’t like the Cherry Boy designation, but Emile kept saying it would lower the price. “The girls all want to be your first.” I started lowering my coupling resistance with Singhai beer. It has a picture of a bull on it. When my cheeks went numb I switched to White Cock whiskey, it has a picture of a white rooster on the bottle. The stopper is a stick drizzled with red wax, not a preferred blend. I should have stayed with the bull.

I woke up in total pitch-blackness. I felt around and determined that I was on a bamboo cot, ass naked with a massive headache. The white cock’s beak was thumping inside my head. I was ready to call out something on the order of, “Someone turn on the friggin lights.” My brainpan issued a warning. I saw a red glow positioned directly in front of me; it appeared to be hanging in the air. I

slowly moved my hand over it and felt nothing. I slowly moved my hand under it and felt nothing. I decided to glow watch.

The red glow never varied in the glow factor. It remained a constant glow. I determined after a long study that it was moving very slowly. I've never been afraid of anything, man or beast. I've never been dog bit or child bit. I didn't like this glow at all. I moved my back up against the wall and waited out the darkness.

As the darkness started to fade from black to semi murky I discovered that my unknown enemy was a mosquito coil, sitting on a small table. It was slowly burning itself to a glowing circular death.

My smile faded as a cloaked figure with no face entered, scythe blade first through the closed door. The door remained closed. His scythe was long and crooked. The blade was well honed, probably on bone mass. I moved further up the wall to a semi-sitting position. Adrenaline provided an additional burst of vision light. He had bone hands, extra long, evading the folds of the cloak. Under the cloak hood was dark emptiness. One hand was moving towards me. It stopped and hovered just out of my reach, maybe. I decided to reach out and touch his bone index finger, to see if he was real. I slowly moved my hand out to touch the grim reaper, living skin over bone-to-bone.

As I closed the death gap, I stopped. Nothing sparked across. A coldness flowed. (I actually touched the grim reaper appendage with the nail of my index

finger; this nail died, fell off and re-grew with an upside down imbedded “Y” scar pattern. To this day the nail will not grow to the end of my finger.) The door began to open. The grim reaper had cast his warning. The new sinner in town had touched death.

The hooker I had paid my baht to entered the room. I said, “What the hell is that?”

“A mosquito ring to keep you safe.”

She was short and ugly with bad skin. Her skin was not falling off and she had no open sores, so I celebrated life, by acquiring additional bamboo burns on my knees.

Years later I found out that Dengue Fever is caused by the bite of the female mosquito. The doctor we had didn't know squat. That's why it took him three days to figure out I had Dengue Fever. After that incident I never would use a mosquito coil, too scary. I wish I would have known the cause of my disease sooner. I could have continued to eat fly shit and drink bad water.

I pick at the fingernail and keep it “V” shaped, other wise it grows a tail and looks like a peace symbol.

Hands

Hands are the man

The same,

but opposite

Take a L-OO-K

Look at my Hands

I was the only one in the Tech Reps. air-conditioned trailer. We are the company-supplied experts to the military. It was a hot day. The day was hotter for the Marines at Cherry Point, MCAS, North Carolina. The Commander had almost crashed half of their fleet of AV-8B Harriers, due to a flap problem. They had received two production aircraft from the Company. The Commander kept one for himself; the other aircraft was shared by the rest of the pilots in the squadron. When the Commander's aircraft was broke, things were hot.

Hank Wall walked in the door. Hank is the big shot Quality Control Vice President from St. Louis. He had just flown in for a surprise visit in the company Lear jet. He wasn't smiling.

His greeting was friendly. "I'm Hank Wall, who's in charge of this shithole."

"Not me, everyone is down at the drawing crib working on the flap problem."

Big Hank says, "Who are you? And what are you doing?"

"I'm the Avionics Rep. I'm supposed to be guarding the door, looks like I dicked up."

Hank said, "I came down here to look this flap problem over to see if we have a quality problem. Where are my engineers?"

“The clinic, getting their heads stitched up, their blood is everywhere. They keep standing up under the aircraft. They won’t need a haircut for six months when the Marine Corpsman gets done with them.”

“Well, Hank, do you want to pay the Commander’s aircraft a visit, it’s right next door? I haven’t worked on it but can show you everything.”

“Let’s go”

We approached the aircraft from the tail, I cautioned Hank, “Be careful under this aircraft it’s been knocking the hell out of your engineer’s.” The flaps are in the full up position and the panels are removed exposing the flap controller limit switches.

“Here are the flap limit switches. They could be causing the problem, don’t know, we have had a team of our best people on this problem for three days.”

I point up and at the shimmed switch. “Here’s the Right limit switch.” I then walk over to the left side of the aircraft and pointed out the left limit switch.

“Damn, they’re both the same. That’s the problem.”

Big Hank, “What the hell are you talking about, of course they are both the same, they perform the same function”

“Yeah, that’s the problem. Look at my hands Hank.” I spread out my hands and touched my thumbs together and wiggle my fingers. “Do my hands look the same to you?”

“Yes, they do, tell me I didn’t come all the way from St. Louis to look at your hands.”

“They aren’t the same, they are a mirror image, each is the same, but the opposite. The switches should be a mirror image of each other, the mechanic that wired the one on the right probably missed work so they had the left side guy do both sides. Your inspectors and engineers don’t know the difference between their left and right hand.”

“Are you telling me that you are the only one in this company that figured this out, and that McDonnell Douglas has stopped production and sent two teams of engineers down here to assist you guys? Why in the hell didn’t you come out and find this sooner.”

“You were the first one to invite me Hank.” I placed my hands together at the thumbs and wiggled my fingers at him. I started making flight patterns, swooping, flying motions and flying sounds. Hank didn’t seem to enjoy the air show.

The rest of the company experts returned from the crib. Hank told me he would take care of everything. I was feeling good about the whole thing, visions of winning awards, and being company wide Kudo’d. Then I heard Hank in the boss’s office. I looked in. Hank had his thumbs touching and was wiggling his fingers at my boss saying. “Do my hands look the same to you?”

Hank found that the next three aircraft had the same problem, set-up by the same mechanic, who had only shimmed switches on one side of aircraft.

Later on my boss called me into his office for my performance review. He asked me what I thought I was going to get as a raise. I said, "Since I found the flap problem, I figure double digits."

"You are correct." He said. "Look at my hands." He touched his thumbs together, wiggled his fingers, and then bent in the first digit from each hand to form a "zero."

My eyes accepted his hands. But I said, "Keep moving your fingers, I'll settle for an eight."