

# Elephants Do Like Beer

and  
Other Observations from a Life Well  
Lived

by Philip J. Hopkins

# **Elephants Do Like Beer**

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Printed in the United States of America

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# Foreword

**D**ad surprised me with this book.

During his final months of life, I knew that he was documenting his many wonderful stories, some of which I may have only heard him tell once. What amazed me was that he had found his own voice in the printed word, and that the output would be much more than a simple transcription.

I have some ideas why it took him so long to write a manuscript and bridge the gap between oral and written storytelling. A quote from novelist Raymond Chandler

sheds some light: “The faster I write the better my output. If I’m going slow I’m in trouble. It means I’m pushing the words instead of being pulled by them.”

My father knew time was short when he began chronicling these stories, so he reduced them to their essence. Polishing and crafting takes time, and he didn’t have it to waste. I think he realized that trusting the words was the surest way to complete the book. Ultimately, he realized that editing could come later, and that it was a task that didn’t require his presence.

Dad could type faster than Clark Kent, but chose to write this manuscript in longhand. He certainly had a life’s worth of great material to draw upon. His single-spaced list of story topics spanned most of a pad of legal paper.

This compilation represents approximately a third of the stories he intended to write. I’m pleased that he had time to finish this volume, and am overjoyed that we had an opportunity to hear his other tales over the years.

From a boyhood spent with truly interesting parents in 1920's Philadelphia, to his love of the circus and affection for its performers, Dad respected those who reached out for their dreams.

My Father was far from all talk and no action. He directly helped hundreds, and indirectly perhaps thousands, through his Catholic charity work. Some of his recollections about fund raising for the Hospital San Francisco in Tijuana are incorporated into this book.

His Catholic faith also provided a context for understanding the essence of human nature, and probably inspired him to see people partly stripped of pretense. That's a great lens for observing human comedy, and there are numerous examples of this perspective in the pages that follow.

It's a fine legacy.

PHIL HOPKINS  
PASADENA, CALIFORNIA



# Clarion Street

Clarion Street in Philadelphia was the street where everyone of importance was born and lived. It had a European flavor.

Whoever was too old to learn English got by with hand signals or a note in their European language. My Mother directed the note and money to the proper merchant. She was always correct.

Every high-class street should have a busybody old maid with a “peeping Tom” mirror. We had one... it was great for attracting snowballs during the winter.

We had the accompanying old maid, too. She could tell by the bread men who was baking, and by the weekly visit of the Amish wagon and all the eggs, butter, cheese and milk my Mother bought. She knew my Mother was a homemaker and daily baker. She didn't know how my Mother kept the women and children laughing. She couldn't hear the German jingles my Mother taught the children. She was too far away... darn it!

We were all born at 2426 Clarion Street. According to my brothers, a lot of people were having a grand welcome party because of my arrival. The doctor took his pocket-watch out, took a peek and said: "Eight in the morning and right on time." His nurse said: "I'll cut the cord, and wash him while you wash up. Then check his Mother. There are no patients to see today, so join the Mister in the kitchen for some schnapps."

When I was handed back to my Mother my Dad appeared. He kissed my Mother and me, and ran a rough boilermaker's hand through my golden curly locks. He asked my Mother what name was she going to give me. Without hesitation, she said "Philip" after my

Dad's brother. She said it with such affection that my Dad gave the two of us another hug and kiss.

The doctor's nurse said she had to get back to the office and left. The doctor was in good hands and the two older boys could bring him and his carriage home when they got out of school. By the time the boys got home, the doctor felt no pain. They loaded him into his carriage and took him home. Then my peers lined up to take a look at their new brother.

I didn't do much until I was ten months old. Walking was no problem. There was plenty of furniture to hold onto, and if the open space got too big I had my trusty German Shepherd "Rags" to hold onto. He always stayed at my side for safety.

I saw my first Philadelphia string band when I was one. In those days they played only banjos and everyone sounded like Eddie Peabody. The Fralinger group was my Mother's favorite. He and his 60 men livened up Clarion Street the first Saturday night in December. They had a twenty-foot flattop decorated wagon pulled by four decorated

horses. Two banjo men carried an eight-foot long plank that they placed under each window for a cake or a quarter. Some ladies were past the baking age.



**FIGURE 1:** THE AUTHOR RETURNS TO HIS BOYHOOD NEIGHBORHOOD IN PHILADELPHIA DURING 1969.

Mr. Fralinger was a Jackie Gleason, Flo Ziegfield, and Al Jolson all rolled into one. On his wagon was written: "Yes, we are the saltwater taffy people."

When the plank was placed under our window for my Mother's prize-winning chocolate cake, she asked what ethnic number had the band rehearsed. When they said Hebrew, she gave them the address of the only Hebrew family on the block. They gave the word to Mr. Fralinger. When it was time for the departing number, Mr. Fralinger had his band face that house and they played the most romantic ballad I had ever heard. I'll bet Ferko and Hageman ate their hearts out.

On Clarion Street you had ninety-nine mothers. Forget the busy body. You had to be good or suffer the consequences. Once a friend refused to run an errand for an old lady, and his Mother confined him to their steps for three days to teach him a lesson. It ate his heart out. He never refused again.

An Irish chap from another neighborhood was visiting his Aunt and threw a snowball

at Mr. Goldman because he was wearing a yarmulke. Mr. Goldman went directly to the culprit's Aunt. She made him shovel the Goldman pavement, then sent him home. He didn't belong on Clarion Street. Unfortunately, he was Catholic. His parents and the nuns did him a disservice.

Yes, seventy-five years later and I still miss Clarion Street. Clarion Street was a family street. If anyone got sick on the block, those who were intimate with the family approached them first to ascertain their needs. They were cheerfully met. Deaths were handled in the same manner. The birth of every child was precious. New mothers got a gift. It could be a dish of perogies, homemade kielbasa, a loaf of hot scone bread, jar of Kosher pickles and tomatoes or a beautiful handmade shawl. I was convinced they all came to see me.

The doctor came to check my Mother and announced that my four-year old sister, who had the only private room due to her gender, would sleep on the couch in the parlor for two weeks while my Dad snored in her bed. You can't argue with a doctor.

I was so happy that Dad was home for a week. He bathed me every morning, then I told him it was time for me to eat. He passed me onto my Mother and went to the kitchen to fix her a meal. He was an excellent cook. We boys inherited his talent. Sure... my Mother could still out-cook him.



# Mummers' Strut

**M**ummers were probably the court jesters of early times. When and how they found themselves on the Philadelphia scene is a known secret.

Ask a South Philly resident about their origin, and they will probably say Mummers originated with the Hoagie, Philly Steak Sandwich, water-ice cones, Tastykakes and famous singers.

Ask a person from South Philly a question, and you are sure to get at least five non-related answers.

I was two years old when I saw my first Mummer and it was not on New Year's Day on Broad Street. It was from the comfort of our living room.

The Saturday night before New Year's, every string band that played in the previous year's parade would come down Clarion Street playing a medley of last year's songs. While they were playing, the two captains from their Fancy Division would carry a long board and place it under every open window for a donation of a cake or pie.

A Mother's donation was cheerfully marked and placed in their truck. The donations were purchased by the Club members the next day, with all the money going into the Club coffers.

My Mother's three-layer chocolate cake brought in the most money every year. Her favorite string band was Fralingers, sponsored by the famous salt-water taffy company, so you knew who got her cake. If their string bands' music did not please my Mother, she just closed our window and we enjoyed her prize-winning cake at our

Sunday dinner. Mother had a subtle way of showing her displeasure.

I believe the “Mummers Strut” was started by the Fancy Division, whose backs got tired from carrying very heavy capes as they danced the five miles up Broad Street. A hunched-over position, assumed every three or four blocks, would relieve the back pain. Why not show their cheerfulness and dance that way? Thus, the Mummers Strut was originated.



# Hold On

**T**he first time I remember hearing the words “hold on,” I was two years old. I was sitting on the bottom step of our freshly scrubbed steps at home when my Mother emerged carrying the biggest wicker basket on her arm.

She sat beside me and explained that we would be going shopping together today for the first time. In order for both of us to have a pleasant trip I must know the rules.

I must take a firm hold of her dress, and never let go until we returned to our kitchen. I must accept no food from anyone, except from her. I must not talk to anyone except to

her. After I repeated these three rules, we started on our food safari.

Our first stop was Shultz's Butcher Shop, where I heard my Mother speak a language I did not understand... German. Mr. Shultz wore everything necessary to identify his trade, even a straw hat. My Mother and he had a good rapport, and she was very happy introducing me, and picking up free liver, kidneys, hearts and pigs' feet. Her order of eight thick pork chops with a pocket in them, two pounds of thick sliced bacon, two pounds of knockwurst, and two pounds of scrapple seemed to keep a smile on Mr. Shultz's face. He then held the most delicious looking hot dog out towards me. My Mother said it was OK to accept it and told me to say "danke schön." See, I'm already speaking German on my first shopping tour.

On the way to our next stop, my Mother explained that she was too busy today to make dessert so she would surprise my Dad and buy cream puffs. Our entrance into the French bakery was like a homecoming for my Mother, and another new language for me. One of the ladies yelled something up to the

second floor, and almost immediately eight bodies appeared wearing the biggest smiles I have ever seen. The kiss on each cheek was something new to me, but as I noticed my Mother accepting and returning same, I figured it was okay.

When everything settled down and the group returned to the upstairs living quarters, the two ladies packed the cream puffs into a box and inserted a long fat cigar-shaped object covered with shiny chocolate. My Mother called it an éclair. She then bought the longest loaf of French bread that looked like a skinny baseball bat. She explained that we were having Irish Stew for dinner, and there is nothing better than crusty French bread to lap up the gravy. Mother paid her bill and we were off to Mr. Guiseppi's produce store.

I don't know why he had a store when all of his produce was shown outside the store. The only thing I saw in the store was a large tub, some knives and some rags. My Mother explained that the tub was for washing the fruit and veggies, the knives for sampling, and the rags for cleaning up. This was too complicated for a two year old. After an

introduction in another language, the three adults seemed to go into convulsions of laughter as they examined each different item. I suppose it was all right because no one cried. My Mother had used up all the room in her basket so Mrs. Guiseppi gave her a big shiny apple for me.

We had one more stop... the shoe repair shop. The owner, Mr. Palumbo, spoke the same language as the Guiseppis.

When I saw the five pairs of shoes being lined up on the counter by Mr. Palumbo, I knew there was no way they were going to fit into my Mother's full basket. They didn't. Mr. Palumbo tied each pair together and draped them around my neck. There were no samples at the shoe repair shop. He had none to give.

Shoe laces, shoe polish and anything pertaining to your shoes were sold at the F. W. Woolworth Store.

Life was so simple! Everyone knew where everything was sold. Bring back those good old days!!

# Professional Mourners

**W**hen I was four years old a man, who lived down the street from our home, died. He had worked for my Dad at the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

In those days the viewing was held at a person's home in the living room. The viewing was fantastic! They had three professional mourners who were hired to sit on one side of the casket and moan, and say nice things about the deceased. This was done so those viewing would be edified.

As they did not know the deceased, they earned their fee for the three hours work.

One did so well that the widow asked her oldest child to check the casket to make sure it was her husband they were talking about.

There was plenty of liquor on the kitchen table where his men friends gathered to toast him, and to drown their sorrows.

My Mother put a fifteen-minute time limit on the whole charade, so our visit was not too long. It was short, but interesting.

# Giant and Midget

I was sitting on the front step waiting to go on my second shopping safari with my Mother when it happened.

I saw the tallest man in the world, carrying the smallest man in the world, come out of Mrs. Crowley's house. I had to tell my Mother immediately. When I related this earth shattering news, she didn't get excited. All she said was: "The circus must be in town."

Not knowing what a circus was, I had to find out. Any time I had the opportunity to talk, I wanted to know about the circus.

When we got home and had emptied the wicker-basket, I asked my Mother to take me to Mrs. Crowley's as I had a favor to ask of her.

We walked down five houses, and a smiling Irish face answered the door. Mrs. Crowley invited us in for a cup of tea and a piece of scone bread. After it was served in a very regal fashion, I asked my question. Without missing a heart beat, Mrs. Crowley told me to be at her front door at nine the next morning, because the giant is a very slow eater and talks a lot.

I returned at nine, pushed the doorbell and was ushered to the kitchen by Mrs. Crowley. She was making the biggest stack of pancakes I had ever seen. She filled one plate, placed one stack on another plate, then called up the stairs for someone named Shorty to come down.

The next thing I knew the whole house, maybe the entire block, seemed to shake until the person walking appeared in the kitchen. Mrs. Crowley introduced me to my first

giant. We shook hands and he sat down to eat. I watched in amazement.

Mrs. Crowley ran back to the bottom of the stairs and called for Will. When she returned to the kitchen she asked the giant if he could eat some more pancakes. I was shocked when he said he could eat another stack. While she was making his second stack, the smallest man I have ever seen walked into the kitchen.

After introductions he sat at the table and Mrs. Crowley placed a hot pancake on his dish and placed his former one on the bottom of the giant's second stack. After thanking Mrs. Crowley for breakfast, they both pressed a large coin into her hand, and asked her to serve a Sunday cookhouse breakfast tomorrow morning. That consisted of scrambled eggs, bacon, home fries, toast and jelly. After examining the two coins, she said: "I'll do better than that. I'll replace the toast with Irish scone, and the jelly with home-made apple-butter." The giant picked up the midget and they were off to the trolley at Broad and Erie on their way to work.

Mrs. Crowley walked me home. I related my experience to my Mother, and the good lady gave my Mother the two large coins and asked her to do her shopping.

When an Amish family who went door to door selling their products arrived, my Mother asked if they had any cracked eggs for the scrambled eggs. They produced eighteen eggs and two quarts of their thick, unpasteurized, unhomogenized milk that would be perfect in the scrambled eggs and scone.

Then my Mother gave her weekly order, paid her bill and the Amish man loaded our icebox with his treasures.

We delivered the eggs and milk to Mrs. Crowley and were off to the butcher and produce stores. After getting her order, Mother told Mr. Schultz to slice one pound of his leanest bacon for Mrs. Crowley and wrap two large sausages for good measure. She paid her bill and we were off to Mr. Guiseppi's for produce.

After she bought the produce for our house, she bought some potatoes, a large onion, and red and green peppers for Mrs. Crowley to make a fancy Western omelet like my Dad always made for Sunday breakfast.

When we got home and Mother put her meat in the icebox and her veggies in her bin, we took Mrs. Crowley's items to her. Much to our surprise, she gave us a freshly baked scone for our dinner. It sure made the liver and onions taste better.

My Mother had a trick in making the liver taste like shoe leather. If you complained, her stock answer was: "It's free." So were all the insides of the hogs that Herr Schultz slaughtered. Why didn't he offer Mother some of his treasures?

The next morning while I was sitting on the step waiting for another day of adventure, the giant carrying the midget came down the street and asked to see my Mother. I ran in and got her. They told her how delicious the breakfast was, and wanted to know if they owed her any money for the purchases. She assured them that the two fifty-cent pieces

were sufficient. Smiling, they left for the trolley car.

The gourmet breakfast was repeated the following week.

# One Hundred and Ten Percent

I remember the first time I heard the expression “one hundred and ten percent.” It was the day after Labor Day, 1924.

As was the custom along the Eastern seaboard, all those of school age returned to the classroom for another year of formal education the day after Labor Day.

Those of us who were five continued to receive our education at the knee of our Mother. As Labor Day always falls on a Monday, it stands to reason that the next day

would be Tuesday and that was wash day in our household.

When I was a child, Mother, the homemaker, did certain things on certain days. She didn't need a planning calendar, an activities book or any suggestions. She just knew what day it was and followed her schedule. Woe to anyone or anything that altered that schedule... only sickness or death was a legitimate excuse—and sometimes not even sickness.

Helping my Mother carry all the dirty clothes to the basement where they would be washed by hand on the scrubbing board with Fels Naptha soap was quite a chore for a five year old. Carrying the washed clothes up the stairs to be hung up in the yard was twice as hard. Holding the clothespin bag was easy but boring. Okay, discovering how many pins you could hold in your mouth at one time was fun. Hearing your Mother say: "I don't know what I would do without you" was rewarding.

After everything was assembled in the yard, I was told to take the list on the kitchen table

to Mr. Borrow, and tell him to put the charges in his book until Friday night. Like a dutiful son, I did what I was told.

Upon entering Mr. Borrow's grocery store, I noticed him carefully placing rolls of toilet paper on a high shelf with a pole that had two pincers on the end. I was fascinated! When he completed the job, he turned to me and asked if my Mother had sent me with a list.

As he filled the order, my mind was made up. I must become his assistant and use that pole. In no time at all he had my Mother's order assembled, placed in the wicker basket I had produced, and marked the charges in his charge book.

It was now or never, so I made my move. Very respectfully I said: "Borrow, Mr. may I fill out an application for a job here?" I had heard my Father coaching my older brothers in the proper way to apply for a job. It seemed forever but Mr. Borrow found his favorite wooden box, adjusted his pillow and sat down. I'm glad he did because now we were eye to eye, and my Mother always told

me to look a person in the eye when conversing.

Mr. Borrow adjusted his loose spectacles that were always slipping to the end of his nose, and said: “And what could you do to make my life easier and perhaps happier?”

Quick as a flash I started my litany of jobs. I could sweep the floor and sidewalk, wash the windows, and deliver packages in my wagon that were too heavy for a lady to carry. I could also slide the groceries down the board to the basement when the wholesaler delivered them. I could bring groceries up from the basement at his suggestion, and I could learn to stock shelves, and watch the store if he ever wanted to nap in the afternoon. Without a moment of hesitation he said: “AND WHEN CAN YOU START?”

He told me to take the basket of groceries home, discuss the job with my Mother and let him know her decision.

My feet would not move fast enough to cover the two-house distance between his store and our kitchen. I charged down the alley to our

back gate and called for my Mother to open it. When she did, I put down the wicker basket and gave her the biggest hug that a five-year old is capable of giving. Who cared if her hands were full of soapsuds and her hair was stringy and damp with perspiration from rubbing up and down on the scrub-board. She was my Mother, and she was going to make the BIGGEST DECISION OF MY LIFE.

My Mother was impressed with my manners and suggestions to Mr. Borrow. When she told me how much she would miss me not being her helper, I knew she was going to let me take the job. She even volunteered to make the chocolate pudding in the morning so I could lick the pot on my lunch hour. Now, that is my kind of Mother!

I thanked her for making the right decision by giving her the strongest hug and wettest kiss that only a five-year old can give. We walked through the house to the front door, and she stood there waving until I disappeared into Mr. Borrow's store. I felt just like my Dad going to work.

I ran up to the counter where Mr. Borrow was sitting reading the weekly Israel paper, and received my first reprimand. He said: "Philip, as long as you work here, you are never to run in this store. Do you understand?" I should have been humiliated but I wasn't because his remarks told me that I HAD THE JOB! For the next two years I kept that promise.

Mr. Borrow extended his hand to shake on our arrangement, and showed me where the broom was kept. I asked which way he would like me to sweep... front to back or back to front. He thanked me for my intelligent question, and said he liked the store swept back to front; and when you sweep everything out the front door onto the pavement, then sweep the pavement.

This turned out to be my first chore every morning. I was to work from eight in the morning until four thirty in the afternoon, with half an hour for lunch. The hours could be adjusted if there was an emergency. An emergency was classified as the arrival of the wholesale grocery truck, three or more customers in the store, the Rabbi appearing

to have hot tea with Mr. Borrow, or when a storm appears and awnings must be rolled up to save them from being shredded.

By the second day there were so many emergencies that I decided to carry my lunch and eat it in the back room. Besides, during bites of my homemade sandwich that my Mother packed me, I could finger the apron I was wearing and dream of the day when I would be a full-fledged grocer.

My first day was thrilling, fantastic, interesting and educational. When my quitting time of four thirty arrived on that first day, Mr. Borrow called me to his side as he stood in front of the cash register, and announced that it was time for me to receive payment for my efforts. He explained that being in business was a gamble, so those who worked for the owner of a business should also be prepared to gamble.

He then presented the options of payment. He would pay me ten cents per day, or I could have all the pennies in the cash register at four thirty. Realizing that no one except Mr. Borrow was ever permitted to open the

register, I accepted the latter. I wanted to show a sign of trust. After all, some day we could be partners.

Mr. Borrow hit the “No Sale” button on the cash register, and when it opened he scooped out all the pennies and placed them on the counter. When he finished counting them, he announced in a very happy tone that I had made the right decision. There were fourteen pennies.

He sat down and said: “Philip, I am proud to be your employer. You put out one hundred and ten percent today. We will have a lasting relationship. Tomorrow I’ll teach you to count. Although you trust me, you will meet men in the business world who will try to cheat you if you can’t count. Before you go to school next year, you will know how to add, subtract and multiply. Now go home and tell your Mother all that you have learned today. Shalom.”

I ran all the way home to tell my Mother of my first working day and to show her my wages. After a big hug for her working man, she motioned me to a chair at the kitchen

table and went to the icebox for the pitcher of milk. With the glass of milk and a slice of homemade buttered bread in front of me I told my story.

Everything went fine, and there were ample “oohs” and “aahs” until I related that Mr. Borrow said I had given one hundred and ten percent that day. Twice in the same day my hands were being enfolded. My Mother said: “Son, you’re different... you always give it one hundred and ten percent.”

I was voting before I realized that one hundred percent was considered perfect.



# Mother Shapiro

**A**t seven I retired from Mr. Borrow, my teacher and mentor, midst many tears and hugs. I was off to get a spiritual and formal education.

The high-school educated nun patrolling the aisles for first grade was not equipped to control the hundred and forty hooligans called students. Chalk, eraser, and spit ball fights made up the day. I learned nothing.

When I explained my disappointment to my Mother, she had me transferred to another Catholic school where the nuns were college graduates and experienced teachers. The class reduction to thirty students, not to

mention the rap on the knuckles with a wooden pointer, helped us to give our undivided attention to the lessons.

Every day, the Principal sat in the back of the classroom for at least half a period critiquing the teacher as well as the students. If she didn't like what she saw, she took over the class and corrected the problem.

One day we were having a spelling bee and doing very poorly. She took over and everything hit the fan. Mother "Shapiro" announced that our lunch and playtime would be taken at our desk and she would return at three in the afternoon, after dismissing the school, for her version of a spelling bee.

As soon as she rang the dismissal bell, she was at our classroom, and told our nun to sit in the back of the room. Then she picked up our spelling book. Instead of going up and down each aisle she skipped all around the room. She also did not take the words in rotation, which confused us. But we passed with a one hundred percent grade. She

congratulated us and told Sister to dismiss us.

I will now insert a wee bit of humor to help you understand this episode in the context of my life.

The eighth-grade class, while waiting to enter high school, all went out and got summer jobs except the one Kosher boy. Due to bigotry, no one would hire him. The Catholic boys went to see the Superior at the convent, and she agreed to hire him as the summer janitor. Three days later they found him sitting on his front step, unemployed.

His friends went to see the Superior to find out why he was fired. She told them she didn't mind it when he arrived in the morning and hung his hat on the statue of the Blessed Virgin, and at noon he would wash up in the holy water font, but when he started to call her Mother Shapiro, he had to go. Shalom.



# Jumbo

**S**ister Julia Mary had a fearful tactic that she pulled on her fifth-grade students every year. The first day of school she invited her four football-playing brothers from the University of Notre Dame to flex their muscles, and tell us what they would do to us if anyone took advantage of their petite sister.

Sister “Petite” stood five feet, ten inches and weighed two hundred pounds. She could have played for Notre Dame.

Do you see why we called her “Jumbo?”



# Honesty

**Y**ou didn't have to be a genius to know that half a scoop is a pound, and two scoops are five pounds. So how did you think that Kroger, A&P, and Acme Stores got so rich? Although the expression "highway robbery" was not widely known in the 1920's, it was going on in the back rooms of the supermarkets.

My education at the age of seven, packaging food in the back room of America's leading grocer, was a lesson in deceit. Advancement was predicated on store profit. The future of two married male clerks and their families depended on the genius of the back room packer.

I must admit that my two-year elementary education at Mr. Borrow's grocery store conditioned me for the District Supervisor, Mr. Scanlon. Mr. Borrow was gentle and humane, while Scanlon was brutal.

The first time we met in the back room for a lesson in packing tomatoes (A&P had gone into produce), he boxed my ears for not placing the largest tomato on the bottom of a basket, and placing smaller ones on the top. In 1926, produce was not sold by the pound.

As I had never had my ears boxed before, I retaliated and kicked Mr. Scanlon in the groin. His scream emptied the front of the store. While he was lying on the floor and screaming, Don, the manager, came and suggested that I had better go home. After he assured me that I would be paid for the day, I went home.

Such an education in finance! Scales? Sure, we had scales. You were better off if you trusted the "palm weight." Palm weight can best be described as placing your trust in the friendship of the merchant. My Mother

always accepted palm weight, and after my higher education in the back room of the leading grocery store, I can understand why.

Even the addition written on the grocery bag that you never took home was draining your pocketbook. Remember “carry over?” Fast addition was an art taught by the chains. The Mom and Pop grocer was honest and gave credit... and samples. How many times did a chain slice a piece of lunch meat and say “taste?” How many times did a multi-store grocer offer you a sample pretzel or potato chip? Today... who knows from samples? I was born to believe that without a sample, you don’t know what you are buying.

My Mother did not trust the chains. I can understand why. It wasn’t just the pickle barrel, sawdust on the floor or smiles that were missing. It was the honesty.



# Games We Played

**D**uring the so-called Roaring Twenties, life was not only exciting... it was simple. Even the games that children played were simple and free of cost. For example:

## Red Rover

There was a group of children divided in two, one half on each side of a street. After a hasty decision by the side in charge as to who was the slowest on the opposite pavement, that person's name was called and he or she must reach the opposite side without getting tagged. If caught, they are out of the game and must sit down on the curb. You had to be fleet-footed and shifty to survive.

### Kick the Can

An empty can was usually donated by someone's Mother to tire out our legs. The rules were the same as for baseball.

### Hopscotch

With a piece of chalk, which was borrowed from your classroom, you drew an oblong with ten squares. The object was to throw your stone on each number (from one to ten) in numerical order. You had to throw the stone into each block while hopping on one foot and bending down to pick it up while hopping on that same foot in all ten squares.

### Buck Buck

It was generally played by three on each side, and was strictly for boys. A heavy boy on a team places his shoulder against a lamppost and parallels his back for someone to sit on. An opposing team member runs and slaps him on the cheeks with fingers and yells: "Buck buck, how many fingers are up?" He tries to guess and if he fails another member of his team takes the same position behind him. This continues until all three boys are locked together or they collapse, at which time the winner is declared.

### Blind Man's Bluff

A person is blindfolded, spun around three times, and is touched on any mentional part of the body by the other players, asking who touched them. If he or she cannot guess before everyone touches them, they lose and must sit on the step.

### Double Dutch

A borrowed clothesline is held by a person on each end and rotated so another person can jump up and down within the turning ropes. It's much harder to do than with a single rope where you only have to judge your jump with one rope.

### Hide and Seek

Everyone hides from the seeker. When you are found you sit on a step until all are found.

### Jacks

This is the only expensive game. A set of ten jacks and a miniature ball costs one penny. Girls would throw the jacks so none touched each other. Then they would throw the ball into the air and pick up one at a time. Then two at a time, until she finally picked up ten

at a time. If a boy had any desire to play this “sissy” game, he had better sit across from her as soon as he saw the jacks appear. They didn’t call me “quick hands” for nothing!

### Stick Ball

This was played the same as baseball except the bat was a discarded broomstick and the ball was a refugee from the sewer. It was cut in half so the pitcher could do more than throw spitballs. Every month during the summer, two Italian men arrived with twenty-foot poles with rakes attached, and brought up all the gunk from the sewers. For the use of a bucket of hot water to wash their hands before lunch, and two jars of cold water to enjoy with their salami-garlic lunch, I got all the treasures of the sewer, including a fresh supply of balls.

# The Amish

**W**hen I was a child, the Amish from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, came knocking at our front door every Friday morning. My Mother and I would follow the man down to his wagon, and after greeting his wife, children and horse in German, my Mother would give them her weekly order.

My Mother bought all their cracked eggs, six quarts of the sweetest raw milk, butter, cream cheese, sour cream and any fresh fruit or veggies they had to offer. She always entertained the children with a German song or poem. While the man took her purchases to our kitchen, she fed a carrot to their horse.

Any wonder why it was a happy stop for all concerned.

Years later after my wife and I had waited a year to get our new car to head for California, we purchased a used luggage trailer from Sears on which to carry our worldly possessions.

When we got to the Amish outskirts of Lancaster, the axle on the trailer broke. As we were standing there, contemplating our next move, an Amish buggy stopped to survey our situation. The man told us to unhitch the car from the trailer and follow him.

We entered a beautiful home where his wife and two sons, who could have passed for linebackers, were reading their Bibles. The father told the two giants to hitch up the workhorses to a wagon, go down and get the trailer, take it to the workshop and fix the axle. They were off like two kids going to the Fair.

He then told his wife to serve us dinner. While eating at their kitchen table, we acquainted them with our past. It was hard

for them to believe some of our stories, so they had a lot of questions.

About an hour later, the two sons appeared and announced that our trailer was fixed, and they were ready to hitch it to our car.

They were busy doing this when I asked the father how much did we owe the boys and his wife for their services. He said a “thank you” would be ample, with a promise to always help anyone needing my help. I promised.



# Grading

**W**hatever happened to the old fashioned way of grading the pupil?

Was it too embarrassing?

What's with these A, B, C and D's on the modern report card?

I've asked three questions. Are there any answers? Does only God know?

In my day, a youngster received a mark from fifty to one hundred. I guess some did not deserve a fifty, but there were few going to school who could not guess half the answers. Things were not that difficult.

The day when the pupil got what he deserved, or what the teacher thought he deserved, in harsh, bold numbers was far more exciting than a shallow D. It was a thrill to look at your monthly report card and see that everything was a passing grade.

On a particularly tough subject like Palmer Method penmanship a warm seventy was appreciated. Now that was a subject! Remember how we had to learn to make the perfect circles, slants and even shading? One hour was devoted every day to penmanship with half an hour of practice at night.

Now when you try to read a message from a college graduate, you think you are reading a drugstore prescription. Maybe that's in Latin?

# Pushcart

**S**ince when did a grocery man also handle fruits and vegetables? This was always a profession unto itself. I'll give you an example.

A real fruit man never kept his wares inside a store. Any idiot will tell you that fruits and vegetables need fresh air and sunshine.

A "huckster" always kept and sold his veggies and fruits from a pushcart. You were born during or after the "big war" and don't know what a huckster is? Okay, I'll tell you.

Huckstering was a verbal profession which was an offshoot of the Italian opera where

there was only one star because he could out-shout everyone else. Although I was not Italian, I was born in the Italian section of Philadelphia. I was one of the best and most revered hucksters. When I entered alleys to sell my goodies, everyone knew I was there.

My distinctive voice, which enunciated every syllable, raised every household window. Being a “star” I usually reserved my voice to one item. Sometimes greed or a good buy at the produce docks dictated two. I preferred one.

When you have only one item to sell you become inventive. My summer-time favorites were strawberries, watermelons and tomatoes. All could be easily sampled. Sure, I carried a sharp paring knife in my belt. How do you think I plugged a watermelon or sliced a tomato so a prospective buyer could see and savor the inside?

If a prospect was serious, I would let her sample one strawberry. Plugging a watermelon was a different situation. By making a diamond cut in the melon about one-inch deep, and extracting same, the

housewife could see and smell the sweetness and ripeness. No, you didn't let her eat it unless she bought it. After you got her ten cents, she could eat the plug. It was hers. If for some ungodly reason she did not purchase the melon, you would insert the plug and completely ignore her.

No, she was not entitled to sample a strawberry or tomato. She didn't know quality. After all, there are so many who need your merchandise and appreciate your talent.

Some baby boomers will ask: "Didn't you have flies?" Of course we had flies. But we also had taste and smell. Look at the waxed fruit today. Where is the taste, where is the smell? Not even the flies will go near them.

I say: BRING BACK THE PUSHCARTS,  
BRING BACK THE FLIES!



# Money Matters

**W**hen I was sixteen, I discovered that some people playing semi-pro baseball were paid. The average player got ten dollars and a free bologna lunch.

Without giving it a second thought I reported to the Angora Athletic Club for a tryout. There were six men, from twenty to thirty five in age, also hoping to get the first base position. Being the youngest I was given the last call. This did not bother me because it gave me the opportunity to assess my competition.

By the time the sixth man had his workout, I knew I had the job. After I scooped or

stretched for everything thrown at me, the manager asked if I could play Sunday afternoon.

When I said I could, he told me to be at the clubhouse at eleven in the morning because the game was to be at one. I asked how much I would be paid. He said it would be my tryout. I reminded him I just had my tryout and expected to be paid ten dollars for the game. He finally agreed.

When I got to the clubhouse on Sunday, I thought a wake was in progress. There was an eight-by-ten glossy of Satchel Paige and his Monarch Chiefs on display. On the bottom of the photos was written: "We're coming." I was too young to be impressed.

Walking out to our field, about two blocks away, my ears were filled with Satchel Paige stories. As we were taking batting practice, the Monarch Chiefs arrived. They were a happy group. They didn't take batting practice... just sat in the shade and ate watermelon.

By noon there were three thousand people standing about our field. We had no seats. The managers exchanged line-up cards, and the game began. It wasn't much of a game. At the end of the fifth inning, while the Angora men were passing the hats for donations, I noticed the two managers making a deal deciding on the final score.

It seems that nine was the magic number. Playing the Monarch Chiefs or Bacarach Giants was like a high school basketball team playing the Harlem Globetrotters. No contest!

Our first eight went down fanning the wind. As I was an unknown quantity, I inherited the ninth batting position. As I stepped into the batter's box a voice said to me: "Satch is going to let you get a hit. Go for the first pitch." As the catcher was very short he never used the squat position. I thanked him, saw Satchel give me a smile, and focused my eyes on the ball. The next thing I knew the baseball, looking the size of a basketball, came floating towards me very slowly. I blasted it as hard as I could and the ball sailed over the second baseman's head. By

the time I flew to first base, he had retrieved the ball and was standing on second base.

In the meantime, the catcher, short stop, and third baseman were holding a heated conference with Satchel about his dipsy-doodle pitch. What showmanship! Satch promised to retire the pitch.

Our next man struck out to end the inning. I was a hero for getting the only hit.

The managers divided up the loot, and the Monarchs were off to New Jersey to play their second game. They averaged fifteen games a week, then headed south for the winter to play in the Negro league.

I can understand why the white players did not want to play them. It would be too embarrassing.

When I got my hit off Leroy "Satchel" Paige I was an upcoming star of Angora Athletic Club.

# Twenty Two Years A Nobody

**I** was twenty two years old when I realized I was a “nobody.” A “nobody” has all the functions of a regular body, but cannot account for the existence of same.

It all started on October 5, 1919. The family doctor, after delivering this bundle of joy to my Mother at home in my parent’s bed, joined my Dad at the kitchen table to “wet his whistle.”

His whistle must have been very dry because the two of them reportedly finished off a

quart of bourbon before my oldest two brothers took the doctor and his horse home.

Needless to say... no birth certificate was ever filed.

When the Big War escalated, and I was a college student in Pittsburgh, I began getting verbally abused by parents whose sons were called to defend our country. As I was a healthy one hundred and ninety-pound athlete, the chatter directed towards me on the trolleys was very confusing. Comments ran from queer to conscientious objector. Neither was acceptable, and I didn't want to carry either label.

As my Dad was dying of cancer at the Naval Hospital, I had to confront my saintly Mother about signing up. After all, she was there on the day of my birth.

I went to the local draft board, and they could not believe anyone could slip through the crack of humanity, and not wonder why he didn't feel guilty. They said I should go to the church where I was baptized, get a copy of the official record, find two people who

remember me being born, and bring this information to them. I did this immediately.

Then I was told that unless I volunteered for the service of my choice, I would be drafted into the Army within the month.

The next morning, I was at the Federal Building to take my physical to become a Naval aviator. I think everyone had the same idea. We were told to strip, form a line of tens, and bend over and smile. We soon found out that this first doctor was not gentle on surveying your rectum.

The next doctor coming along in front of us was a cardiologist, and he seemed to take forever in listening to my chest. Then he asked: "How long have you had this heart condition"? I asked him: "What heart condition?" He almost carried me over to a chair, and told me not to move. Then he went to get his boss, a cardiologist about twenty years older than the first doctor, and confirmed his thinking. I think my heart must have stopped.

He took my application, stamped it rejected, and gave me a note to our family doctor, suggesting where he could take me for help. He told me to get dressed and forget the service. I was now classified “4F.”

As I was leaving the building, a Marine lieutenant and his sergeant were returning from lunch. They asked if I wanted to be a Marine. I told them my story, and showed them my physical rejection papers.

They wanted to see if they had different Navy doctors giving the physical. When the answer turned out to be yes, they told me to fill out their application and take it with me to the physical exam room. I did. I stripped and got in line and passed the exam.

I was now a U. S. Marine, and was told to report at eight in the morning at the B&O station for my ride to Parris Island. That day my three-and-a-half years of misery started. They broke every promise.

My sense of humor saved my life.

# Jump...I've Got My Own Problems

**W**hen I was going to college in Pittsburgh, I had some tough courses working towards my degree in Psychology.

One particular night, my head told me to take a long walk, and then return to my books for another hour of studies.

I had just started to cross the Allegheny River bridge when I saw a damsel with hat, gloves, pocket-book and shoes nicely arranged, put one leg over the railing and shout "I'm gonna jump, I'm gonna jump."

As I walked past her, I said: “Jump, I’ve got my own problems.”

I don’t think the vulgar words coming out of her mouth made her a graduate of a convent school.

But, I saved her life.

# How Can You Tell Without a Smell?

Perhaps it's because I'm getting older and my taste buds are not as good as they used to be. Nevertheless, I remember when my nose used to get excited and my salivary glands went into high gear when I entered a grocery store.

Entering a Kosher deli was on a higher gastronomical plateau. In both stores my nose always spoke to me so I knew the smell I should expect. The grocery store had the tub of butter, tins of cookies, barrels of sugar, unground coffee, stacks of unwrapped bread,

and Fels Naptha soap, plus the unsmelling can goods and toilet paper.

There were no tissues. In the cold weather, if you didn't have a piece of discarded sheet, you used your sleeve. Most of us looked like admirals with thirty years of service.

The Kosher deli was blessed with large barrels of pickles, pickled tomatoes, pickled herring, tins of potato chips and fresh Jewish rye bread. Bagels were sold only at the Jewish bakery across the street from a Catholic Church on Sundays. Perhaps this was for religious reasons?

As the door never closed during business hours, I know you have a question on your mind. How about flies? Flies... of course there were flies! Everyone of school age knew that the fly swatter rested on the cash register, and if a fly was on the rye bread or bagel that you had your eye on, you got the swatter and shooed him off.

**BRING BACK THE SMELL!**

# I'm Sending the Boys

One Friday evening when the family was seated around the kitchen table enjoying our Kosher snack, after having seen the movie called "Wings," my Mother suggested that the picture wasn't half as exciting as chasing Pancho Villa.

As my Dad objected to her telling the story, we all had to hear it. My Dad was a Captain in the U. S. Army Reserve, stationed at Battalion Headquarters on South Broad Street in Philadelphia.

He attended drills once a month and camp for two weeks with the Battalion every summer. He was appointed Adjutant of the

Battalion by General John J. “Black Jack” Pershing. He rode and walked with Pershing for two years chasing Pancho Villa.

My Mother was disgusted being home with two babies... one was three and the other was one. Thus the famous telegram to my Dad: “I’m sending the boys to you.”

General Pershing agreed with my Mother and the troops all came home. The power of a woman!

# America's Arm- Wrestling Champ

**I**f my Mother did not have family plans, my Dad enjoyed spending Sunday afternoons with his Army buddies. They had a big piece of property where everything for the three thousand-man battalion was kept in readiness. The main hall could fit all of them for meetings or meals. I loved to eat off the old-fashioned mess gear.

My Dad was two hundred and forty pounds of muscle and stood five feet, eight inches. He was as broad as he was tall. He was the U.S. Champion in arm-wrestling and took on all comers.

One night after Strangler Lewis won his wrestling belt he challenged my Dad to a contest so he could prove who had the strongest arms. My Dad's buddies persuaded him to take up the challenge. A date was set for a Sunday afternoon four weeks away... ample time for his buddies to sell three thousand tickets at five dollars each. It was the very first time admission would be charged. The winner would take all, including my Dad's belt. As most of the battalion worked at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, Brills, etc., the tickets were all sold in one day.

As my Mother and the rest of the family thought the sport to be vulgar, I was thrilled to ride the subway with my Dad. His buddies greeted him and related how lucky they were to find idiots to take their bets.

Fifteen minutes before the appointed time, Strangler Lewis arrived in his robe with fifty hangers-on. When he took off his robe he wore only his wrestling shorts and championship belt. Some of my Dad's

buddies ran to get my Dad's arm-wrestling belt and put it on him.

The General in charge of the battalion explained the simple rules... two out of three put-downs determined the winner, with a ten-minute rest between each put-down.

Then he said, "Position... start!" After what seemed like an eternity, my Dad put Strangler down. Strangler shook his head in disbelief. He had a meeting with his henchmen. My Dad sat quietly for the next start.

The next put-down was easy... maybe too easy. Strangler put my Dad down in five minutes.

As soon as the back of my Dad's arm hit the table Strangler leaped to his feet and announced, "I've got the old man beat now." While he was working the crowd, one of my Dad's close friends approached him and said, "The boys have everything covered. Don't take too long with the kid." My Dad smiled.

The General restated that this would be the final put-down, then said, "Position... start!" I saw my Dad look at the clock on the wall, smile at Strangler, and force the wrestler's fist to the table... in exactly three minutes.

Strangler grabbed his fancy robe, and he and his fifty henchmen quietly disappeared. My Dad handed his belt over to be put back on the wall then borrowed a towel to wipe his hairy chest. He put on his undershirt and Sunday shirt, and ordered a sarsaparilla and soft pretzel for me.

To my Dad, my Mother and his children came first. As soon as my treat arrived we walked over to the bar where my Dad introduced me to everyone within earshot. He enjoyed two steins of beer and we headed home. Great Dad!

# The Irish Have No Corner on Humor

Certain ethnic groups, especially the Irish, have tenaciously clung to the opinion that when God distributed the sense of humor they were first in line.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to be reared in a large Eastern city fully realize that every immigrant who arrived brought his country's sense of humor with him. In my opinion, the Creator gave just a little extra to his chosen people. After all, you should take special care of relatives.

Being a city boy, any town that had the word “beach” or “lake” in its name intrigued me. It was a natural reaction that I had to see “Lake Elsinore” before making our decision on where we would spend our old age.

In 1945 the founding fathers of Lake Elsinore, California, had no worries about its claim to fame. They just wanted to survive. It was a hot August day when I drove down the main thoroughfare. It was so hot and muggy that its sole occupant was a shaggy Airedale who was taking a siesta in front of the only skyscraper in town... the two-story Lake Elsinore Hotel.

The unfamiliar sound of my automobile engine raised his head high enough to investigate my presence before he shuffled over to the car. His sleepy but quizzical eyes followed my every move as I adjusted my tie, practiced my smile, and reached for my portable typewriter.

My official greeter might have met other salesmen who entered this hotel to sell their wares, but now he would feast his eyes on the master. He seemed eager for his first

lesson as we entered the open door and approached the desk.

The lobby was crowded with overstuffed chairs. It had an early Brooklyn look. “Comfortable” would be the only word to describe it. I was sure that the owners inherited the sofa and matching chairs from their parents when they lived in Coney Island.

The rotund proprietor did not raise his bald head, which was resting on cupped hands as I carefully placed my portable on the registration desk. He was not overly excited about meeting another salesman, and he doubted that an overnight guest would travel with such a small suitcase. In either case, he was going to let me make the first move.

During this moment of indecision, I took the opportunity to scan the registration book and count the keys that were hanging behind the desk. There were no guests registered.

Better sense should have dictated that I make a fast and silent exit, but my Airedale friend seemed to smile and challenge my optimism.

As my salesmanship was at stake, and who wants to be laughed at by an Airedale, I uttered my favorite opening remark: “Well, Pop, how’s business?”

I never expected his retort. Without raising his head one inch from his cupped hands he said: “Lousy... and it drops off in the afternoon.”

Myron Cohen, eat your heart out.

# Damn Yankee

I had just finished my first four weeks of training at Parris Island when my Father died. The Chaplain at the Philadelphia Naval Hospital notified the Corps to send me home for the burial. I was issued the customary seventy two-hour pass and a train ticket to Philadelphia.

When I walked into our living room, I was greeted by four of my Dad's Admiral friends, representing all the Navy Yards in the USA. My Dad, besides being a mouth-piece for the Navy before Congress, represented the AFL and met regularly with the President's Labor Cabinet member, Mrs. Perkins, at our kitchen

table when FDR wanted to pass down advice on my Dad's suggestions.

After the burial services, his closest friend, Admiral Sheridan, asked me when I was due back at Parris Island. I told him it was the next day. He immediately told his Adjutant to call the Marine Corps General and tell him that he was authorizing an additional two-day stay at home. I can imagine being Adjutant to the leading Admiral in the USA can be a hectic job. He never made the call.

When I arrived at the gate of my "adopted home" at Parris Island, I was escorted to the brig for being AWOL.

After about an hour of contemplating my fate, I was summoned to a Southern Captain's office. He spoke like he had a mouth full of mashed grits, announcing that from this day forward I would be called "Damn Yankee." He closed by saying that I could pick up my Yankee sea-bag from his Sergeant. I thanked him for giving me his undivided attention and promised to do my best for his battalion. He never got the hint of my sarcasm.

When I checked in at the assigned battalion, the torture began. The fifty-nine Southern gentlemen were expecting me, and made it very clear that they did not want any damn Yankee messing up their platoon.

I found my upper sack at the rear of the barracks, stripped down to my shorts and thought about my future. The happy days of the past seemed like a fuzzy dream. I was just up to my foolish day of enlistment when a cheerful voice from the bunk below said: “What’s your real name, Yankee?” He didn’t use the word “damn” so I knew I was in friendly territory.

When I answered: “Phil Hopkins from Philadelphia,” he said: “I’m Paul McKay from Louisville, Kentucky.”

Just then the barracks lights went on, and our warden Sergeant ordered everyone to do fifty push-ups. As I was in superb physical shape after doing four weeks in previous Yankee boot camp, it was a snap for me. This did not endear me with my Sergeant mentor.

The next morning at four, the barracks lights went on, and we were told to fall out beside our bunks. We were given half an hour to get outside to shave in cold water, shower in cold water and get into our dungarees for a happy day.

Next, we were marched to the chow hall that could comfortably seat a thousand troops. As it was Wednesday, Navy regulations dictated that we be served a mess tray of cold baked beans. Seconds were available, if you begged for them. As I knew this gourmet breakfast was going to be served every Wednesday and Sunday, I took great delight in watching my compadres squirm when I asked for seconds. Psychology, psychology!

After breakfast, the fifty platoons were marched to the parade grounds where our stellar Captain announced that competition between the platoons would start today. Final judgment would be on hand combat, swimming, running, rifle range and intelligence. Those were his priorities, in order of importance to the Marine Corps.

I didn't have the hand-to-hand killer instinct in me until someone was really trying to kill me, but I qualified. The swimming was enjoyable. With full pack we jumped off ten, twenty and thirty-foot platforms into twenty feet of water, hit the bottom, pushed up for the surface and swam to the side of the pool. Because "Damn Yankee" said this was fun, I had to do it twice. Two guys almost drowned but were saved by the lifeguards.

Running with full pack was no problem. I had been running with groceries, newspapers, and magazines all my life. Rifle range for one week was a problem.

I never had a rifle in my hand in my life. I saw more "Maggie's Drawers" come up than Carter has pills. I felt a strong kick to my rear-end by the Gunnery Sergeant after every target missed beyond one thousand yards. By the fourth week I qualified as a marksman and the kicking stopped. The one day on the pistol range made me the platoon hero. I was the only one who got Expert. I guess I was meant to be a Wyatt Earp and not a Daniel Boone.

Every Friday at three in the afternoon, we were seated in the mess hall for an hour with a Naval Intelligence Test in front of us. I knew everything on the test except the mechanical part, although I was prompted by the instructor to try guessing at the answers. I was too smart for this ploy. The test deducted one right answer for every wrong answer. Why hurt yourself by guessing?

After eight grueling weeks our torture was over. The Captain congratulated our Sergeant and announced that, due to official scoring, "Damn Yankee" would carry the battalion flag in the graduation parade the next day. My friend of eight weeks, Paul McKay, was the only one who congratulated me. For me, that was enough.

The next morning, the battalion assembled on the parade ground. The Captain presented me with the Rebel flag. As soon as he and his officers joined the General, the band struck up "Dixie" and we were off to the races.

As Paul McKay came in second in the battalion, he carried the American flag to my left. As we passed the reviewing stand, and I

was the only one not permitted by protocol to give an “eyes right,” I asked McKay how many smiles could he count on the reviewing stand. He said they were all mad as hell. We chuckled.

The Captain could hardly wait to get his precious Rebel flag out of my hands, ordering me to be at his office in a Marine “suntan” uniform, with my sea-bag, in a half hour. When I got there, he handed me orders to report to Cherry Hill, North Carolina for Marine Intelligence School. There was a traveling box lunch waiting, which consisted of a gourmet bologna sandwich, apple and two cookies. I was impressed.

I threw my sea-bag into the waiting Jeep and I was off to a new adventure.



# He's My Father

**W**e're supposedly a victim of our environment. How many people do you know who are excused for their ignorance because in their converted years they claim... I didn't know any better? What kept them from being educated? Only themselves.

Many years ago I met an African-American man who had just retired as a computer expert at North Island, San Diego. As his wife worked as manager of the Chancellor's home at the University of San Diego, she was not free to spend much time at home to keep him company.

Fortunately, he enjoyed playing the organ. When I heard about him from his wife, I asked her permission to visit him. She was delighted that I showed so much interest. I asked him to play some of his favorite tunes for me. After a half-hour concert, I asked if he would be interested in going fishing on the pier. He said he would be delighted.

The following Wednesday I packed two gourmet sandwiches, two sodas, four cookies, two beach chairs, and the fishing gear. We headed for Shelter Island. It was early so we were able to select a choice spot.

After about two hours, we decided to eat. I noticed that my guest had a hard time feeding himself, so I asked his permission to assist. He was thrilled! I was so busy doing my chores that I did not notice a big, white peroxide blonde standing next to us with hate in her eyes.

In a foghorn voice for all to hear she bellowed: “Why are you being so damn nice to that nigger?”

My reply shocked her. I said that I had two reasons: “He is my Father, and I am in his will.” She silently packed her gear and left.

We had one nibble on the fishing line. We think it was from the Lord.



# Under the Counter

**I**n 1944, when I returned to home cooking after my tour in the Pacific, I foolishly believed that a serviceman should get some preferences.

My first stop at an auto dealership awakened me. The game was called “under the table.”

As a “ruptured duck” wearer you got priority treatment. The owner (who needed a sales force?) and his wife played a great sympathetic game. She showed the two cars they had for sale with the factory price on them. Then she took you to her husband to close the deal. My buns had barely warmed

the comfortable chair before the rules were explained.

I could drive either car off the floor in twelve months for \$500 down. \$100 extra dollars per month moved that car closer to my garage. \$1700 today, above sticker price, put the car into my garage. At that point, I walked out.

I found an honest Nash dealer, waited fourteen months, paid factory price and drove it to California.

# Westward Ho!

**W**ith much faith, and all our worldly possessions packed into a trailer hitched to our new Nash, my wife, Marie, and I left Pennsylvania and headed back to California.

After a long drive, we arrived in Orange, California, and went directly to the home of our old friends, and former neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Goetz, to catch up on events in Orange during our two-year absence.

As we were looking for a rental, they advised us that there was a shortage of rentals in Orange, but they understood that Anaheim was loaded with rentals at reasonable prices.

We thanked them for their advice and headed north to Anaheim.

We couldn't believe our eyes... rental signs galore! Our paradise!! We drove around town but couldn't decide on the area we liked.

As it was lunch time, we decided to have a hamburger, and stopped at a local spot that was doing a thriving business. It was a family owned and operated business, and made an excellent hamburger and milkshake. The chefs were known as the Karcher boys. We asked the smiling Carl to recommend an area, and he suggested we look into the Five Points area. It was near St. Boniface Church and St. Catherine's Military Academy. I must have looked Catholic to him.

We took his advice and found a fantastic duplex completely furnished with a "Murphy Bed" for a dollar a day. We were rich!

The next day we returned to Karcher's for lunch, and thanked him for his excellent advice. We then returned to our new home to

get acquainted with our landlord. On the way, we circled St. Catherine's Military Academy to view a dress parade they were having for parents. There were lots of whistles blowing, and it seemed silly watching six to twelve year olds carrying wooden guns. I prayed they would never carry a real gun. I had nineteen months during the war in the Pacific, and it was no fun.

The next day I began looking for employment. I went to the largest creamery in the county, and offered them a commission deal. They would pay me one dollar for every quart of milk I sold if the customer took delivery for ninety days, or fifty cents for those who took delivery for sixty days. They jumped at the proposal. What could they lose? I started the next day.

Marie went to the Board of Education in Santa Ana for an interview, and was hired the next day as Secretary to the Assistant Superintendent of Schools. Things were beginning to fall into place.

I had a fascination with the Military Academy, so one day I decided to see if I could do something with the students in the Athletic Department and applied for a part-time position. It was fate, because the day I walked in for an interview the Sister Superior was searching for a coach to teach the juniors swimming, and she hired me on the spot. I was able to handle both my teaching and selling jobs without any problem.

I was offered a full-time position as a teacher-coach, because of my teaching background, so I gave up the position at the dairy and took the teaching-coach position. It was the best thing I ever did.

When a student was sick, I took him to the Infirmary. The little saint in charge of the Infirmary was Sister Petrina. She took good care of the boys, and spent many a night without sleep if anyone was very sick. We became good friends and I soon learned what a real saint was. The boys loved her. Marie and I visited her often, and when Philip was born she was the first one we visited as a family. She has gone on to her reward, but her spirit will always be with us.

California was the land of opportunity, and I was lucky to be there when it all began. God blessed us in so many ways and seemed to guide us in whatever we decided to do.

We are so thankful.



# Wedding of the Year

**I**t always amuses me when I hear someone remark that they know how they would react under any circumstances. Then they go on to impress everyone within earshot that it is a sign of adolescence to go to pieces under pressure.

Being a caterer to the rich has afforded me many opportunities to operate under pressure, and to wonder why I had not cracked, or at least screamed when the pressure became unbearable. I can only contribute my sanity to my sense of humor, and to the knack of quoting a tension-breaking remark that temporarily relieves the

pressure. This, coupled with a dictatorial manner, has saved many an event from disaster.

Wedding receptions have always been my favorite event, and in fourteen years I had only two failures. In one, I permitted the mother of the bride to be in charge; and the other turned into a complete fiasco when the entire bridal party disrobed, much to the consternation of the guests... and this caterer. But that is another story, one I would like to forget.

As the social calendar for the year 1973 was coming to a close in La Jolla ("the jewel"), I was retained to cater the reception for the President of the United States' personal physician. The fact that President Nixon and his family would be attending the wedding heightened the tension as the day got closer.

The reception would be held on the bride's parents' estate, which would be sufficiently guarded from gatecrashers. All of the staff, including the band and florist, had to be vouched for by yours truly as reputable and trust-worthy.

Although I had a reputation for performing a complete service, the bride's mother insisted on retaining the service of a florist friend. I should have smelled trouble. I had retained Abbey Rents to erect the necessary tents to cover the patio, and to supply heaters in case the night turned a bit chilly. They also supplied the tables and chairs.

As the reception was not to be until six in the evening, our catering personnel did not arrive until four to set the necessary tables. The food and beverage trucks would arrive at five.

Although I was busy supervising the setting of tables, and the unloading of the food and beverage trucks, I should have been alerted as to eventual trouble when I was greeted by a frantic florist as we entered the estate.

In a voice shrill enough to shatter glass, the florist informed me that she had been a nervous wreck since noon wondering when we would arrive. In fact, she was so worried that she asked the mother of the bride to start worrying... perhaps I forgot the time of the

reception. Every time she looked at the bare tables and no sight of anyone from the catering company, she thought of four more maybes.

Thank God the bride had complete confidence in my ability, or she would have gone to the church in a straight-jacket instead of a gown. It doesn't take much tension to push some mothers of the bride beyond the breaking point and ruin the day for their daughters.

As I had supervised a few thousand receptions during my career, I took the florist's jitters as being overly impressed with the guest list and dismissed her anxiety. I told her to check her arrangements, and then leave the grounds before she would make anyone else a nervous wreck. After all, we had a lot of work to do and little time in which to do it.

When the tables were set, and the bartenders had their stations at the ready, I told the personnel to relax and enjoy a cup of coffee or tea until we heard the cars arriving.

The first car to arrive from the church was supposed to be the Secret Service car. I immediately notified my employees that I would be stationed at the front door greeting the guests, and unless it was a dire emergency they should consult with the chef in case of questions. By the time I arrived at the foyer, the print and television media had stationed themselves under the canopy where the cars would dislodge the passengers.

A uniformed college boy hired for the occasion would open the car door and direct the driver to the private parking lot in the rear of the estate. I was real proud of the efficient manner that this was designed to work in the battle plan. What happened next was not in the plan.

The florist had not left the grounds as I had requested, but in her excitement to see the celebrities had secured a spot behind the hedges. Like Orphan Annie, she had eyes the size of silver dollars while straining to see the occupants of the first car.

Fortunately for all concerned, the first car in the long procession contained the bride and groom, and both of them had a terrific sense of humor. In fact, they thought we were pulling a practical joke.

The Secret Service was in the second car. As my uniformed livery man opened the car door for the General and his bride, the decorator dashed from her secret spot, reached into the car for the General's hand and said: "Welcome to the wedding reception. I'm Dorothy, the florist."

It is to the General's credit that he did not act a bit ruffled, but showed his charisma by introducing his new bride. Then he called me over and asked with a twinkle in his eyes if there was anyone else of importance that he should meet before proceeding to the reception line. While we were enjoying our little joke, I saw the florist approaching the next car.

Then it dawned on me that perhaps for the first time in history the President of the United States was about to shake hands with the local florist on national television.

With this in mind, I excused myself and rushed to save the florist from causing further embarrassment. I told the Secret Service she was not on my clearance list and must be removed from the grounds immediately. They handled the problem.

The marriage and reception of Major General Walter R. Tkach, USAF MC, to the former Miss Cheryl Gaillard of La Jolla, California, was not just the social event of the year, it was one of my favorite catering events.

The thank you note from the General and Cheryl was precious... my kind of people.



# Being Converted

**W**hile making my Thursday weekly business call on Les Fine, he said: “Now before you get that calculating mind operating, Jew boy, I want you to call your wife and see if you are free this weekend.”

Marie confirmed that I was free. Les was elated and told me to be at his office at four the next day. As I had no idea where my host was taking me, I naturally packed for Las Vegas with the wildest Hawaiian shirts and shorts.

I got to Les’s office a half-hour early. As soon as he signed his outgoing mail for the day we got comfortable in his new Lincoln

Continental and headed for Santa Monica, then turned right. I thought he was picking up a friend who also enjoyed Las Vegas.

We went quite a distance, and he turned right onto a very wooded estate. I thought his friend really had bucks. When we got to the estate, two Franciscan priests dressed in the traditional brown robes and sandals greeted us.

Les introduced me by saying: “Well, here is ‘Jew boy.’ Make a Christian out of him.” The two priests laughed and showed us to our room. They laughed even harder when I told them I thought I was going to Las Vegas. They asked Les to show me around the retreat house grounds, and explain some of the services to me.

Although Les was of the Hebrew faith, I could see the affection the priests had for him. While taking our tour, he introduced me to every priest or brother we met. He went into great detail explaining the difference and their purpose in the Order. I was impressed.

At quarter to six, a big bell called everyone to the dining room. I was not surprised to meet fifty eight owners of supermarkets. This was their annual retreat. They were surprised to see “Jew boy.”

After a warm greeting by everyone, the Retreat Master asked us all to stand behind our chairs while he said some prayers and a few words. The prayers were the usual ones, but then he said that Les had kidnapped “Jew boy” who would be the only one permitted to break the silence after dinner until the Sunday conference. Now let’s all enjoy our dinner.

The tables of tens were served family style, and the brothers kept the serving dishes replenished. The food was delicious! The nine meals were gourmet.

After dinner we took a leisurely hour walk, and at eight were summoned to the chapel for a conference and night prayers. Anyone wishing to talk with a priest could do so. There were six of them available.

When we got back to our room, Les asked if I had any questions. I asked if a library was available, as I liked to read before retiring. He said he would take me there. It was a well-stocked library. Two other men were also there. Les asked me to read the Life of St. Philip Neri. He could quote many stories about this great saint. He had to be impressed.

We returned to our room, got into our pajamas and I started to read. Les started to snore. After my eyes got tired, I turned out the light and joined Les in dreamland.

The next morning, while the sun was coming up, I heard our shower running. As soon as Les returned to our room, he informed me that he liked to take a long walk every morning of the retreat, and would I care to join him. I said that as soon as I shaved and showered, I would join him. He waited. As soon as we got a safe distance from our sleeping compadres, he asked what I thought of the book.

I said I liked the answer Philip gave to a fellow priest, while he was playing handball

with a group of orphans. He answered that if he had one minute before his death to decide on his fate, he would continue to play handball because that is what God wanted him to be doing.

Les was surprised at my logical conclusion but admired it. We discussed many parts of the book and walked until we heard the breakfast bell.

The fun for me started at Sunday lunch. At the conclusion of the meal, the Retreat Master announced that there would be a stack of cards and a question box at the chapel door. Anyone was free to pick up a card, make a comment and drop the card into the box. I filled out my card and dropped it into the box.

We got to the conference, and the padre announced that there was only one card in the question box and it was signed "J. B." He said it must be from Jew boy. Jew boy wants to know who is paying for this outstanding weekend. Father said that Les Fine would be paying for me.

I stood up and thanked Les for being so generous, and then I dropped the bomb.

I confessed that I had been a practicing Catholic since birth, and had made retreats since high-school, but none was as nice as this. When Les recovered from the shock, he announced that I could use my Las Vegas gambling money and pay for the retreat for both of us. Everyone applauded. I wrote out the check.

We had a million laughs driving back to my car.

# Dying for Walnuts

One Thursday afternoon, while making my weekly call on Les Fine (the one who kidnapped “Jew boy” to make a Christian out of him), I found his office deserted except for his secretary, and she was crying.

When I inquired about the tears, she informed me that my good friend was in the hospital dying, and only immediate family could see him.

I got the name of the hospital and room number and was off. I went to the front desk and announced to the two nuns that I was Les’ brother, Israel. They gave me a family

visitor's pass, and I was off to Les Fine's room.

It was like entering a mortuary. Mrs. Fine and their daughter were keeping the vigil. They told me that two Franciscan Fathers from the retreat house had just left. I told them Les was in the right spiritual hands.

They said Les had not said a word for two days.

I told them not to worry... he'll talk to me. I took my order book out of my briefcase, and went over to Les and tapped him on the forehead.

When he opened one eye to see who would bother a dying man, I said: "Les, sign here before five o'clock and get the special discount on five hundred cases of Diamond walnuts. If you want to go for a thousand cases, I can lower the price another ten cents a pound."

His scream of "Jew boy!" produced a doctor, a nurse and six saintly nuns. I closed up my

briefcase and wished everyone a nice day. I had performed a miracle.

Les was discharged that afternoon, got over his shock and was back at his office on Monday.

I shipped him a thousand cases of Diamond walnuts. After all, what are friends for?



# Mama Mia!

**W**hen was the last time you had a real homemade Italian dinner with the dago red wine from the basement, and the hard-crust-ed bread begging to touch your palate?

I recently visited my wife's cousin Chuck and his wife, Grace, and their family, and spent a Sunday afternoon of eating and reminiscing. In an Italian family, they go hand in hand.

A four-hour dinner is not unusual. The only unusual thing I found was that Italian sherbet was served first. I thought the meal was over.

Our hostess explained that this is done to purify the palate so your taste buds would savor every spice in the meal.

Every time another dish appeared, I loosened my belt and dug in. I limited myself to two glasses of wine and a half-loaf of crusty bread to save room for the dessert, even though we would not be seeing it for four hours.

As the fifteen “chow hounds” were fed family style, you can imagine how the platters were piled sky high. Any platter that looked half naked was refilled. Course after course was paraded to the table. I think we must have run out of family stories because the food and wine were removed, a dessert fork with a clean napkin was placed in front of each guest, and a homemade Napoleon floated down to everyone. What a sinful way to end the best Italian meal I had ever eaten! Thank you, Grace and Chuck.

# Meeting a DuPont

**I**n the middle of winter I was summoned by Linton Restaurants of Philadelphia to diagnose their food problems.

As it was snowing, I decided to take the West Chester trolley to Paoli and ride the train to Philadelphia.

The interview with Linton's executives turned out to be non-productive.

Going home on the commuter train to Paoli was a different experience. The stampede, something I had never seen in California, occurred as soon as I purchased my ticket on the Paoli local.

As soon as I boarded I realized everyone except this Californian knew the rules. The regulars took their seats, produced their cards or newspapers, and ignored the usual courtesies of those relegated to stand in the aisles for the next hour. The conductor made sure that protocol ruled.

I noticed that one chap was occupying a seat for two. He had his office papers spread out on the seat towards the aisle while he enjoyed the beauty of the passing scenery. Noticing that he was the only one who would occupy two seats while the aisle was crowded with standing passengers, I realized that drastic tactics must be used.

In my best peon fashion I approached the gentleman and informed him that I was from California, where everyone got a seat when they purchased a ticket. I also informed him that I was not used to the standing and swaying of the train, and I informed him that I was about to throw up on the papers occupying the unoccupied seat.

Needless to say, he grabbed his papers and jumped into the aisle. At this opportunity, I took his window seat. After he returned to sanity, he placed his papers in his attaché case, placed it on his lap and went into total silence.

At the proper time the conductor approached to take tickets and check monthly passes. As the conductor was unaware of what had transpired, he took my ticket, checked my companion's monthly pass and said: "Congratulations, Mr. DuPont, I see you have completed your office work before we reached Paoli. Who might your friend be?"



# Dynasty

**A**fter the war, Marie and I agreed to wait the fourteen months for a new Nash car rather than cross the palm of an auto-dealer. In the meantime, we had to find jobs to pay for our keep until the car arrived and we could head for California.

Marie became an Executive Secretary for a Philadelphia lawyer who was a District Grand Master of the Masons. He was one of the nicest attorneys you could ever meet.

I went to work covering the Eastern Shore for Autographic Register, a company that made snap-out carbons for multiple purposes.

Marie traveled by trolley and I by Greyhound bus. We both tried to be home for six o'clock dinner. Our hostess, Betty, was an outstanding cook. Her husband, Buzz, was stationed in Germany for six months, helping to clean up the mess the inhabitants made of their own country.

Before my arrival at Autographic Register, their three-member sales force had taken a crack at E. I. DuPont but failed to get their business. I saw this as an opportunity and challenge. I asked the Philadelphia Director if I could devote every Thursday to unfolding the mystery. He agreed.

The company gave me a beautiful attaché case when I graduated from their school in Hoboken, New Jersey. I had all the ammunition I needed to win the sales war on the Eastern Shore.

On Monday morning I would case the DuPont Company. At eight o'clock I walked into the lobby like I was expected. It was typically French from the receptionist to the ornate furniture, pictures on the walls to the greeting. The receptionist told me that

purveyors are seen on Thursdays only. I thanked her, and asked for a brochure which would acquaint me with the company.

The receptionist was not impressed when I mentioned that my Mother came from Alsace Lorraine. But I did learn that due to corporate law each division was under a different name, and did not publicize themselves as a DuPont Company. She gave me a list of these companies. I had a mind and attaché case full of knowledge. I went to the YWCA cafeteria for a delicious twenty-five cent lunch and studied my “cache of gold.”

Wilmington, Delaware, was not a big city in 1945. It had three policemen. The most important one, I found, patrolled downtown on a mini-bike giving out jaywalking tickets to out-of-towners at a cost of one dollar. We Philadelphians never walked to the corner to cross a street. The policeman told me that he averaged a hundred tickets a day. It was the first town to install diagonal street crossings, which saved time and shoe leather.

After I visited the lobbies, met every receptionist, and gathered every article on that DuPont division, I made my exit.

My fourth day in Wilmington was adventurous and humorous. I arrived at headquarters at seven thirty in the morning, when a gentleman who looked like he had lumbago was unlocking the front door. The receptionist was unlocking her desk and two damsels were placing some of the largest silver trays of homemade French pastries I had ever seen on a table where silver coffee and hot water pots were at the ready. Dainty cream pots were on ice, and sugar bowls were available. About one hundred imported French cups and saucers with one hundred silver spoons stood at the ready. No Styrofoam or plastic for these Frenchmen. As I was signing the appointment book, the “Mother Hen” said: “Mr. Hopkins, help yourself to the French pastry.”

As I entered the most elaborately decorated office I had ever seen, I scanned the room looking for a hat rack, but none was to be found. My interviewer probably hung his hat

in his private quarters. I noticed there was a door to the right of his ten-foot long desk.

As I entered his office, the gentleman rose to greet me. I sat down and placed my new Stetson hat on his desk. I was shocked to see him fling it across the room as he said: “No one ever puts anything on my desk except me.” I retrieved my Stetson, and returned to my seat. Then I placed the hat on my lap, and promised him I would be in his humiliating office every Thursday morning at eight o’clock, to explain the benefits of snap-out purchasing forms from Autographic Register.

Then it happened... an alarm clock on his desk went off. I asked what was that. He replied that my time was up, and he would see me next Thursday at eight. He arose and disappeared into his private office. I’m sure he had many laughs over our first meeting. It wasn’t funny to me, but I knew I would get the last laugh.

I was ready when they unlocked the door the following Thursday... but with added ammunition. At a sales meeting the previous Friday, I asked my District Manager to call

our headquarters to make up the following and mail it to my home by Monday night.

I suggested they send two snap-outs that guaranteed excellent reading on the last page, using any pencil or pen. The more pages, the better. On Tuesday night, when I arrived home, my answer was waiting. Eight pages could be read clearly. The expensive, heavy machines used by DuPont could only give them six pages.

When I called to see Mr. McCormick I had all my answers ready, even to the weight of my competitor's machine. Suppose an employee dropped it on her foot? Mr. McCormick was so engrossed in my story that he shut off the alarm clock and told me to continue.

When I finished, he asked if I was free for lunch. What could I say? He told me to be in the lobby at noon, and lunch would be on him. I thanked him, and his handshake had a very warm feeling. I spent the free time at the library lining up my next prospect.

When I returned at quarter to twelve, the receptionist was all smiles, so I knew

something important was going to happen at lunch. After she buzzed him and told him I had arrived, he came out of his office, shook my hand, and we strolled to a conference room that was set up for lunch. Every purchasing agent for the various DuPont branches was already there, standing and waiting for us.

Mr. McCormick gave me a choice seat and said: "Let's eat and then discuss snap-outs." I had just taken my first bite of a filet mignon when he said: "Phil, tell us about your parents." There goes my lunch! I put my fork down and entertained them. I gave them many laughs. Someone suggested that I should write a book.

Mr. McCormick asked me to explain why the company was going to snap-outs, and how the warehouse would handle distribution. As my company could supply a snap-out from two to eight copies, each manager would have to determine his need of two to eight pages and the number of snap-outs his branch would use in a month's time. I would get these requirements from Mr. McCormick.

We all shook hands and he and I strolled back to his office.

He asked how many were living at home. I explained why we were living with the Mehaffeys, and he called the food manager and told him to pack three lunches and deliver them to his office pronto. In ten minutes, nine beautiful catering boxes arrived. I asked permission to call Betty Mehaffey and told her not to cook, and that a friend was catering dinner. She said: “Wait until Buzz calls from Germany tonight... will he be surprised!”

On the ride home, as the Greyhound bus arrived at my favorite duck farm, I asked the driver to pull over so I could buy my usual two dozen eggs. I gave him half a dozen for being so nice. Duck eggs are twice the size of chicken eggs and half the price. When I arrived at Betty’s, I looked like Santa. I called Marie to tell her of our good fortune. She was elated. Then I called my boss and asked to meet with him the next morning at nine.

When I arrived at the office next morning, I asked permission to close the door of my

boss' office. Then I told him the entire story of how I got the DuPont account. He ran around his desk and hugged me. Then he called his President in Hoboken. He doubled my salary, bus fare and added a dollar a day for lunch. He asked who could handle the account when I left for California. I said ONLY my boss, Mr. William L.K. Smith. I promised to show him the routine, and introduce him to everyone.

We had our favorite Chinese food for dinner in honor of my raises. I was back on the seven o'clock Greyhound bus on Monday morning heading for Dover, Delaware. Ambition never dies.



# The Franciscan Way

**1** 954 was a very unusual year for me. Marie and I had our loving son; I got my food broker's license and inherited an eighty-two-year old, cantankerous maiden aunt.

The third episode started with a call from my sister. After my aunt's sister was buried in a shady spot of the cemetery, the remaining aunt presented a will naming me as sole possessor of the surviving person and her personal property. I called a lawyer, and he suggested I call a family meeting to get their opinions. I called my sister and set up a meeting for the five of us at ten in the morning on a Saturday.

On Friday night at eleven I took the “red eye” flight out of Los Angeles, and went directly to my sister’s home in Pennsylvania. Everyone was there.

I offered \$500 a month to anyone who would be my aunt’s custodian. My brothers wanted to know what would happen to the money from the sale of her \$10,000 home when she died. I honestly said I had not thought of crossing that bridge as yet, as she could out-live all of us. Finally, my sister said for \$500 a month she would take her.

I notified the attorney and he suggested I talk to my aunt’s favorite neighbor, and ask her to invite those who had been nice to my aunts, and have them take what they wanted from the house. Then I called the Little Sisters of the Poor and asked when they could send a truck to pick up what remained in the house. They said Monday morning at eight.

I called my favorite wife and told her the story, and asked her to call my secretary in Los Angeles and tell her to juggle my business appointments for three days, and I would be at the office on Tuesday morning.

I was busier than a knob on an outhouse door. I deposited my aunt with my sister on Sunday, went to the house and invited favorite neighbors in to help themselves. They had a grand time! On Monday I returned to the home to let the Little Sisters of the Poor men take the remainder of the furniture. The neighbors swept and dusted the house. I then gave the keys and permission to sell the house to a realtor. My sister drove me to the Philadelphia Airport on my way back to Los Angeles.

Four months later, my sister was on the phone crying. She couldn't stand my aunt any longer. I told her to call retirement homes and ask who would take her for \$500. Dr. Dowlings in Kennett Square said he would take her. I told my sister to take her there. Dowlings was a beautiful estate that could accommodate a hundred ladies with private rooms, delicious meals, registered nurse supervision, and a doctor on the property... an ideal situation.

Everything went fine for six months. Then the "cow chips" hit the fan! The good doctor

called me to say my aunt was looking through a neighbor's bureau drawers when she was caught, swung around and broke her jaw. He wanted my aunt picked up immediately.

I called the airlines and ordered two tickets from Philadelphia to Los Angeles for the next day's flight, and one "red eye" flight for that night from Los Angeles to Philadelphia. I called the doctor and told him of my plans; then called my sister and repeated the plans to her. My sister met me at the airport and took me to her home where I could shave and shower. I drove to the retirement Home, picked up my aunt, and boarded the flight to Los Angeles. She was very quiet. I wonder why?

When beverages were offered I ordered bourbon and seven, with a 7-Up on the side. I never drink alone. We both enjoyed a delicious Cornish Hen meal.

When we arrived at my house, my aunt wanted to know who the "kid" was, and I told her that it was my one-year old son, Philip. She announced she would not be

living in any house where there were kids. I said that I would find her a place that didn't have kids.

I called Bishop Manning's office and he suggested a Mexican Franciscan Sisters home, that had seventy five ladies, in Santa Ana, where the Superior spoke English and was very saintly. I called her on the phone and she said to bring my aunt right down; and that no one could be as bad as I had described my aunt.

When Mother Mary Ann, OSF, opened the front door I saw my first SAINT. My Aunt, dressed in her hat, white gloves and carrying an umbrella, asked me if Mother Mary Ann was dressed for Halloween. My aunt had never seen a nun before.

Mother Mary Ann suggested we go to the parlor and she would answer all questions. My aunt and Mother Mary Ann spent the entire night in that room. In the morning at sunrise my phone rang at home. I was summoned to the parlor. When I appeared, Mother answered the door and told another

Sister to sit with my aunt while she took me to her office, which was across the corridor.

I knew I was in trouble, so to break the tension I said she reminded me of a flapper who was out all night trying to hail a cab. She smiled and said: "What are we going to do?" I asked her to show me the room they had for my aunt. I was shocked... it was the most beautiful single room I had ever seen. It had chirping birds and blooming flowers wishing you a beautiful day at sunrise. I asked how much, like she was an innkeeper, and she said \$150 a month. I said \$500 and it's taken.

I called my wife and told her of my plans for the day and to notify my office. Mother and I took Aunt Elizabeth to her room. Then Mother Mary Ann left for the convent to rest, and I dug in for the day.

After I got her hat, gloves and umbrella put away, I showed my aunt the new commode the new wing had in every room, and all the built-in drawers for her clothes. She wasn't impressed. I asked her to sit down so we could have a chat. I explained our situation and ended up by saying: "This is it." We

were at the end of our rope. She got up and looked out the window.

I asked if she was tired and hungry and she answered “yes.” I told her to put her clothes away while I got us some breakfast. I told her to give it a try, and if she wanted to leave I didn’t know where she would go. I thanked her for cooperating. A nun delivered a tray with breakfast. We ate silently. After eating a hearty breakfast, my aunt stretched out on the bed and went into a sound sleep.

I went to the Lobby to find something to read. The Sister at the front desk motioned for me to take books, although they were all about Francis of Assisi and his beliefs. I found them very interesting. My aunt slept for four hours. When she awakened it was time for lunch. The food was delicious. Lunch was the main meal of the day. Today it was veggie soup, baked chicken, rice pilaf, peas, apple pie, and tea, coffee or milk.

I suggested we tidy up and explore the grounds. It was a big property covering a full square enclosed block, ninety-five percent of the rooms were doubles. We strolled for two

hours and was met by Mother Mary Ann in a garden with another Sister. She introduced us in Spanish. We all laughed after I said: “Today we are wetbacks, tomorrow we’ll be gringos.” I promised to stay until I had Aunt Elizabeth tucked in for the night, and promised to see her in the morning at breakfast time.

The next morning I was at the front door at six, when all the Sisters were meditating before Mass. I spied my Saint in deep thought and sat beside her. I took her hands and reminded her of the “Franciscan Way” I had just learned about the night before.

When Mass was over, I went to my aunt’s room to have breakfast with her. It was as I suspected... she was fully dressed and packed to escape as soon as she ate. I played that I didn’t notice. Sister brought two trays, and I outlined the itinerary for the day. I asked Mother Mary Ann if two elderly Sisters would like a two-hour ride along the beach with us. She picked two, and after my aunt was washed and dressed in her Philadelphia best, we headed for Laguna Beach.

We stopped at See's Candy Store in Corona Del Mar where I bought a one-pound box of soft centers for my aunt, and a five-pound regular for the convent. We were back at the Home at eleven. After taking my aunt and her candy to her room, I delivered the convent candy to Mother, and told her I would have to leave for a few hours but would be back for dinner and the evening. I believed my aunt would nap after lunch.

Everything happened as planned. I returned to have dinner with my aunt, and stayed until she was tucked in for the night. We enjoyed the radio. We played cat and mouse for a week, when I got a promise from her to try another week. She agreed. She showed her hatred by throwing anything religious into the wastebasket.

To ease her transition, my wife and her friend, Emma Valentine, had a sheet cake and juice party at the Home. A friend had given us a movie projector, and he provided movies once a month.

Mother Mary Ann pleaded with me to find another place for my aunt. She had been such

a problem. I promised to work for their Order for the rest of my life if she would let her stay. Mother Mary Ann agreed, and God heard my promise.

While the lady living across the hall was visiting a friend, my aunt decided to go through the lady's bureau drawers. When the lady returned and found her in the act, she questioned her and my aunt swung at her, missed, spun around and hit the floor, breaking her hip.

My aunt was rushed to the hospital where she died five days later. Mother Mary Ann went to a New Mexico Rest Home for three months to get her sanity back. There was no problem settling the will. I gave everything to the Franciscan Sisters.

When I returned from a ten-day trip throughout the Northwest, Marie told me to call Mother Mary Ann. I did. She reminded me of my promise to work for them for the rest of my life.

She wanted me to go to Tijuana, and help turn an old downtown hotel into a hospital

there. With help of my friends, the Sisters now have an eighteen-bed modern facility, with sleeping quarters for a dozen Sisters.

I can't believe what has happened in forty-five years being a Franciscan.



# Sign Here

**N**obody can fix anything anymore! Am I right?

For instance, the other day I nursed my car into the service department of a fancy dealership, and a guy in a spotless surgical gown carrying a clipboard with his pencil at the ready came over to me. Images lit up in my head, and BINGO I realized that this is an “I gotcha buddy” moment. I felt as though I had just delivered my best companion to the emergency room. No... the look on his craggy and unsmiling face reminded me of the morgue. It was too late for any emergency room.

Before he examined the patient or listed her ailments, he said: “Sign here.” I graciously reminded him that I was not signing a thing until he told me what was making my friend cough, sputter and exhale a black substance. Does he take me for a pigeon?

No free estimates, Dr. Repair scowls as he stands at arm’s length. One would think I hadn’t used deodorant that morning. In his pious nasal tones the good Doctor explains that unless I sign the work sheet, their insurance company will not permit him to examine the patient. That was the very first time I had ever heard my loved one referred to as a patient. I was impressed.

Reluctantly I signed the work sheet, but underneath my signature I inserted the word “conditionally.” When Mr. Automotive statistical estimating engineer saw the word, he asked the obvious... what’s with that? I explained that my legal advisor insisted that I insert the word on everything I sign. One never knows when one might need that word in Small Claims Court.

He finally orders me to start the engine. With the gesture of a Maitre d', he beckoned a mechanic. Aha... they walk around the patient. They walk to one side and listen, walk to the other side and listen, then stop to hold a consultation. I feel relieved. They are professionals.

Then suddenly, without warning, they break for lunch. An hour and a half later they return. By then I AM STEWING.

Over the loudspeaker, I am notified that my car has been road tested, and I should report to cubical nine for a diagnostic report. It's so much like a first-class hospital... that's class!

When I got to the designated cubicle, the patient was there, hoisted to a most embarrassing position. All the under-covering was showing.

My "almost a doctor" repairman is standing at the rear end, but, thank God, not looking up. The good doctor said: "We have road tested your car, and while we cannot be sure at this time, we believe the trouble is in the

transmission. However, we won't know until we open her up."

My beloved is hovering between life and death and he's going to open her up! This is major surgery! Our eyes met and I asked him: "What is your estimate for the operation?"

He coiled-up and hissed: "Between \$1,700 and \$2,000." I suddenly needed an Aspirin, Excedrin, Compose and probably a dash of Preparation H.

When the throb between my ears subsided, I asked: "Can you tell me whether it will be closer to \$1,700?" I gave a sickly smile that begged for the lesser figure. He said it depends on what we find after we open her up.

By now the expression "open her up" is beginning to rub me the wrong way. I needed another opinion. Would you have major surgery on one opinion with a difference of \$300? No way, Jose!

Besides, there was something about this doctor's finely shaped manicured nails that I didn't like. They were PETAL PINK. But, how can I get out of this automotive morgue and away from this surgical maniac? He has my keys. I'm inspired. In a flash I get an idea.

I told him I must have my keys to open the trunk to check my appointment book, to ascertain when the patient would be free for surgery. Loaner cars went out with high-buttoned shoes. He reluctantly gave me the keys, and I proceeded to the rear of the patient. Just then his phone rang (it had to be my guardian angel), and he waltzed to the Service Manager's office.

As soon as he was out of the Emergency Room, I lowered the patient, got behind the wheel and headed for the exit.

I was back on the road, but what was I going to do? The patient is still coughing and acting as if each breath would be the last. I begin to talk to my car. It's all-right, I said, we'll be home soon. I promise to take care of you. Suddenly I feel embarrassed... what am I, crazy?

Privately I make a promise. At the very next garage I'll stop and have an oil change and maybe a new filter... so I'm a big spender. It's better than spending \$1,700 or \$2,000, for an exploratory. And those petal pink nails? Oi vey!

Up ahead was an old, dirt floor gas station. In keeping with my promise, I pulled in. The señor, wearing farmer coveralls and red flannel underwear that I can see through the opening at the neck, approached me. He wiped his greasy hands on an impossibly dirty rag.

After much bowing and smiling, I asked him if he could change my oil and filter. He didn't speak; he just motioned me toward the hoist. I felt uneasy again and was beginning to worry. Had I taken my car out of a sanitized automotive hospital to a Tijuana clinic?

Why did I stop at this God-forsaken gunk-hole? He's so slow... I'll be here forever. I can see my tombstone now: Died sitting on a milk can.

After surveying the bottom of my car, he began draining the crankcase oil into a portable washtub. I'll bet he used it for bathing. While he was waiting for the oil to drain, he started wiping off the bottom of the transmission. It was easy to guess that he was looking to find some problem so he could pad my bill. Sure enough, he beckoned.

The Tijuana kid pointed to a small hose behind the transmission and said it needed changing. Without a "by your leave" he tore off the hose and said "It's rotten, see?" Help, I'm stuck. I'm at the mercy of this crazy Mexican. My son will never see me again. What should I do? Should I start screaming? Should I beat my head against the bumper of my elevated car?

Without consulting me, he shuffled off to a bin behind the garage and came back with a small hose. Now I figured that whatever he charges me, I'll have to pay it. I'm at his mercy.

In no time at all, he squeezed the rubber pipe into place and proceeded to complete the oil and filter change.

He lowered the patient to the floor, inserted five quarts of oil, and slammed the hood. Like the starter at Indianapolis on Memorial Day he said: “Start your engine!”

No coughing, no shortage of breath, no smoke! The car was purring like a kitten. It’s a miracle!

The Mexican gentleman walked to the driver’s window and said: “Señor, that will be an extra \$1.79.... 79 cents for the hose, and \$1.00 for the labor.”

Now that is a mechanic’s mechanic.

Who needs those sanitary garages with their hotel lobby and free coffee? Give me those greasy dirt floor places anytime. They never say... “Sign here.”

# Bald is Beautiful

**L**ong before female rock stars and baseball players shaved their heads, I noticed my crowning glory was receding and would reach a bald spot before another birthday.

While trying to decide if a new hairstyle would remedy the situation, my eyes fell on a “We grow hair” ad. The free consultation appealed to my frugal instincts. “No reservation required” put my body behind the wheel. Loving the challenge of a potential con game threw my active brain into high gear as I drove. By the time I entered the miracle worker’s reception room my plans were laid.

The receptionist was a vision of loveliness, and had the smile and beauty to make every bald-headed man want to have hair at any price. And, she had her price. With a clipboard on crossed knees and her lips a whisper away, she proceeded to explain the financial contract. When I insisted that I enjoy the free consultation first, she pouted and said the magic word: “problem.”

Then she leaned so close that her perfume overcame my senses and she purred “We have a problem?” Her suggestion that a problem existed dropped my chin to my chest, my hands to my head, and a deep sigh escaped from my lips. This remorseful demonstration brought Miss Centerfold to her feet, clipboard falling to the floor, and a plea for forgiveness gushing from her ruby lips, with her promise of never using that word again, and never discussing contracts or payment.

I raised my head to continue the interview, providing she would be more professional and take a seat behind the desk. I told her I would feel safer that way. She gave me a

strange look, but took the suggested seat. Up until this moment nothing was said about name, address, phone number, etc. I guessed this is all taken care of when the contract was signed.

Miss “Almost a Nurse” (well, she was dressed like one) then asked when did I notice for the first time I was losing my hair.

That question opened the gate of mental gymnastics and I calmly replied: “Last night, while I was sleeping.” I was not surprised when she did a beautiful double take, and asked me to repeat my answer. The very same look of disbelief came into her eyes when I repeated the answer.

As a question will always follow a startling answer, I was fully prepared when she asked: “And how did you know you were losing your hair while you were sleeping?” I calmly replied, as if I was letting her in on a secret, “Because it woke me up when it hit the pillow.”

Now her chin went down on her inflated chest; her hands covered her face; and her

body shook like a bowl full of Jell-O. When she finally regained her composure, she rose with dignity, straightened her starched white uniform, and said: "Please don't go away. I'll be right back."

Her haste to enter the connecting office left the door open so I could hear her say: "Reg, I've got a sick one out there. You are not going to believe what I have to say." With that introduction, she plunged into our interview and finished with a hysterical laugh. When the two of them stopped laughing, Reg said: "That is the funniest thing I have ever heard." Reg asked for a few minutes to compose himself before she should "show the nut in."

I love to hear people laugh.

Miss Clairol returned to her desk and informed me that the doctor would be buzzing for me at any moment. While waiting, I played I was interested in the latest men's hairstyle magazines. Everyone had so much hair. I wonder why? My new friend behind the desk kept staring at me as if I was one of a kind... and I was!

Just when I began to enjoy her mental frustrations, the buzzer sounded announcing that the “almost a doctor” was ready to see me. Dr. Reg offered me a seat in an antique barber’s chair, (this boy had class) and asked Miss Everything to read my questionnaire. Although they were standing behind me, the elbowing and joshing told me my act was star material. They hadn’t seen nuttin’ yet!

Although I had not planned to enlarge on my act, Reg’s utter coolness prompted me to make the game more interesting. As he had not seen my PROBLEM as yet, I was ready to further test his sense of humor. I didn’t have long to wait.

After a quick examination of my receding hairline and growing bald spot, Reg appeared at the side of the chair and announced that I had a problem. When I repeated my act and enlarged my sigh, he called for Miss Hip-Swinger. She said she was sorry that she failed to tell him about using THAT WORD in my presence, and she would pull me out of my depression.

Her soothing voice removed my hands from my face and raised my chin. Her exit remark to Dr. Reg was a warning... don't use THAT WORD. As soon as I heard him say he was sorry, and he didn't mean to offend me, I knew he had lost his cool and I was still master of the situation.

Reg placed a dental bib around my shoulders, and appeared with three vials of colored water (red, blue and green). After spending a lifetime in the food business, I know colored water when I see it.

As I was to be impressed with his exploratory examination, my doctor thought it prudent to acquaint me with his procedure. A dab of blue on my bald pate would announce living hair follicles; green would ascertain dormant follicles that may be brought back to life; red would tell us that everything under the skin was dead. I told him to get busy and perform his miracle.

While he was inserting the swab into the blue vial, I figured out my next surprise. I love surprises, don't you?

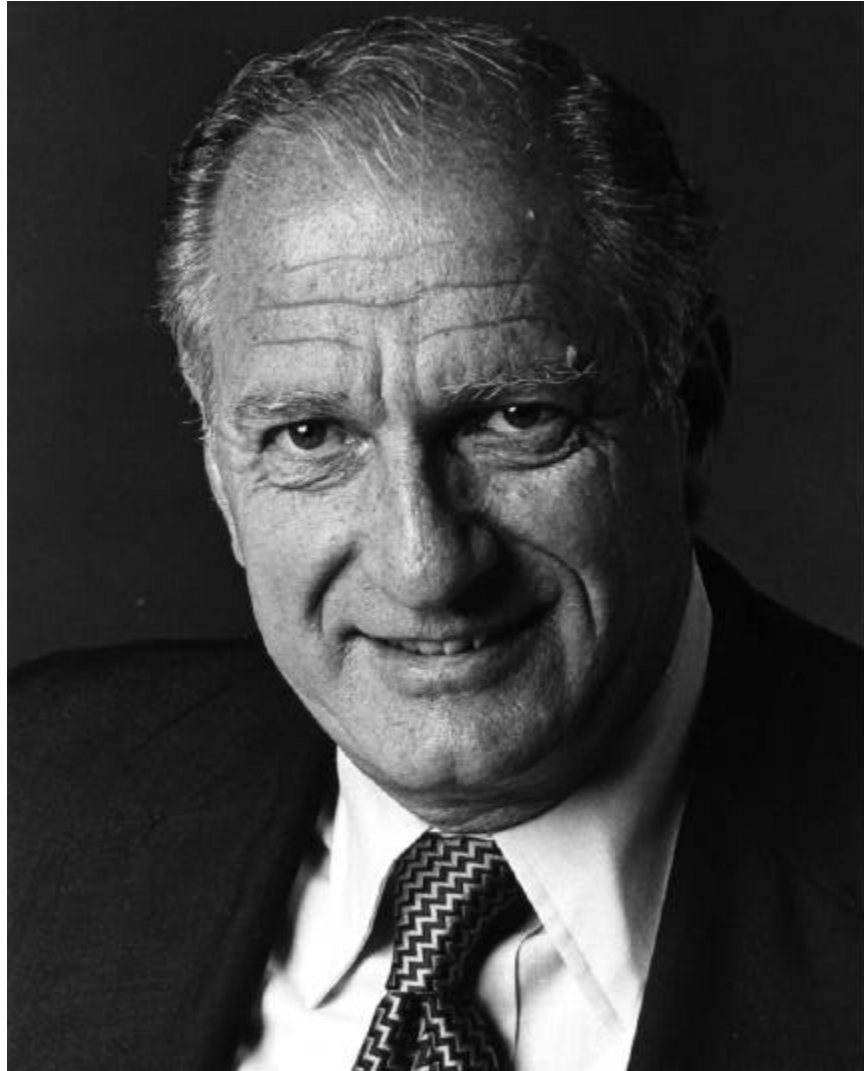
When he touched my pate with the blue swab, I let out the loudest yell a football stadium had ever heard. It lifted Herr Doctor from the floor to a record-breaking high-jump response, and produced the receptionist and a prospective client from the outer office. Oh yes, the janitor who was working down the hall also appeared.

This piece of comedy looked like the Keystone Cops had escaped. Everyone, but me, was in motion. While the quack explained to the assembly what had happened, I sat smugly in the barber chair waiting for someone to ask my version of the event. After all, I was the star!

I was not surprised that the client who had just signed a contract, and was waiting for treatment, wanted to know what happened. He looked so pathetic, I thought I would be nice and give him something to think about.

After taking a very deep breath, I told the good doctor that when he touched my bald spot with the blue swab, it felt like he was inserting an ice pick into my sensitive scalp.

His retort of “I’m getting out here” did not surprise me. But, then I’m never surprised.



**FIGURE 2.** THE AUTHOR CONTINUES TO BATTLE NOISY HAIR LOSS IN 1976.

As my mission was accomplished, I was receptive to the suggestion of my adopted

nurse... that my skull was much too sensitive for treatment. She assured me that my baldness would not affect my charisma... look at Yul Brenner! In fact, she confessed that she was attracted to shiny pates, even though she made her living helping men grow hair.

When she asked me to give her a call because she found me to be different, I knew some women would do anything for money... or a laugh.



# At Your Convenience

**A**s the food and beverage director for a large hotel, you assume the responsibility for all rooms where food and beverage is served. This responsibility covers furniture, décor, maintenance, etc.

At most hotels, you have a banquet manager who assists with these responsibilities but you still keep an eye open for burnt-out light bulbs, dying plants, burn marks on the furniture and carpet stains, among other things.

Each morning, with clipboard in hand, an experienced and knowledgeable food and beverage director inspects every restaurant

and banquet room in the hotel to be sure they are clean and ready for the day's business.

My stroll this particular morning awakened me to the fact that our popular steak lounge was too bright for an intimate lunch. We could improve the décor and save electricity by replacing the present bulbs with those of less wattage.

When I returned to my office, I sent the following memo to Max, the hotel's handyman: "Max, at your convenience today kindly replace all bulbs over 100 watts in the steak lounge with less bright bulbs."

Being a downtown hotel, we catered to businessmen and office staff for our luncheon trade. To make the proper impression and to meet these executives, I generally stationed myself near the hostess during the luncheon hour.

On this particular day, I had seven large banquets totaling over 4,000 guests in progress, so could not be available at the entrance to the steak lounge.

When the phone operator paged me, I was supervising the dish-up line in the kitchen as our executive chef was home with the flu. As it is important to answer all pages immediately (emergencies do happen in the hotel business), I went to the nearest phone. I was startled to learn that the steak house hostess requested my presence immediately.

When I asked her to describe her emergency, she just kept repeating: “You won’t believe this; you won’t believe this; you won’t believe this...”

By the time she had said it for the third time, I realized she was going to keep saying it until I stood by her side. I replaced the phone receiver and rushed to the lounge.

From the laughter coming out of the lounge, I could not believe that we had an emergency in progress. Realizing that some people giggle and even laugh when in shock, I asked the hostess to describe the emergency, and then tell me what is going on in the steak lounge that is so funny. By this time of the day I needed a good laugh myself.

She took me by the hand and marched me over to the lounge room door.

While the entire room was in convulsions at his antics, my friend Max was on the top of a wooden ladder, which was straddled over a table of four, while he changed one of the offending too-bright bulbs.

When I observed the side holding and laughter of our patrons, I thought of comedy acts at Leon and Eddie's, Hellsapoppin, and now the steak lounge.

One of the men at the table under the straddled ladder came over to me and said: "Phil, this is the greatest and most unusual thing that has ever happened to me in my forty years of business luncheons. You are just full of surprises. We love it."

Laughter or no laughter, I proceeded to get Max down from that ladder and out of the steak lounge. What could I say to a guy who had just entertained two hundred guests by simply changing a light bulb?

I knew if I questioned his judgment, he would raise his eyes to Heaven, put on that angelic smile, and say: "You said—at your convenience."



# Where's Max?

Asking for Max was like asking for a typhoon after a hurricane. Max was the local troglodyte who masqueraded as the maintenance man of our twenty-three-story hotel. The hotel, by the way, was topped with a revolving rooftop restaurant.

For many years I wondered if the cry "Where's Max?" was meant to seek his assistance, or simply to check on his whereabouts. I soon discovered the latter was more prudent.

The cry of "Where's Max?" just to learn where he was started the adrenaline flowing

wildly in the veins of those who had seen him in action.

When there actually was something to repair, this meant disturbing Max from his TV set in the basement maintenance room. When he eventually arrived, he assumed his most angelic expression and the silence of a confessor.

While the rest of us watched, Max would survey the problem with the professional air of a surgeon about to perform a heart transplant with the lid from a rusty can. The silence was that of an operating room and the results just as dubious.

For those of us who had already seen Max in action, it was a time for winking, eye rolling, rib poking and internal convulsions. We thought we knew what to expect, but we were never right.

Anyone will tell you that the proper way to measure a broken window is with a tape measure. That may be how you would do it. Not Max! He does it the Max way.

When one of the large, plate-glass windows blew out of the hotel's rooftop restaurant during an intense rainstorm, Max got the call.

He arrived and studied the situation. Max then carefully measured the exact size of the missing window glass by extending his arms until the fingers of each hand touched the window frame. Then, without a word to the assembled coworkers, with arms still extended, he proceeded to walk to the elevator that would transport him to his basement workshop. His extended arms measurement represented as much accuracy as his brain could comfortably hold.

But what would he do when he got to the elevator? No problem. He just pushed the "down" button and assumed his former extended arm position. Except for a curious informer who followed him to his workshop, the rest of us waited on the twenty-third floor for his return. Our wait was made interesting by the telling of tales documenting previous Max fiascoes.

Our laughter increased as each newer member of our hotel family said: "I can't

believe it,” “You must be kidding,” or “Are you kidding?” Each comment was made with a little more doubt that one human being could have been responsible for so many legendary disasters. But this is the first time some of the new employees had seen Max in action. After today, they would be believers.

In due time, Max and his pane of glass returned and the audience crowded around. No one had to say “silence, please.”

As the rain continued to pour through the frame where the glass had blown out, Max steadfastly approached with his freshly cut pane as if he was following Teddy Roosevelt up San Juan Hill. He did not stop advancing until he bravely inserted the glass into the window frame... then stepped back to admire his accomplishment, wiping the rain from his face and gratefully accepting the applause.

Oh yes. By the time the applause started, the pane of glass was already falling twenty-three stories to the pavement below. Max had misjudged cutting the glass by about two inches, which is not bad when you are

replacing a six-foot pane of glass without  
using a tape measurement.



# It's a Miracle

**E**very year, my office force at Servomation Food Service spent the two days before Christmas decorating a beautiful Christmas tree for the company luncheon.

When they had finished and placed all their gifts around the tree, I would lock the building and leave as soon as I had signed my out-going mail.

One year, after the luncheon and when the coast was clear, I loaded the beautifully trimmed tree into a company truck, brought it home and set it up in my living room.

My son followed me back to Servomation in our station wagon. We parked the company truck in its usual spot, returned the key to the truck board, and drove home.

When I arrived for work the next morning, the office force was all upset. The Christmas tree was missing! No one could believe it.

On New Year's night my son and I reversed the kidnapping event and returned the tree.

When I arrived for work everyone had to tell me that the tree was back. I said: "It's a miracle!" Oi vey!!

# Anything Unusual?

**S**ome weeks ago, my doctor friend who lives next door announced that she would be out of town for a few days and would I mind checking her property and retrieving the newspapers. Being a good neighbor, naturally I said I would.

Monday morning is trash day for our neighborhood so I thought I would really overdo it and put the doctor's trash containers out. After I finished the task and retrieved the morning paper, I tried all the doors and looked into the kitchen window to make sure all was secure.

Lo and behold... a nude woman was standing in the kitchen sipping coffee. After careful inspection I ascertained that it was the good doctor, so returned to my adobe. I was enjoying my private laugh when the phone rang.

It was my doctor friend. After thanking me for placing the trash cans on the curb, she said: "Phil, I noticed you looking in the kitchen window this morning as a security measure. Did you see anything unusual?"

Being a gentleman from the old school and with tongue in cheek I said: "Not a thing."

I have an appointment Monday with my ophthalmologist.

# Headshrinker

**E**veryone should live next door to a headshrinker. I was fortunate. I lived next door to two of them; but in La Jolla that's easy. As affluent people seem to have more mental problems than average people do, psychiatrists and psychologists find this village to be a gold mine.

Fate deemed it humorous to place a female and male psychologist on either side of my hacienda. I admit that the female was much more fun.

The couch was probably still warm from her first patient when she realized it would be more fun if sessions were held in a hot tub off

her patio. She placed the hot tub next to a peek-a-boo fence that separated our property. Rather than protest the installation, I welcomed it.

Although our den window did not provide good visual aid, my elephant ears kept me informed of the clients' progress. After a month of listening, I came to the conclusion there are no new problems.

It was while watering the flowers near the fence one afternoon that I realized it is more fun to live next door to a female doctor. I was startled out of my meditation by a voice calling: "Phil, Phil, would you come over here?" Being a thoughtful neighbor, I advanced to the fence to find the doctor and a female client completely nude.

As I was surveying the two of them in disbelief, the doctor said: "Phil, would you get over here and fix our damn plumbing?"

As one who was always expecting the unexpected, I replied: "No, I can't. But I have a friend in Pennsylvania who would love to."

# The Real McCoy

**O**n Wednesdays my final stop as a food broker was at the McCoy Market. Izzie Parks was president of a ten-store chain, and we both enjoyed playing mental parry and thrust games. Naturally, Jew boy's mind was a calculator, and usually no match for someone who had to use the real thing to get an answer.

I was surprised to find the main office unattended, and Izzie's door was closed. I knocked on his door, and it was opened immediately by a six foot, six inch tall giant wearing a holster and sporting a shiny sidepiece. As I had an opportunity to see past this threat to humanity, I noticed five other

gangsters showing the same holsters. No one wore a coat, so the firearms were quite visible.

Izzie was sitting at one end of his desk explaining his Profit and Loss Statement. Not willing to enter a room with six guns on display, I excused myself and started to make a fast exit. At that point, Mr. Giant told me to get inside and state my business. The friendly tone he used told me that I had better obey. I entered, put my briefcase down, and shook hands with everyone.

Izzie's hand was very moist. I could understand why. The gentleman occupying Izzie's chair said: "Shoot." Although I didn't like that word, I went into my pitch.

I explained that Spreckels Sugar Company had a one-week promotion on five-pound bags for those ordering a 60,000-pound semi-truck load delivered to one location. There would be a better discount for additional semis or boxcars.

Mr. Mucky-Muck said: "In your opinion, what is the very best deal, and how should

we get rid of the sugar?” I told him to buy the boxcar deal, as he had three days to unload it and give the sugar away with a five-dollar purchase. As the stores were all different sizes, none should take more from the boxcar than they thought they could use. I could give them the date and time a boxcar would be on the siding; and date charges would start if it was not emptied on time.

I was told to get out my order book, and write up the boxcar deal for Izzie to sign; and be sure to make up his ad.

Then I was asked the most surprising question. Would I consider bringing my calculating mind to Las Vegas and work for the boys? I said I would have to discuss it with my wife, and let them know. He gave me his calling card and said: “Make it tomorrow. I’m going to get rid of our business advisor, and give you his job. By the way, you don’t have to carry a ‘piece,’ and you’ll start at triple your present salary... whatever that is.”

I discussed the deal with Marie, and after she got over the shock, we both agreed to say no

to the fabulous deal. We wanted to stay healthy and alive. As promised, I called my new friend, Bugsy Siegel, and he was very disappointed. He said if I changed my mind to give him a call.

# Hit by a Star

I was just getting out of my car when I noticed this short, bald, middle-aged man getting into a very expensive car. He seemed to be deep in thought. The next thing I knew, I was flat on my back. That man had hit me!

Before I could get to my feet, the driver was telling me not to move until he ran inside to call an ambulance. I assured him that would not be necessary, as I was not hurt. He assisted me to my feet and said “I’m Bing Crosby, and if you need any medical treatment or compensation just call this number and it will be taken care of.” He gave me the card of his attorney. I thanked him; we shook hands and parted friends.

When Bing died. I got a call from his attorney telling me that when Bing got home he called him, told him the story, gave him my name, address and phone number. If I asked for compensation he was to pay it. His lawyer insisted on sending me a legal form to sign so I would not sue the estate.

I was happy to exempt Bing's family from any additional problems. Not everyone is hit by a Star!

# The Blarney Stone

**M**y sister and her girlfriend were always looking for ways to save a peso. They were more than frugal. They called it thrifty. They knew every thrift shop in the Keystone State.

They heard of an Episcopalian Nunnery in London where twenty ladies could sleep for half the price of the cheapest hotel, and it was within walking distance to everything. They wrote for brochures, and within a week they were booked.

The Episcopal community arranged van service from the airport. Now for the house rules: Continental breakfast was available

between seven and eight in the morning. The front door was locked at midnight so you had better sign the book when you leave for sightseeing. Any questions?

Cork, Ireland, is a very short flight for those who want to kiss the Blarney Stone. The Nunnery checked to see if their Cork Nunnery had a room for two. They did, so they booked my sister's party for three days.

When the girls hit the Irish soil, local men suggested they try Callahan's Pub for lunch. My sister told them I was a close friend of Callahan's brother in Philadelphia. They said to ask for him. The girls got to the watering hole in Cork and the place had only two entrees... both described in Gaelic and English.

When the male waiter, who looked like he had seen more than his share of eighty summers, presented the menu you could have Irish Stew or Corned Beef and Cabbage, both served with scones. The girls said they would savor both and asked to see Mr. Callahan.

Within minutes a tall, handsome, broth of a man was at their table. When my sister related my relationship with his brother, Jimmy, from during the time I was top gun at Holiday Inn City Line, he asked her if I was the one who sponsored a Catholic charitable hospital in Tijuana. She said I was.

He told the elderly waiter sitting next to him to have someone take over his tables, as he was going to call Jimmy. He told the girls that our waiter was the senior Mr. Callahan, and he owned a pub in every city in Southern Ireland. He said he knew all about me from Jimmy who owned his own pub at Thirtieth and Market Streets in Philadelphia.

Jimmy used his Dad's menu and Dad's rules. They were closed on Fridays, as both items on the menu were meat. They were open on Sundays as anyone can be to Mass by eleven in the morning. They closed at eleven at night. They supplied Irish entertainers six nights a week, from seven until closing time. Many of the singers worked for free.

A phone was brought and he called Jimmy. He asked him when was the last time he had

seen me. Jimmy said three months ago when the survivors of Bataan and Corregidor had their reunion at the El Cortez a hotel in San Diego where I was now head gringo.

He asked Jimmy if he knew who was sitting across from him. Jimmy guessed Phil Hopkins. When his brother said it was my sister, Jimmy was disappointed but asked to chat with her. Knowing my sister, the kissing of the Blarney Stone wasn't needed to get her Victrola spinning.

Months later, I was galloping along with an organization that could feed ten thousand hungry mouths at one sitting. I was the caterer to the Del Mar Racetrack, San Diego Sports Arena, San Diego Stadium, commercial tuna seiner launchings, four-day horse rides with five hundred saddled up... you name it, we catered it.

My day was typically sixteen hours long, seven days a week. Yes, I wrote the contract, and I loved the action.

One evening, while relaxing with a refreshment after securing the money and

liquor at the Sports Arena in San Diego, the phone rang. It was Jimmy Callahan. He told me of his chat with his brother, Dad and my sister. Then he asked what I was doing. I told him and he laughed. I told him I had reopened my contacts with my Hebrew legion of friends to help the Tijuana Hospital. We talked for a while longer, then said “shalom” and hung up. A real compadre!



# Smuggling

**I**n the early 1950's I was a food distributor with a warehouse on Higuera Street in San Luis Obispo, California. The only thing that would attract foot traffic to the street after six in the evening was the best Chinese food this side of San Francisco. The restaurant was my next-door neighbor.

On Thursdays I had a very long day, and usually did not arrive back at the warehouse until eight at night. I noticed that my Chinese neighbor next door rarely had a customer in the evening, and he did no advertising to help his dinner trade.

Pulling in one Thursday night at nine, I noticed all his blinds were tightly closed. Thinking something could be wrong, I parked my truck and went next door and knocked on the restaurant's door.

After my neighbor was sure who it was, he opened the door and invited me in. What I saw were twenty half-naked Chinese eating all the leftover food from the restaurant. He told them to ignore me and to keep eating.

He told me that he and his wife lived behind the restaurant, and the upstairs with an outside fire escape had a dorm and toilet for twenty men. The "coyote," as we would call him in Mexico, had to supply them with clothes and find them jobs in San Francisco or Los Angeles before he got fully paid.

Like a good neighbor, I promised to keep my mouth shut. The next morning I told my wife we would be having a gourmet dinner for supper. We had twelve quart-size containers that were put on the coyote's expense account. We ate our fill, and had so much left over that we invited our friends over for a Sunday Chinese buffet.

# Does He or Doesn't He?

**I**t was 1952 when I first met Nancy and Ronald Reagan in the Club Car on the overnighter to San Francisco.

The six members of the Spreckels Sugar Sales Department in Los Angeles had been summoned to headquarters to see the sugar beet fields, tour a factory and get a pep talk on how to fight C&H Hawaii cane sugar.

As we all had dinner at home, we decided to have a nightcap before retiring. When we entered the Club Car, the friendliest chap I met that day stood up and said: "I'm Ronald

Reagan, and this is my wife, Nancy. We're on our honeymoon and would like to treat you to a drink."

As our expense account was for a double stateroom, we heartily agreed to join them. As soon as Nancy got tired of twirling her swizzle stick, she excused herself and went to their stateroom. At midnight when the Club Car closed, Ronnie paid the small tab and we all retired. It was a very interesting four hours for us all.

In the morning we were picked up by the Spreckels van and driven to headquarters for a Continental breakfast and our tours. I suppose friends met the honeymooners at the train station.

The next time I met Nancy and Ronnie was at the Anaheim Convention Center where he made his acceptance speech to run for Governor of California. A mutual friend convinced Shirley Temple Black that I had the future John McCormick to sing the Star Spangled Banner. My protégé blew it by asking everyone to join him in the singing.

Shirley and I were so embarrassed; we were speechless.

From a well-greased “kitchen” cabinet, it was easy for Ronnie and Nancy to spend eight years in Sacramento while their money friends smoothed the jump to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. It’s nice to have friends with money.

When Ronnie retired after his eight years as President, the same question bugged me as it did in 1952. Does he or doesn’t he color his hair? What do you think?



# Las Vegas

**I**n 1954 I was a food broker in Los Angeles. One day I received the following invitation from the local KTTV Television Station.

“Dear Food Broker:

As the invitation indicates, you are most cordially invited to attend KTTV’s Sahara Safari in Las Vegas, Nevada, on October 25 and 26.

The event is intended as a salute to you, one of the leaders in the food industry of Southern California, because your principals have been or will be members of the KTTV family of advertisers and because we as a

station would like to acquaint you with KTTV's programming and merchandising."

Here is the proposed schedule for the Sahara Safari.

"Sunday, October 25-

Leave Lockheed Airport Burbank aboard a chartered Constellation plane at 11:00 AM.

Arrive in Las Vegas at 12:15 PM.

Board a special bus for the Hotel Sahara and arrive at the hotel at 1:00 PM.

Check in the hotel and, if you wish, have lunch, go for a swim.

4:00 PM - Short presentation in the Congo Room.

5:00 PM - Cocktail Party in the Casbar Lounge from 5:00 until 6:00 PM.

7:00 PM - Dinner show in the Congo Room featuring Victor Borge.

12 Midnight - Late show at the Riviera Hotel starring Johnny Ray & Jonathan Winters.

Monday, October 26-

Breakfast or lunch whenever you wish.

2:30 PM - The bellboys will pick up your luggage in your room.

3:00 PM - Board the bus at the front of the hotel for ride to the airport.

3:30 PM – Leave for home.

4:45 PM – Arrive Burbank Airport.

Naturally, the above schedule is an optional one. All food, bar and room charges at the Sahara Hotel and the late show at the Riviera Hotel will be assumed by the station. We would like you to attend the presentation at 4:00 PM, but even that is optional. I certainly hope you will be able to join us and ask that you send the enclosed slip right back to us.

Cordially,

Chuck Martin

Merchandising Manager”

Wouldn't you consider this invitation to be complimentary? Well, Ed Hull, my landlord at my brokerage warehouse and I certainly did.

We were so busy signing chits for KTTV to pay that we never played the slots.

Then on Sunday at two in the afternoon, while we were packing our bags to be taken to the bus, our room phone rang. It was the

Head Cashier. She wanted to see us PRONTO to settle our BILL. Our hearts nearly stopped. We sat on the bed to recover, and check our wallets. We both had twenty dollars.

We finished packing, picked up our bags and reported to our executioner. She asked to see our driver's licenses, and wrote the numbers on a tape that was as long as a roll of toilet paper, and gave us the BAD NEWS.

Our bill totaled \$1,340.48. Unfortunately, in the State of Nevada, everyone must pay his or her own entertainment tax. She told us we owed the State of Nevada \$1.34. Phew! Our hearts started to beat again.

# You Never Had Pheasant Balls

**E**very year the Orange County Red Cross had their cheapie lunch for five hundred volunteers to present their certificates. When I say cheapie, I'm talking about a three-dollar buffet.

It was our only chance to clear out the walk-in box and freezer and not lose money. After all the holiday banquets we did, we were especially loaded with turkey stuffing.

I had my three regular salad ladies make small balls of stuffing, put turkey gravy on them and place them in buffet pans. They

made fifteen hundred balls. With six salads, rolls, and lime fruit Jell-O, it made a presentable buffet.

About fifteen minutes before the starving five hundred arrived, we put the buffet out for inspection. As was my habit, I strolled every buffet line with the committee for any comments. When we got to the end of the line, where the dressing balls were located, the committee asked me what they were. Without batting an eye, I said: “Pheasant balls.”

As soon as the five hundred were seated, their staunch leader announced that: “Phil has done it again. You’re going to have pheasant balls with your gourmet buffet!”

We had to put on a limit of three for each person. A change of name has helped many products.

# Sixty Four Thousand-Dollar Question

**A**s I had spent three years learning all the aspects of the food business, I made friends with the leading wholesale distributor, Rand-Halpin. Mr. Halpin was a credit to the “old sod” ... honest!

When I joined A. W. Adams Food Brokers, I proved my sales ability and was rewarded with forty supermarket chains and all food distributors for my territory.

After a few calls on Mr. Halpin in San Luis Obispo, he suggested that I stay at his Ranch

in Paso Robles for the night instead of a motel. I quickly agreed.

After I had called on the few markets in the county, I drove to the Halpin ranch where his very friendly wife greeted me.

As I never drank alcohol during the day, she and I spent an interesting half-hour discussing my past.

When Mr. Halpin arrived, we ate a delicious dinner. While eating dessert, Mrs. Halpin announced that we would be viewing her favorite television show this evening... The Sixty Four Thousand-Dollar Question.

When I announced that it was all fixed, everything hit the fan. She jumped to her feet, pointed her longest finger at me, and shouted: "Get your suitcases and get out of my house immediately!"

I didn't have to be told twice. I was at my station wagon with suitcases faster than a jackrabbit.

I wonder what gullible Mamma Halpin thought when the truth about the show was later revealed. It was fixed.



# Lou and Knucklehead

**E**very year when Ringling Brothers came to San Diego, I would go to the circus train on the first Monday. That was the performers day off, and at nine in the morning there stood Lou Jacobs, wife Jean, daughters Dolly, LuAnn, and Knucklehead, his talented dog, waiting for me. We would do the same routine every year.

Then we would head for Tijuana where the girls did their Christmas shopping while Lou, Jean and Knucklehead just watched.

I took the five of them to Mexican wholesale distributor friends, and they got the best deal

in town on clothes, musical instruments and novelties.

At noon we returned to their circus train, put the goodies away and headed for my hacienda for a dip in the pool and a Mexican buffet. I always had bratwurst for Lou and Knucklehead.

My mother-in-law was visiting from Philadelphia so I naturally included her in our circus conversations. I went into the kitchen to refill the iced-tea pitcher when my mother-in-law charged in to secretly tell me that the man on my patio was an impostor and not the real Lou Jacobs.

As she refused to rejoin my luncheon party, I asked Lou what props he needed to do a short version of his act to convince her. He asked my wife, Marie, for a large trash bag and he cut the sealed end open. He then asked for a broom.

Then Lou, Knucklehead, Jean, the girls, Marie and I marched into the living room to convince the unbeliever. While Lou was

explaining to Knucklehead in German what they were going to do, I explained their act.

Lou is hunting, sets eye on a rabbit, shoots at him, drops him into the bag, and the rabbit goes out the bottom of the bag and walks away to live another day. When Lou's act was over my mother-in-law retreated to her bedroom until I packed them all into the station wagon and drove them back to the circus train.

I made sure the ladies had plenty of Mexican food for a late snack, and Lou and Knucklehead had their bratwurst and kaiser rolls.

Every day until she got on the plane back to Philly, my "doubting Thomas" mother-in-law would say: "That wasn't Lou Jacobs."

My son recently found this biographical profile of Lou on the Ringling Brothers Web page:

Lou Jacobs was born Jacob Ludwig in 1903 in Bremerhaven, Germany. His early training in show business seemed to encompass

everything but comedy. Upon emigrating through Ellis Island to America in 1923, it was as a contortionist that he first found work. His first foray into comedy would eventually lead to his signing with Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1925. He created his own clown gags, and his repertoire is legendary to circus scholars and fans alike.

Later Jacobs added a partner to his act—a pint-sized Chihuahua named Knucklehead, in what became a circus classic act. Jacobs and Knucklehead would prove to be an enduring partnership.

# P.T. Barnum's Favorite Seamstress

**E**very year P. T. Barnum toured Europe seeking the best acts in the world for the Barnum & Bailey Circus. He always reserved one day for a Catholic girls' orphanage, who prided themselves on supplying him with their best seamstress.

Taking the Superior's word, he presented Maureen MacCauley with a third-class passenger ticket, (no employee of Barnum & Bailey Circus ever crossed in steerage), a train ticket from New York to Bridgeport, Connecticut (the circus' winter quarters at the time), and a note that read: "This young lady

only speaks Gaelic. If you make sure she reaches our winter quarters you and your family will have passes to the Greatest Show on Earth. Signed P.T. Barnum.”

Maureen needed no help in finding Bridgeport, but with the help of the present Head Seamstress asked Mr. Barnum if she could keep the note. He said he would be honored. I saw the note when I was five years old... well preserved in a frame.

She was taken to the second floor of a very long barracks where she was shown her private cubicle. There were ten on each side. Each cubicle contained a bed, chest of drawers, small desk and chair, a nightstand with a wash-up basin, a night lamp and a packet of Barnum & Bailey writing paper on each desk. She was told to write to the Superior of the orphanage to say she had arrived safely, tell her about the trip, and thank her and the Sisters for raising her.

Meals were served family style in the Mess Barracks next door. Employees were expected to be there at eight, one and six.

There were, reportedly, no seconds permitted on desserts.

Foul weather gear was stored in a closet at the front door of the Seamstress' room. A priest and a doctor were present 365 days a year. They lived with the executives. The circus provided replacements when they went on vacation.

In winter quarters, mass was said at ten every Sunday morning in the Mess Hall. The doctor had an infirmary where he lived. The show traveled with fifteen hundred people for eight months. Eighteen seamstresses remained at headquarters making the next year's outfits... two traveled with the show doing repairs. Sunday was their day off. The meal schedule was the same. The mass schedule could change as the priest came from a parish in Bridgeport and had to fit it into his schedule.

At breakfast Maureen met Mr. Bailey and all his superintendents who lived at Winter Quarters until the show got on the road. Everyone was very friendly.

On Sunday, her day off, she asked if she could wander off to see the elephants after lunch. She was told she could wander wherever she wanted until dinner. They didn't have elephants in Ireland, so she wanted to see if they were as big as the rumors.

Maureen found their barn. The elephants must have alerted the elderly gent sitting with them because he arose to his feet and with a club with a steel hook on one end greeted her. He said something to the fifty elephants and they all raised their long noses and bellowed something. She said, "thank you" in Gaelic. The old man laughed.

She peeked into the other animal barns... not much action there. Each had its own elderly man in charge. None of them gave any attention to her until she got to the lions and tigers barn. The trainer was exercising the big cats two at a time in a small covered ring. When he saw Maureen he put the animals back into their cages and walked towards her carrying his whip. He said something to her in a strange language, so she left.

One of the seamstresses spoke German and she insisted on introducing them. He came over to their table and asked if she would be interested in seeing him feed his cats, as he called them. He said they are fed once a day at three in the afternoon after the first performance.

Big cats are a victim of habit and do not like any changes in their routine. Maureen promised to be at the cat barn at three on Sunday. Her interpreter volunteered to go with her.

When they arrived a half-hour early, Herr Trainer was cutting up a small steer and removing the meat from the skin. The twenty-two animals never took their eyes off their personal butcher. When his butchering was completed, he pushed his rolling table down the center of the cat barn.

He spoke to each animal by name and pushed a large chunk of meat into the cage. Each animal's chunk was according to its weight. Older animals got a very large bone to grind the tartar off their teeth.

Still wanting to see the elephants being fed, Maureen asked her interpreter to ask the animal superintendent for a feeding schedule. He complied happily. The men called her the Gaelic animal lover.

Every Sunday after mass, she started on her safari, returned for lunch and visited the animal barns. Many of the days were snowy so she donned foul weather gear. She had never seen snow in Ireland. She asked Mr. Bailey if he could spare a book so she could keep an accounting of her adventures. He presented her with a beautifully lined schoolbook, and told her to fill it up with her daily adventures. There were more books waiting for her... a very fatherly man.

She dedicated her book to her two adopted fathers and the good Sisters who raised her until she was fourteen. When she retired fifty years later, she had fifty notebooks full of adventures.

She traveled with the show five times as a repair girl, and taught classes on costume repair.

In ten years she became head seamstress, and introduced classes on quality and efficiency. Mr. Bailey, who was her official boss, always gave her his highest ratings. He appreciated ambition.

When she completed her fifty years with the Greatest Show on Earth, a rumor spread that Ringling Brothers was purchasing the show and moving the winter quarters to Florida. She asked to see Mr. Bailey, and asked if she had enough money to retire. He took out a big ledger plainly marked "Maureen MacCauley." He handed over all the money she had left with the show for fifty years, added one percent interest, then subtracted the times she had asked for clothing money. He told her to take the money and retire.

Knowing her friend on Clarion Street in Philadelphia would be charging to Florida to join Ringling, Maureen told her friend to tell the landlord that she would rent her home and be there in three days. She arrived with two suitcases on the day they were leaving, and got the house completely furnished for twelve dollars a month.

A Mrs. Hopkins, who lived three houses down, introduced herself and invited Maureen to dinner. She said her family ate promptly at five. Tomorrow we could go food shopping and she would introduce her to her favorite merchants. Although Mrs. Hopkins was born in Alsace-Lorraine, she could speak many languages. She drove a hard but very fair bargain.

After five years of close friendship, Mr. Hopkins moved his family to West Philadelphia and Maureen stayed in close touch. You should never let a true friend get away... not too many out there.

Maureen asked my Dad where she should deposit Mr. Bailey's check. He suggested the PSFS Bank as the largest and most stable bank in Philadelphia. He suggested that the two ladies and Philip go to their main branch on Sixteenth Street, put the check into a savings account that would pay one-percent interest, and have lunch at Horn & Hardarts. After lunch Maureen suggested they pick up eight complete dinners and the largest apple pie. The treat was on her.

The journey started at eight in the morning, and when they got to the bank it was open. My Mother asked for the manager, stated Maureen's business, and with the biggest smile deposited the Barnum & Bailey check. The manager gave Maureen a bankbook declaring the bank would pay two-percent interest on such a large deposit.

My Mother suggested we visit St. John's Church and go to mass. It seemed like a million people were burning a hundred million candles. I asked my Mother who died. She laughed.

My Mother announced that we would walk home, and pick up our dinners at H&H, two blocks from our home. Dad asked Maureen to say the Grace in Gaelic. It was beautiful. As soon as she was finished, he explained how he went around the table starting with guests, then the oldest child, letting everyone tell what impressed them that day. We did not discuss finances.

After dinner, Dad went upstairs to take his daily bath and get ready to listen to Amos and Andy on the radio.

When he came downstairs, Dad asked Maureen to go into the parlor to discuss her banking transaction. When she told him that my Mother got her an extra one-percent interest if she maintained a \$50,000 balance, he couldn't believe it. She showed him her bankbook... he believed.

Then she asked: "Now that Mr. Barnum would not be going to the orphanage to help the Sisters, could she spend that extra one percent on the Sisters?" Dad thought the idea was admirable and told her to go with Mother, tell the bank president her idea and tell him she needed help to make a will. He felt that with her deposit it would be free.

She discussed the best date with Mother, and we were off again for PSFS. I loved it! Mother loved it because it was her washing day and it was raining. Clothes needed sunshine in the yard to dry.

The president of PSFS wrote a check on Maureen's account for \$500 to the Sisters in Donegal, and told Maureen and Mother if they would give his notary about half an

hour, he would have the will ready for signature.

We headed for mass at St. John's... same people, same candles but a different priest. After mass Maureen signed the necessary papers, and we went for an early lunch at H&H. Then we took the trolley for home... another great day.

But every day for me was a great day. I never had a problem. My family laughed when I called them opportunities. But only my Mother understood me.

I guess the biggest compliment my Mother ever paid me was that I was "different." She explained what she meant when I left home at eighteen. She said: "You do it your way and I admire that."



# Elephants Do Like Beer

**A**s the self-appointed promoter for Orange County's first Children's Hospital, I thought I should put the money where my mouth was and sponsor the first fund raiser.

With the help of my Shriner friends and friends of the St. Joseph Sisters, we sold five hundred tickets at twenty-five dollars each. I promised to produce the biggest star they have ever seen to entertain them, and a top-notch band for dancing.

Dinner at eight would be stuffed Cornish hen, baked potato, green beans almodine and apple pie alamode. A fresh gourmet salad would precede this feast. All proceeds from the five cash bars would also be donated. It was an offer no one could refuse.

I had heard of a young man in Fullerton who had a trained baby elephant that could do an unassisted fifteen-minute show. I convinced him to let his elephant be my star attraction.

My good friend, Bernard Swartz, from Disneyland promised his eight-piece band for dancing. Bill Tischler, a Shriner and an airline captain for United, promised to do his Dr. Chuckles clown act. Mrs. Yoder promised to read some dour poetry. So, I had an hour of unusual entertainment to offer.

Our star, Anna the elephant, arrived at our pantry room just as our waitresses were about to deliver the five hundred gourmet salads to the banquet hall. After surveying the ladies and salads, Anna did an unlady-like thing. She turned on her “faucet” and flooded the floor with two inches of elephant juice. The owner took Anna outside, hosed

her legs and feet and tied her to the trailer to dry. He and I squeegeed the pantry floor, hosed it down and dry mopped it. No one would ever know we had a flood.

After making sure the dinner was served on time, and the band was playing, I went out to see how our star was doing. She was happily waiting to show her talent. As I was leaving to go inside, her owner/trainer had an unusual request. Could Anna have one bottle of beer before her performance? This was her payment. I went to the nearest bar, got her bottle of beer and took it to her owner.

When she saw the beer, her whole act must have materialized in her mind because her eyes sparkled, her ears flopped, her fanny shook like five hundred pounds of Jell-O, and she guzzled the beer down in one gulp. She gave the empty bottle back to her owner and gave him a warm nuzzle.

By now it was show time. I introduced the star of our show, and she went into her fifteen-minute routine. Needless to say, she brought the house down. A very tough act to follow.



# Garbonzo Beans

**I**n 1960, in order to spend more time with my wife and six year old son, I sold my brokerage business and signed a five-year lease with Fashion Square in Santa Ana for a small eighty eight-seat buffet restaurant that had gone “belly up” trying to compete with Bullock’s Tea Room, and a large food chain at the entrance to the mall.

As my spot was in a very undesirable location, I got a very reasonable rent. Since I would be open only for lunch, I decided my menu would be what I would like to eat at this time of day. I settled on two homemade soups, rotating three times a week, corned

beef, hot pastrami, barbecue beef, ham and turkey served on a kaiser roll for the mavens.

The salads were cole slaw, potato salad, tossed green and garbonzo or kidney beans. Three kinds of homemade pies completed the menu.

Before opening, I spent the week before calling on every office building in the neighborhood posting my menu and opening date. We opened the day after Thanksgiving. When we closed at three in the afternoon, we collapsed after a busy day.

The food and prices were right for the average working person. Our customer count did not decrease until after New Year's when we leveled off at five hundred a day. Everyone told their friends, and we started to get the Hollywood crowd on their way to homes or yachts in Newport Beach.

One day, our garbonzo bean salad was not selling too well, and it was two o'clock and one hour to closing. Tony Curtis was enjoying his lunch at our celebrity table just

across from the cash register when I made up and told the following story.

A little boy by the name of Bernie Schwartz from Brooklyn walked all the way across this vast country towards Hollywood to become one of its biggest stars. When he got to Arizona, he dropped from starvation. A local rancher took pity on him, offering a sack of unfamiliar beans. He ate a handful of these garbonzo beans, stuffed his pockets with the beans and nibbled on them until he reached the studio gate. Today he is the star known as Tony Curtis.

As expected, a young lady asked if he ever came into the Sandwich Shop. When I told the twenty or so Curtis fans that Tony was sitting at the celebrity table right then, and would be most happy to sign autographs, they paid their bills, placed their food on a table and formed an orderly line to chat and get his autograph.

Word about our food got around quickly at the Hollywood studios so we were flooded with stars.

Gypsy Rose Lee was a weekly regular, so were many others. I never infringed on their privacy without their permission. It was a happy five years but I was ready to move into the big time of the food business, so bought a banquet hall with a liquor license and stepped into the spotlight.

# Sandwich Shop

**O**ur little eighty eight-seat gourmet eatery took off immediately, but I still looked for improvement.

I thought of those delicious, juicy French-dipped sandwiches at Philippe's in Los Angeles, so I put them in next to our barbecue beef.

How about those real kosher pickles that you got free at Cantor's or Sam's on Produce Row? I ordered a hundred-gallon barrel of them every week. And those green kosher tomatoes... the same. Why shouldn't I serve the type of food I like?

Our two-seat celebrity table in front of my cash register was occupied every day. Some of my favorites were Gypsy Rose Lee, Roz Russell, John Wayne, Robert Young, Gary Cooper, Allen Funt (who was always taking notes), and Dick Powell. It was a constant stream.

Every Friday we fed all religious clergy free... regardless of creed. When the word got around, we built up quite a clientele.

Our featured item every Friday was a delicious Chinese tuna casserole. The five-pound can of tuna was the important ingredient. Once, when the chef brought the casserole for the hot line, he whispered: "I lost the key to the tuna can." I said: "Don't worry, it will show up."

One of the first in line every Friday was a clergyman from my church who never cared for my showmanship. He picked up his casserole, a salad, beverage and pie, and took a table in the rear.

After about ten minutes I heard a scream from this man of God. He was holding up the

missing tuna can key for all to see. I went down to his table, removed the key from his hand and said: “Father, it couldn’t have happened to a nicer ‘future saint.’”

He never came back.



# Smile, You're on Candid Camera

**B**ack in the early 1960's, when I had my famous Sandwich Shop in Fashion Square, I pulled every trick in the book to keep a happy atmosphere. Who needed grumpy customers?

Even though I was thirty feet from the start of the buffet line, playing the kosher piano (the cash register, for you gentiles), my ears were tuned to the comments of each customer. As the line was purposely set up to feature our homemade pies, this was the first delicious taste you encountered.

One day, I could tell trouble was brewing when a mother and daughter declared in a loud voice the stupidity of anyone who would place dessert first on a buffet line. As they proceeded along the line their comments became more abusive. I thought I would change that.

Directly behind me was an old fashioned Coke dispenser. When they approached me to pay their bill, I pointed to the Coke dispenser and said: "Smile, you're on Candid Camera."

You will never believe the results. Every regular customer stood up and applauded. The mother and daughter ran to every outstretched hand and shook it.

I smiled like the cat that just ate the canary. Little did the two grumps know that the laugh was on them.

I'll do anything for a laugh.

# Mexican Reception

**W**hen catering my first Mexican wedding reception in the 1960's, the police demanded that a permit be signed by the wedding party. The permit required the hiring of a private security company to maintain order, or the costs for any police required to squelch any fights would be absorbed by my catering company.

Although I found this insulting to the groom-to-be, gringos have laws and we must comply. When I presented the permit to the groom, and explained my embarrassment, he understood.

When he explained the love everyone attending the wedding reception had for his Uncle Tomas, I proposed that we give Uncle Tomas a company name and launch a new career in private security. How does “Mexican International” sound? It sounded okay to the Police Department.

The future bride and groom came in one Saturday evening while I was catering a wedding reception for five hundred. I think they wanted to size me up and ascertain my personality.

After introductions, they asked to see the facility, including the kitchen. They seemed most interested in the walk-in box and dish-up line for holding hot food. The size of the stage and dance floor was also important.

At the completion of the tour, we returned to my office and I learned about a Mexican reception.

Mexican receptions are unusual and full of surprises for a first-timer.

They asked if a Sunday six months in advance was available, and what time the walk-in box would be empty the night before. I checked the bookings and gave a yes on the date and a ten o'clock time on the availability of the walk-in box.

The señor asked for a contract, and after signing it produced five hundred dollars in cash, and promised to do the same every week until the wedding. It's nice when your family owns the largest tortilla business in the county. After six months I had \$12,000 of his money.

A week before the reception, we set the ground rules. The priest and wedding party must enter the hall first. When the wedding party was seated and he blessed same, the buffet and ten-piece mariachi band would start. At four o'clock the padre would bless the assembled group and announce that the family part of the reception was over.

Everything went as planned the afternoon of the rehearsal. Then I noticed something unusual. The bride, groom and best man were not present. After the padre seated

himself at the family table, I inquired as to their absence. He explained that it was a custom for the best man to drive the newlyweds to his favorite grandmother's house. There they would drink hot chocolate and receive some marriage advice. Then they were to join us at the reception. A lovely custom! At about two o'clock the newlyweds, chauffeured by the best man, joined us.

The assembled family stood to acknowledge their entrance. As there was no head table, they sat at the family table. The best man got them each a plate of enchiladas. Between nibbles they accepted congratulations from everyone present.

At four o'clock, the mariachis stopped playing; the padre blessed everyone and announced that the family portion of the reception was over. The bride and groom left, following the best man in their car.

My employees cleared the family tables and filled their plates with the best Mexican food they had ever eaten. The kitchen ladies consolidated all leftover food, placed it in the walk-in box and left.

After half an hour of eating and laughing, my crew was ready to clean up the banquet room, reset the room and go home for a much-needed rest. They were tired.

My three best bartenders arrived at seven to set up their individual bars. The mariachi band returned a half-hour later, looking for food. When I explained that there was no food or drink available, they weren't very happy. That wasn't my problem.

At eight, the two hundred and fifty adult guests arrived for their party... and what a party! No one came to cause problems. They came to get to know their New Jersey amigos, dance, sing, and make the bride very rich. How?

After the bride danced with her father and father-in-law, an uncle started the money dance. He would approach the groom and, after securing his permission, pin the largest denomination U.S. banknote I've seen to her veil. They would circle the floor, to considerable applause. It wasn't long until her veil and dress would be covered with

currency. Then the best man would announce that he would conclude the money dance, and all should depart.

As agreed, our employees should break down the buffet line, clean the hall, and put clean tablecloths and candles on thirty tables. The rest were to be removed.

Three hosted bars should be ready to serve from eight until midnight. No tip glasses were to be displayed. Employees would be compensated in the final bill.

The best man was in complete charge. The leftover food would be picked up at ten on Monday morning. He would be at my office at noon to settle the bill. Any questions? Who has questions after six months of a beautiful friendship!

I asked permission to hug everyone, and received the ultimate compliment... I had become a Mexican Señor.

The day before the wedding, the future bride's family and guests were flown from

New Jersey at the groom's expense. They all stayed at the family hacienda.

As arranged, the ladies delivered the food at ten the night before the reception. Our tables for five hundred and the thirty-foot long buffet table were raring to go.

When I arrived at nine, the food ladies were waiting for me. They asked my permission to place salsa and corn chips on every table, and to bring the food to room temperature so it could easily be heated on their return. I agreed.

As soon as they loaded my four ovens and eight hot covered food containers on the kitchen serving line, they left for the church.

On their return at one o'clock, they started to heat the food. At one thirty, the padre and five hundred happy but starving amigos were at my banquet hall. In an orderly fashion, the families filled the tables, the ladies put the food on the buffet table and everything was blessed. The mariachis started to play

While I was entertaining the South Jersey compadres for about an hour with my stories about Atlantic City and Wildwood, I got a frantic wave from my favorite bartender.

He told me that about every ten minutes an older Mexican man would appear, say one word, “Chivas!” and slide a five-dollar bill across the bar. He would then throw the drink down the hatch, carefully place the empty shotglass on the bar, and disappear into the crowd. As he already had eight drinks, should the bartenders “eighty six” him? I went to the best man and told him story and he laughed. He said it was time I met the wedding’s private security force.

Bent over so his chin almost rested on his knees was Mr. Mexican International, dressed in his Sunday best. He was about five feet tall if he could stand upright, and weighed about eighty-five pounds, which included the eight Chivas Regal drinks.

He appeared to be in a partial coma.

We were just starting the introductions when a young male guest committed a social

cardinal sin... he did not seek the boyfriend's permission before asking a girl to dance. There was some pushing and shoving. The best man sent them all to see Uncle Tomas.

Señor Security miraculously revived, demanded that each kneel in front of him, heard their stories and then told them to go home. This was quick justice, and they left pronto.

I had one question to ask the best man... why did Señor Tomas send both sides home? His answer was that the offended party should have contacted Señor Tomas when he was offended. As he did not, he also broke a rule of cultural etiquette and must be punished. It made sense.

Later, I received another frantic wave from my favorite bartender. Uncle Tomas, my security force, had just downed his fifteenth Chivas Regal. I went over to his chair in the corner to check him. He was still more or less conscious.

About an hour later, drink number twenty did it. After downing the final Chivas, Uncle

Tomas slowly rotated around like a top until two nearby male guests caught him and carried him to where the best man had made a bed of chairs. His stiffened body just lay there until he was placed on the back seat of a car and driven home.

From that night forward, whenever an employee needed cheering up, someone would yell “Chivas!” and we would all burst into laughter.

# Show the Baby Picture

A friend of ours from Portland, Oregon, was attending FBI School at Quantico, Virginia, when he called to ask if he could spend a weekend with us in Pennsylvania. Naturally, we were delighted.

As we wanted to introduce him to some of the historical landmarks, we took him to a Horn & Hardarts Automat.

Our friend had just become the proud father of a son, so he was loaded with pictures.

While we were enjoying our dessert, our friend just had to show the pictures of his son once again. Just then the Automat's clean-up

lady was passing our table and the new dad insisted that she see his pictures too.

Being polite, she went through the folder of pictures, returned it to our friend and said: “Don’t worry... he’ll change.”

# Have Santa Suit Will Travel

**F**or many years, from Thanksgiving until Christmas Eve, I visited many old folks homes, hospitals, orphanages, prisons and juvenile detention centers giving my “Ho, Ho, Ho’s” and hard candy to everyone who believed in Santa.

One year, a friend who had a son in the Carl Harvey School for handicapped children, asked me to entertain about a hundred children there. He warned me that some of the physical handicaps might be upsetting. I told him not to worry. Santa, like God, loves everyone.

I arrived at the appointed time and went into my act. Although my friend's son could not speak, he tried to tell everyone that he knew Santa personally. I paid no attention to his sounds or pointing to my shoes. Neither did anyone else.

When he arrived home, he found a picture of me at one of their yard parties and made it very clear to his dad that Santa was really Mr. Hopkins.

He made the connection through my shoes. You can't fool a smart child; even a cerebral palsied one.

# House Boy

**N**o more work pressure or crazy people to deal with... no more business trips. I was retired. My time was my own.

Shopping and taking care of the house was no big deal. After six months my opinions began to change.

First of all, there was no beginning or ending to the day. You're on the job twenty four hours a day. It's hard to begin any new project because you know you are going to be interrupted in a few minutes. The phone will ring or someone will be at the door.

The sense of isolation is oppressive! Nobody knows or cares that you're alive. You're trapped in the house and every day is the same. You get lonely. You start watching those television soap shows. There is no sense of completion.

You spend an hour shining the kitchen and five minutes later it's a disaster. You don't get a raise or promotion, OR ANY THANKS! You begin to think that any dumb-dumb can do your job.

Your wife comes home with her office problems. Her arrival home was supposed to be your highlight of the day. Forget it!

If she calls to say she has to work late, I'm crushed. I had put a lot of effort into the dinner. But, how can I complain? I've done it many times.

# How's Your Voice?

**W**hile visiting my son in Santa Monica, I thought I would walk to Venice and give the Muscle Beach crowd a treat by showing my knobby knees. After strolling the boardwalk for two hours, I thought it advisable to board the bus for home before my body was defiled. Besides, my feet were killing me!

As I stepped into the parked, empty bus, the driver asked: "How's your voice?" Coming from South Philadelphia, home of all great singers, naturally I said: "Fantastic." The driver handed me a song sheet on which was listed twelve old-time favorites. I paid my fare and took a window seat. I wanted

everyone on Wilshire Boulevard to enjoy my huckster voice.

As he threw the bus into gear, the driver announced that the first number would be “I’ve Got a Gal.”

By the time we started on the next song, “Swanee,” a ninety-year old refugee from Brooklyn gumming a Lender’s bagel had climbed aboard and sat next to me. I knew it was a Lender’s bagel because her bag containing the last one said so. The bus driver did not offer her a song sheet.

As I approached my stop, I asked my seat companion for a critique of my voice. She said: “Not good, not bad. I’ve heard worse. Have a bagel.”

# Mistaken Identity

**S**ome years ago I was invited by my boyhood friend, John Cardinal O'Connor of New York, to have breakfast at his residence, and bring him up-to-date on my work in Tijuana, Mexico. We set a convenient date.

The weather was on the wet side so I wore my tan topcoat and slouch hat. John had asked me to be there in time for his morning eight o'clock mass.

I was met by his personal secretary, who upon opening the front door said: "Father?" Thinking he was referring to my son, I said: "That's, ahh, me." He seemed shocked.

As we walked into the refectory to get to the tunnel leading to the cathedral, the three housekeepers were waiting to pass judgment on the cardinal's California friend.

The secretary, without looking left or right, said: "California." One of the three ladies said: "It shows."

When we got to the end of the tunnel, John was vesting for the mass, saw me and gave me a wave. This prompted the secretary to ask if I wanted to join the bishops on the altar. I respectfully declined and said I would take my seat with the humble. The secretary, who happened to hold the rank of monsignor, elected to join me. The cardinal already had six bishops and another cardinal assisting. I thought... that's more than enough.

After mass the secretary, bishops, and the other cardinal went through the tunnel to the refectory where I was introduced as "Father Hopkins." Thinking this was some kind of an inside-the-hierarchy joke, I went along with it.

After a brief delay, John came bouncing into the refectory singing our alma mater high-school song. We gave each other an old-fashioned bear hug, and John introduced me, mentioning my wife and son. His secretary appeared distressed.

John suggested we all enjoy the beautiful buffet set on a sideboard. He had personally selected Philadelphia scrapple, poached eggs, home fries, caramelized baked beans, bagels, cream cheese, New York cheesecake and beverages. Although everything looked delicious, I thanked the cardinal and only took coffee.

John had an unusual way of controlling the twenty-seat table. He sat in the middle so there was one person on each end, ten sat on opposite sides, and three sat to the left and right of the cardinal. Everyone had plenty of room.

I explained that besides coming to enjoy John's company, I was on a begging safari for our hospital in Tijuana. I needed write-ups in the Catholic New Yorker and Standard and

Times in Philadelphia. My California kosher friends had already been “bled to death” and we needed some new sources of funds.

John asked me to tell the story on how I turned an old hotel in Tijuana into a modern hospital. I did, and they were impressed. I told them not to be impressed but to realize that with God’s help everything is possible.

Cardinal Baum from Rome, who was sitting to my left, touched my arm and asked if I always had this faith. I said yes.

John said: “Phil, it shows. My secretary will get you an appointment at both papers.” I thanked everyone and asked them to help me by spreading the word about the hospital. I gave John a Tijuana jogging sweatshirt that our Sisters had hand-painted for him. It was really wild... lots of Mexican colors.

My interviews at both Catholic papers went very well and the resulting articles brought in a lot of pesos. I was delighted with the results.

I wrote and told John I owed him a favor and got an immediate reply. He wanted me to visit a bed-ridden Navy chaplain friend and report back to him on the old salt's condition. John sent his name, address and phone number on Coronado Island. When I called, a Navy nurse answered the phone.

“The monsignor said to come anytime,” he said. I replied: “I’ll see you tomorrow afternoon.” Anchors aweigh, my boy!



# Jack Haley and the Wizard of Pancakes

**F**or many years the men's fund-raising group of our Church had a monthly pancake breakfast. They generally fed about fifty die-hards, who were compelled to listen to a fellow parishioner extol on his business and why he was successful.

Very boring! When I complained about their program, I was told to take it over. No problem.

The Wizard of Oz was a popular movie at the time, so I thought why not have one of the stars as our next speaker?

I went to the Catholic rectory in Beverly Hills and asked the monsignor to call Jack Haley and ask if he would see me. He said that I should come right over.

His houseboy answered the door and ushered me to a sitting room. I had just gotten comfortable when Jack came floating down the most beautiful staircase I had ever seen. I thought he must have borrowed it from a studio.

He greeted me like I was an old friend from his vaudeville days. I told him of my mission and he said “Yes, I’ll see you on a set date at the Holy Family Parish Hall in Orange.”

I drove back to the rectory and thanked the monsignor for his help.

On my way home I came up with another idea. Why not sell tickets in advance so we could estimate the number of tables to set up and the amount of food to prepare? I ran an

ad in our church bulletin, and we sold our capacity of four hundred tickets in one week.

On the designated Sunday morning at quarter to eight, Jack Haley, from the Wizard of Oz, appeared. I introduced him, and he delivered the most spiritual speech about the Christopher Movement that I had ever heard.

After the speech was over, he stayed another hour signing autographs.

Yes, it is better to light one candle rather than curse the darkness.



# Two Drinks

Owning one of the few “floating” liquor licenses in the State of California had many advantages.

With a one-day notice to my Liquor Board, I could be issued an okay to take the license off the wall of my banquet hall and temporarily transfer it to any facility in the state.

I typically charged one thousand dollars for this service. Other caterers who traveled throughout the state could not get a mobile liquor license.

The first appearance I made with my license was for an NBC bash honoring Bob Hope.

My bartenders were setting up when a very fashionable lady approached me. She introduced herself as Dolores Hope, wife of Bob, and informed me that Bob was having very serious eye problems and his doctor had restricted him to two drinks.

I notified my bartenders immediately, and told them to give me a pre-arranged “SOS” signal if they had problems.

It didn’t take long before Sir Bob used up his quota for the evening and I got the SOS call.

As I approached him with the bad news, he was prepared. He placed a crisp one hundred-dollar bill in the lapel pocket of my coat and informed me that there would be more if I kept cooperating. I took the banknote and placed it in his lapel pocket, and replied: “The answer is still no.”

After he walked away, Dolores who had been watching the scene came over and thanked me. The Hopes made an early exit that evening.

I stayed the four hours, took inventory of opened bottles, paid the bartenders, picked up my customary thousand-dollar check from the caterer, and headed for my Banquet Hall in Orange to unload the liquor.

It was a very profitable night, and I may have helped save Hope's eyesight.



# Sweet Tooth

**E**very Wednesday afternoon I would go to St. Joseph's Hospital, in Orange, to pick up my former Pastor who had suffered a severe stroke. He lost his ability to speak and depended on a wheelchair to get around. He had daily nursing care, and sleep medication took care of the nights.

After my first visit with the good priest, I went to see the Superior to get her permission to take him for a drive. She was delighted.

The following Wednesday afternoon, I appeared at his room. The nurses had him dressed and in a wheelchair. With the help of

an orderly, we got him into my car. I told the orderly to be back at the same spot at three o'clock.

We drove to the beach. I had no idea that Father had a sweet tooth until we saw a See's Candy Store in Corona del Mar.

He started pointing with one finger and jabbing my shoulder. I stopped, went in and bought him a one-pound box of candy. He was as happy as a kid. It was his first box of candy since his stroke.

As promised, we were on the hospital parking lot by three o'clock, and the orderly transferred Father into his wheelchair. On the way to his room, he offered everyone he met a piece of candy.

When I got home, I tore out the See's store list from the telephone book and planned our next week's trip.

On our next excursion, Father became confused when we did not head for the beach again, but when he saw a See's store he was happy.

I think our weekly safaris prepared him for speech therapy. I hope so.



# Talking to Your Son

**T**alking to your son is like setting up an appointment with your doctor. Almost impossible!

The first question he asks: “Dad, is this chat necessary?”

That knocks out fifty percent of the reasons for the discussion.

The next question from your favorite son is always: “Well, Dad, when would it be convenient for you?” That is the kiss of death.

Past experience has taught Dad that what is convenient for him is not necessarily

convenient for his son. After all, he has more important things to do... wash his Jeep, bone up for exams, raid the refrigerator, and call friends.

After three rejections and two maybes, a date was set for a father and son talk.

Now, what was it we were supposed to talk about?

# Carmen

**O**ne busy Friday afternoon in my office at the El Toro Marine Air Base in Santa Ana, I was scanning the entertainment section of the Los Angeles Times.

Lo and behold! Rise Stevens and Frank Guerrara were appearing in the opera Carmen in Los Angeles. Marie knew Frank from St. John's choir in Philadelphia, so we had to see the opera to renew old friendships.

In 1945, the price to see an opera for a Saturday matinee was expensive... two dollars and fifty cents a seat. I showed the ad to the "voice" in the family, and she charged next door to tell the news to our lovely

German friends who were delighted with the news. They were ready for the drive to Los Angeles at noon with us.

We arrived at the theater at one o'clock for the two thirty performance. Being in uniform, I was able to get three of the best seats for six dollars. I have never been a fan of opera, so I handed the tickets to my wife, and promised to see the show. She never asked how. After I parked the Jeep, I walked around to the stage door and made a friend.

Pop, the doorman, was reading the racetrack tip sheet. As I knew every track on the East Coast and some of the horse's names, I picked one, and asked how my "nag" was doing. He said she had won.

We chatted about local tracks, and I asked how the attendance was for the show. He said the two matinees were money losers, but that the evening performances were sell-outs.

I said I would stick around for a few minutes to see how my wife's friend, Frank Guerrara, was doing. I filled him in on their close relationship. We had just bonded when

everything “hit the fan.” Pop said sit and do not move. It looked like Knute Rockne had just yelled, “Win one for the Gipper.”

The orchestra in the pit was playing a rousing blood-warming selection from the opera, while everyone on stage took their position. Let the show begin!

Pop and I talked very little except when he asked about a nag running at Santa Anita. After two inquiries, I took his hands and newspaper in mine and whispered into his ear: “Never bet on a nag; bet on a jockey. Put all your pesos on Willie Shoemaker and you’ll be rich.”

During the performance, Nellie, the beautiful white horse in the show, came off the stage at the first break and went directly to her groom who took her out the stage door for relief of bowels and exercise. The groom spends all day with her in this city, and she gets a new groom when the show moves to another city.

Rise Stevens charged off next all out of breath. I congratulated her on her performance. She thanked me, and said to

Pop: “They are making Marines poster-handsome these days.”

Frank Guerrara finally came off stage also out of breath... too much pasta! Mamma Mia must be traveling with him. I commented: “In great voice, Frank... remember St. John’s choir?” The twinkle came back into his eyes, and he said he would never forget it. I told him that my wife, Marie Calnan, from the choir was there just to hear him sing. He said he appreciated that. Then he ran off to change a costume that was dripping with perspiration.

When the cast was assembled and the second act was about to begin, I shook Pop’s hand and told him to remember “Shoemaker.”

Four months later, when I was in the neighborhood, I stopped to see Pop. When he saw me he yelled “Shoemaker!” He said he had made two grand on that midget. We laughed. I left yelling “Shoemaker!”

# And Leave the Driving to Us

**D**uring the post-war years, when every returning serviceman was on a car dealer's list, I found myself being a bus commuter. Although I suffered the usual inconveniences, I rather enjoyed the experience. It gave me the opportunity to observe my fellow passengers, and thus write this story.

As a "first of May" (that's circus talk for "first-timer"), I was usually elbowed sufficiently while waiting for the bus door to open, then I got the uncomfortable seat over a wheel. The constant vibration did not

permit me to do much more than watch the daily “musical chairs” game being played by the fair sex.

On about the third day of my commuting to E. I. DuPont’s in Wilmington, the usual vacant seat next to me was suddenly occupied by one of their junior executives who seemed elated to make my acquaintance.

It seems that a majority of the passengers commuted five days a week from suburban Philadelphia to Wilmington to work for some of the large industrial companies that maintained their offices there. The State of Delaware has a tax way of attracting large corporations.

Anyway, four of the daily passengers worked in the same office of the DuPont Company, and had been had by the Mata Hari (as they affectionately called her) of the Greyhound, and they were poor losers. So, my newfound friend made this interesting suggestion. If I would turn the tables on this wench and spoil her little game, they would award me a dollar.

The next morning, when it was boarding time in Philadelphia, I found my four friends giving me the “thumbs up” sign as I took the vacant seat over the wheel. As soon as the Greyhound departed from the terminal she went into action.

By using her compact mirror, she started to eye each prospective victim as if she were going into battle. I interrupted her scan of the battlefield by asking if I might borrow her Delaware magazine to check eating places in Wilmington. My interest in restaurants qualified me as her next victim.

Before I realized what was happening, she was giving me a choice between two of the most expensive restaurants in Wilmington. Being a gentleman from the old school, I told her to make the decision and we would meet at the restaurant at noon. She promised to call that morning and make our reservation for a window table.

When I arrived at the appointed hour, Miss Mata Hari was in deep conversation with Felipe, the Maitre D'. Little did I know that

she was ordering the wine that would accompany our filet mignon. Who ordered the filets? You guessed it. We were ushered to the choice window table and told to enjoy the view while our filet mignons were broiled to perfection. In a few minutes our choice bottle of wine arrived, and was opened with great gusto by the captain of waiters. I diplomatically refused the wine as I told everyone within earshot that I did not partake of alcoholic beverages during working hours.

The luncheon progressed romantically until my companion announced that tonight was the one night each week that she stayed overnight in Wilmington, so we should start discussing where we would have dinner. When I did not jump at the bait immediately, she started using her best orthodontic smile on a male at the next table whom she hoped would be her dinner ticket.

Unfortunately for Miss Free Lunch, her flirting provided me with the perfect exit. I have always felt that a departure should be just as dramatic as an entrance. As I was enjoying the hot apple pie and third cup of

tea, I mentally produced the script that would stick my companion with the check.

With a villainous sneer, I told my flirting companion either to give this meal ticket her undivided attention or she would see some drastic action. As I consumed the last tasty morsel, I riveted my eyes on the Don Juan at the next table.

I knew if I stared long enough in his direction she would follow my stare... and that was all I needed. My plan worked perfectly.

As I carefully folded my linen napkin (no paper napkins for this gal), I whispered in a voice loud enough for all to hear that I'd had it and was leaving. I asked her to wait until I had left the room before she joined her dinner beau at the next table. Now the action really started.

As I arose from my chair with all the dignity of a dethroned monarch, Felipe dashed from his station of authority with bill in hand. In order to buy time and deflate his ego, I told him to follow me to the foyer and we would discuss the matter. Long ago I discovered

that waiters of Felipe's caliber hate to be told what to do; they like to be asked.

When we got to the foyer, I demanded that he present his bill immediately and the necessary pen to add something additional. I don't know why he presumed that the "something additional" would be a gratuity. Foolish man!

Although he was trying to assist me in arriving at the proper gratuity by suggesting fifteen percent as nice, I continued writing the following message to my former luncheon companion: "Please take care of this. The lunch was delicious."

While Felipe was looking for his tip but instead was reading my message, I took him by the arm and pointed his body towards my former table. By now she had convinced Don Juan to occupy my empty chair. My parting words to Felipe, as I headed towards the front door, returned his bloodhound instincts... and he was off to nail his quarry. "Get her before she skips."

The next morning I was fifteen minutes early instead of the usual five for the Greyhound. I wanted to be early to collect my wager and I knew my debtors would want to hear the full story.

As each one arrived, I told them to prepare themselves to be one dollar lighter before arriving in Wilmington. They naturally said they would be happy to pay after they heard my story and check it out with our fair damsel. We were so busy getting comfortable in our seats at the back of the bus that none of us noticed that the lady of my conquest did not board that morning. Now my friends suggested I wait another day for my money. As they all worked in the DuPont building, I said I had a better plan.

We will meet at the same restaurant where I left Miss Free Lunch yesterday, and if Felipe does not vouch for my story I will buy lunch for everyone. If he does vouch for my story, you can all chip in proportionately, buy me a lunch and give me the wager. What a way to get another free lunch!

They agreed that we would meet at eleven thirty outside the eatery to avoid the noon rush. When I got there, my debtors were assembled, and each was holding a dollar bill in his hand. Although they swore they did not see Felipe and check out my story, they said they would like to pay off their debt and then we could all go in and have a congenial, but Dutch-treat lunch.

As I surmised, they had a plan to stick me with the luncheon tab (I now had lunch money for the week). I told them I could not afford to eat in such a ritzy place, so would have to pass on their invitation and truck down to the YWCA cafeteria. Besides, I liked their food better.

My surmising was confirmed the next morning when they did not approach my female pigeon, and ask her to confirm my story.

It just shows you... you can't trust anyone these days, not even those you do favors for.

# Anchors Aweigh

I was getting a tour of Nazareth House in San Diego to determine that if, with the proper changes, our St. Francis Home in Santa Ana could meet the health codes to become a permanent place for our one hundred retired ladies. It broke everyone's heart to see them moved to a hospital when they needed full-time nursing care.

Mother Malachy and I had just arrived to the conclusion that my project would not be possible when the fire alarm went off. Mother grabbed her portable phone, called the fire station and asked them to give her one minute before they responded. In the meantime, she was running as fast as her

County Cork legs could carry her towards a priestly room.

As soon as she pushed open the door, we both saw the culprit sitting there puffing on a cigarette, watching TV. Mother Malachy called the fire station, shut off the alarm, said something in Gaelic to the monsignor and took me to her office.

The good “future Saint” needed a favor. Would I have a chat with the wayward monsignor and make it clear to him that he would be forced to move out the next time his “ciggie” set off the alarm. Three times was enough. I said I would.

I went back to “Peck’s bad boy” and delivered the message. As I was talking to him, I noticed a picture of him and my high-school classmate, John Cardinal O’Connor, with their arms around each other in Rome. He told me that John, as Chief of Naval Chaplains, was his boss.

The monsignor was the first chaplain who went to sea, back in 1926, and served for forty years. I asked if he would tell me his story.

He went through a pile of seafaring books and handed me his life story. I borrowed it.

When Father Neeley was ordained in 1926, he volunteered for the Naval Chaplain Service thinking that a chaplain in the Navy boarded a ship and rendered religious services to the crew.

He soon discovered they were assigned to Navy Yards and had services for the crew while they were repairing and getting ready for the next cruise. This seemed a boring life to Father Neeley. So, he petitioned the head of Naval Chaplains to ask the Fleet Admiral to try an experiment and put him on an active-duty ship. He promised to keep a daily log sheet and submit it to him on his return.

Father's first assignment was on a battleship whose captain was very cool to the experiment. Father was made an ensign so he could eat in the Officers' Mess. His stateroom was the size of a large closet. No frills, but private. His room contained a bed, small desk, two chairs, a shelf for books on Protestant, Hebrew, and Catholic services, a shower and a "john."

His days were long but happy. He visited every city where the ship docked, met the local clergy but kept himself available if the captain needed him. After a month of testing the captain liked him.

After a year at sea, he was told to go home for a month until his next assignment. When his month at home was up, he was assigned to another battleship and left for another year. This went on for forty years.

I don't believe I have ever seen a happier chaplain. He truly loved God, the sailors and the sea.

# Cow Chips

**T**he Cow Chips Sporting Event is held each year during the Del Mar Fair in California. I was happy to be the winner in 1983.

A cow chip is dried-out cow dung that resembles a discus with straw baked into it. They come in different sizes. I prefer the regulation discus size, as that is the best flinging configuration.

My certificate acknowledges that withstanding heat, gusty winds and hazardous aroma, I performed to the best of my ability in slinging “meadow muffins” to the win the championship. I’m now known

as Phil “Meadows” Hopkins to those who sling cow chips.

# Do You Know What This is?

**W**orld and family crisis have been stopped with what I call the “coup de grace.” Many family arguments have been squelched by someone saying: “And just who do you think you are?”

Whoever invented this verbal thrust to throw his opponent off guard is a master at the coup de grace. I have always believed that you should start every conversation with a question. This gives you ample time to size up your situation and to ascertain the mental attitude or disposition of your confrere.

Some years ago, I was notified that an elderly aunt had gone to her reward and I was to dispose of her worldly possessions.

A tour of the two-story brownstone home quickly told me that there was nothing of great value to declare. All of the furniture was early Salvation Army. I contacted a local realtor, and he suggested that I clean out all the closets and get rid of the furniture before placing the house on the market.

Although most of the packages I found in the upper floor closets contained mildewed curtains and drapes, there was something wrapped in a 1919 Philadelphia Evening Bulletin that caught my eye. It was an original oil painting signed “Alberti.”

Not wanting to return to California empty handed I rewrapped the painting and called for a taxi to the airport.

As every big city cab driver is a gourmet, art connoisseur, or both, it was not long before I had to admit that the painting was an Alberti and I was taking it to the West Coast.

Although the cabbie had never heard of Alberti, he assured me that he must be an old and famous Italian painter, and that I should talk to Lloyds of London before boarding the plane.

When we arrived at the airport my newfound art critic had an unusual request. He asked if he might see the Alberti in exchange for the cab fare. He wanted to tell his wife and the kids that he had seen an original Alberti.

With great fanfare I laid the picture on the hood of his taxi and slowly unwrapped it for his edification.

After he took what seemed like an eternity to savor its fading beauty he called every cab driver waiting for a fare to come feast their uneducated eyes on an Alberti. I stood back while he savored their comments.

I have never heard of anyone speak of Alberti with more authority. As I knew he was constructing his factual opinions as he spoke, I admired his inventiveness as much as his acting. In fact, I listened closely so I could retell his story with just as much authority.

When I figured he had used up his three dollars and eighty cents (my cab fare) in expounding his knowledge of the arts to his enraptured audience, I suggested that he rewrap the painting so I could catch my flight. Never have I seen anything wrapped with such loving care.

As we shook hands he once again reminded me to call Lloyds of London before boarding, and to act tough if some counter clerk tried to put my Alberti in the baggage section. I thanked him for his advice and promised that no one would get this painting out of my hands. His knowing wink told me that I knew how to act tough.

As I approached the ticket counter with my Alberti under my arm, I made up my mind that an open frontal attack would be the best and only way to handle this situation. An airline clerk is a master of psychology and this, coupled with the company manual, is a tough combination to beat. They are schooled to expect the unusual and pride themselves in accomplishing their objectives. They are

acquainted with the distraught, crude, belligerent and confused.

They are not prepared or expect the solicitous. My “how are you today?” salutation extends the hand of friendship and invariably gets a fine retort. If you wait long enough, even though it might seem like an eternity, the clerk will invariably ask: “...and what can I do for you?”

Now you have “Miss Come Fly with Me” on the defensive, and you are advancing towards the excellent service you see on the television commercials. While making arrangements for your ticket you must completely ignore whatever you are carrying. Otherwise, the clerk will focus his or her attention on the object and take great delight in telling you that your package will not fit under your seat, so you will have to visit their very efficient freight department.

Knowing that the next question would be: “And what are you going to do with the painting?” I was ready with my “coup de grace” and said: “Do you know what this is?”

This game of mental gymnastics is necessary if you want to stay in control of the situation. Although her question did not faze me, mine made her stiffen to attention. While I waited for my answer, she buzzed for her immediate superior and informed him in an excited voice that she needed help. Upon his arrival she informed him in a very confidential voice that I was an art courier with a very valuable painting, and I would be boarding the flight for Los Angeles, and would he please take over.

The ticket supervisor saw the golden opportunity to impress his underlings and with an air of importance leaned over the counter and said: “Would you please place a value on the painting so I may determine what precautions should be taken.”

My truthful answer of “I would not attempt to place a monetary value on this Alberti” made him snatch the red phone from its receptacle, and notify the boarding gate to hold all passengers until further notice.

Operations personnel were told to notify the captain that there would be a slight delay

due to unusual circumstances, and to stand by for further instructions. Security was told to send two armed guards to the ticket counter to accompany the Alberti and me to the plane. A Pentagon General could not have done a more thorough job, or have been prouder of his accomplishments than this master of the situation. Before I had the opportunity to stop all this foolishness, I found myself and the Alberti being rushed toward the plane through doors marked “Private.”

I must admit, I did feel the pangs of sympathy as I observed my fellow passengers straining at the boarding gate. I could read their thoughts as they watched me getting the VIP treatment.

As I nonchalantly climbed the steps to board what seemed like my private plane, the alerted crew met me, consisting of the captain, the copilot, the flight engineer, and two freshly scented stewardesses. The “cute as a bug’s ear” stewardess was about to welcome me aboard when the captain stepped forward and announced that it might be prudent to stow the Alberti forward,

where it would be under the constant supervision of the flight engineer.

When my painting disappeared through the door marked “Flight Personnel,” I took my favorite seat, which is by the galley. It seemed I had just gotten settled when the floodgates of humanity were opened, and my angered companions were hurriedly rushed aboard the delayed flight. I noticed that everyone went out of his way to leave the seat next to me vacant. Low whispers and inquisitive glances were my only contact with my fellow passengers.

As soon as we were airborne, I received my favorite beverage and the latest magazine. Well fortified after a second beverage I settled down for a most relaxing trip, and enjoyed my forced loneliness. The privacy gave me sufficient time to ponder my situation and I must admit I could see the plot thickening. I was rudely shocked out of my reverie by the captain’s announcement that we would be landing in Dallas due to fuel line problems.

As I was deliberating this unforeseen change in my plans, I noticed our copilot approaching with a very worried look on his face. Did the captain or flight engineer put his foot through my Alberti? And, if he did, who would laugh more than this amateur curator would? But luck was not with me, and I was confidentially informed that the captain had decided to ask Dallas to provide the necessary security for the painting while the plane was being serviced. This would permit the crew to have a snack without worrying about their valuable cargo.

Of course, I agreed with the captain's suggestion. Who am I to doubt the wisdom of a man who is entrusted with a multi-million dollar aircraft investment?

The captain informed the head stewardess of his plan and she, in turn, notified the passengers that everyone was to remain seated until the armed security guards entered the plane and took their position to guard an important painting. When this was accomplished, we were told that we may spend the hour in the coffee or gift shop, and would be notified when the plane would be

leaving for Los Angeles. As I took a small table in the coffee shop, I became aware of the fact that I was tolerated, but not accepted. I believe I became accepted when a peroxide blonde invited herself to my table. I think she fancied herself as the logical one to shatter the veil of mystery. After the usual formalities, she broached the question that was on everyone's mind. "Who was the painter... and how much is it worth?"

My hushed reply that it is an Alberti and no monetary value has ever been placed on it drew an earth-shattering sigh. Although she did not know Alberti any more than I did, her sigh was worth at least a hundred thousand dollars. And that was the price she voluntarily placed on the painting. I would place her high on my list of art critics.

After gleaning her choice morsel of information she seemed in haste to leave my company, and spread the good news. Her departure was a signal to the two stewardesses occupying a nearby table to have their second cup of coffee with me.

These girls wasted no time with the usual pleasantries, but got right down to the question at hand: "Just how much is the painting worth?" My truthful response of "I would not attempt..." put them in a trance. They would still be sitting in the Dallas coffee shop if the operations department did not notify all to board the plane for take-off. Their haste to tell their secret to the other members of the crew was something to behold.

At the boarding gate I was given the VIP treatment. I was politely ushered through a side gate like a publicized courier, or a star at MGM. During the flight from Dallas to Los Angeles, the unoccupied seat next to me became a popular destination. Everyone wanted to know about the Alberti. It seems as though everyone has a relative or friend who has a valuable painting.

The steady flow of traffic to my "confessional" was happily stopped by the captain's announcement that we should fasten our seat belts, as we would be landing shortly in Los Angeles. During the taxiing procedure we received the next

announcement: All passengers must remain seated until the painting was escorted from the plane by the security guards. When the stewardess unlocked the door, there stood my knights in uniform. As I approached them with the painting under my arm, I quickly sized them up and started to work out my escape plan.

On the way to Baggage Claim, I explained the plan to them. They retrieved my two checked bags, which I permitted the ex-Trojan tackle to carry, and the group of us approached the taxi stand. The cabbie inquired: "Where to Señor?" Frankenstein's other son deposited my bags in the trunk.

I thanked them both for their devotion to duty and took my seat in the cab. The driver, Jose, took off. After he went about a hundred feet, I shouted STOP! After all, we were abreast of my station wagon parked in the airport lot. After retrieving my bags and painting, I placed a silver dollar in the confused driver's hand and said: "You are a good compadre. Thank you." He was still standing there smiling when I paid my parking fee and drove out of the lot.

# The Monastery

**W**hy do we assume that monastery life is somber and full of sore knees? On the contrary.

I had a ten-year relationship with the Discalced Carmelites in San Diego, and found them to be full of fun, very interesting and very busy mentally and physically, none of which interfered with their prayer time.

Every Sister rotated her job, unless she petitioned the Superior to stand pat. We all cannot be gourmet chefs, so if that is your calling why not enjoy the kitchen? We all cannot be artists, musicians, or gardeners, but

we can discover our talent by trying something that appeals to us.

My first encounter with these “future saints” was a surprising joy. The Superior and her assistant from our charitable hospital in Tijuana made a retreat at the monastery. On their return they told me that the Superior of the cloister wanted to see me. No appointment was necessary.

The next morning at nine, my wife and I entered a small lobby and came face-to-face with our first cloister turntable. When you push a bell, a voice on the other side of this contraption says: “May I help you?” Then you state your business. If you have something to deliver or pick up, the nun on the other side spins the turntable, and that’s how mail and packages get in and out of the convent.

This time, the voice said: “Please go around to the back gate and meet Sister Sophia who will answer all your questions.” When we got to the back, there was a twenty-foot gate. It opened, and there stood a young Sister in the

wildest full-length Mexican apron we had ever seen.

Her personality matched the apron. With the biggest smile she said: “Buenas dias, I’m Sister Sophia. The regular chef has her day off to rest, do her laundry, smell the flowers or whatever she wants. My buffet does not have to be ready until one in the afternoon. My band of one is over there practicing. (Yes, a Sister was playing “Guadalajara” on her guitar) So, follow me and give your opinion.” She took us to a large garage that was filled with junk that people had left at the back gate. Were these deducted as tax write-offs? I told her that my two friends and I would pick it all up.

Three times a year the Kobey family in San Diego gave me free spaces to raise money for our Tijuana Hospital. When I called Laurie at Kobey’s, she said I could have two spaces that Saturday. I called Sister and told her we would empty their garage on Friday morning, and sell it all on Saturday. She was in Carmelite heaven!

On Friday at nine o'clock, a very somber Sister wearing the white veil of a postulant met us at the back gate. She looked like she had an ironing board up her back. I asked for Sister Sophia, and she said she was packing and shipping Hosts to the various parishes.

We got to work and filled the truck. The next day, we had the Kobey Swap Meet sale and sold out in three hours. We sent six hundred dollars to our Sisters in Tijuana for the hospital.

Some weeks later we had a call from Sister Sophia to say she just gotten an usual gift for Tijuana... one hundred pairs of new leather sandals, and she could fill up the truck with antiques. We now called the donated junk "antiques."

We took everything to my garage and unloaded the truck. Knowing our Tijuana Sisters could not use a hundred pairs of sandals, and any of the antiques, I called my friends at Ralphs Grocery Company and asked for a van load of discontinued can goods.

My good compadre, Ben Gingery, brought the load from Ralphs to my garage, and once again we unloaded it. I called the hospital in Tijuana. Two Sisters came up to load the can goods onto their van, and went through the sandals for size. Within an hour they were heading for the border with a full load.

Four weeks later, a Sister Jane called to say she was back on the gate and had a load for us. I promised to be there the next morning with my two trusted compadres.

We got there, and both Sister Sophia and Sister Jane met us at the gate. Sister Sophia said she was there for formal introductions. She didn't need them. Sister Jane, who was raised with six older brothers, was a real tomboy... a Debbie Reynolds type, but much taller.

Sister Jane told us to be careful when loading the antiques. The five of us had a ball! It was better than an Antiques Road Show. The Swap Meet brought in seven hundred and forty dollars for the Tijuana hospital.

Life is never dull in a monastery, and there's more than praying going on.

# Free Christmas Tree

**E**very Christmas Eve my son and I went to a local Christmas tree lot to pick up our free tree.

My favorite friend, who lived across the street from us, asked us to bring him home a free tree, as he was tired paying twenty dollars, too. We promised to bring him one.

When we arrived, the lot man had been so disgusted with sales that set all the leftover trees on fire. They all burned but one. We rescued the most beautiful free tree you have ever seen, and tied it to the roof of our station wagon.

Then we thought of neighbor Rod, and picked up a lovely burnt tree for him. Actually, it looked more like a six-foot charred stick.

When we got home we set up our tree in the living room, and carried the burnt tree across the street to Rod's porch.

When he opened his front door, he was speechless. We explained that his tree got a wee bit moonstruck. While he was still laughing, we left. What are friends for?

# Hey, Come Back With My Juicer!

**M**y son and I were strolling down the Atlantic City boardwalk minding our own business when a peddler who was demonstrating a plastic citrus juicer called to us to “sample” his product.

I think his exact words were: “Who will take this juicer?”

Being a helpful guy I said: “I will,” and reached out to take it out of his hand. As soon as I started to walk away, the man got excited and wanted his juicer back, yelling,

“Hey, come back with my juicer!” over the heads of the crowd.

It seems that his sales patter included handing the juicer to someone in the audience, then enticing this “mark” to participate in his demonstration. During the product demo, something of little value was to be exchanged for real money.

I thought it best to get away from this con man, and we continued our stroll down the boardwalk.

We still have the juicer after thirty years. It is great for extracting the juice from oranges, lemons and limes. Maybe I should try it on watermelons.

# When You Have an Emergency

**O**ne morning my wife, Marie, sprained her wrist just a half hour before she was to have her piano lesson.

As soon as I could get the injured wrist into an ice pack I called her music teacher to notify her of the accident and to cancel the appointment.

When I explained the reason for my call, her teacher said: “Mr. Hopkins, in the future when you have an emergency, I wish you’d give me a twenty-four-hour notice.”



**FIGURE 3.** PHILIP J. AND MARIE E. HOPKINS IN SAN DIEGO DURING 1994.

# Who Are You Named After?

**S**ome people wear their heritage with great honor. Some even go so far as to change their name if their lineage came from, in their opinion, the wrong side of the tracks.

I was very lucky. I was named after a shell-shocked uncle.

My Mother told me that before Uncle Philip went to Germany and was gassed in the trenches, he was everything a young lady would desire. Now he was a physical shell of a man with no mind, living at the Veterans Home.

Every Wednesday at noon, my Mother would meet his trolley and bring him to our house for lunch. He always wore a large tag pinned to his coat, listing his name and address on one side and our address on the other side.

My Mother always had Uncle Philip back on the trolley to the Veterans Home by three o'clock. I was so proud of my Mother for doing this. I was equally proud of my heroic uncle.

Yes, I was named after someone special.

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