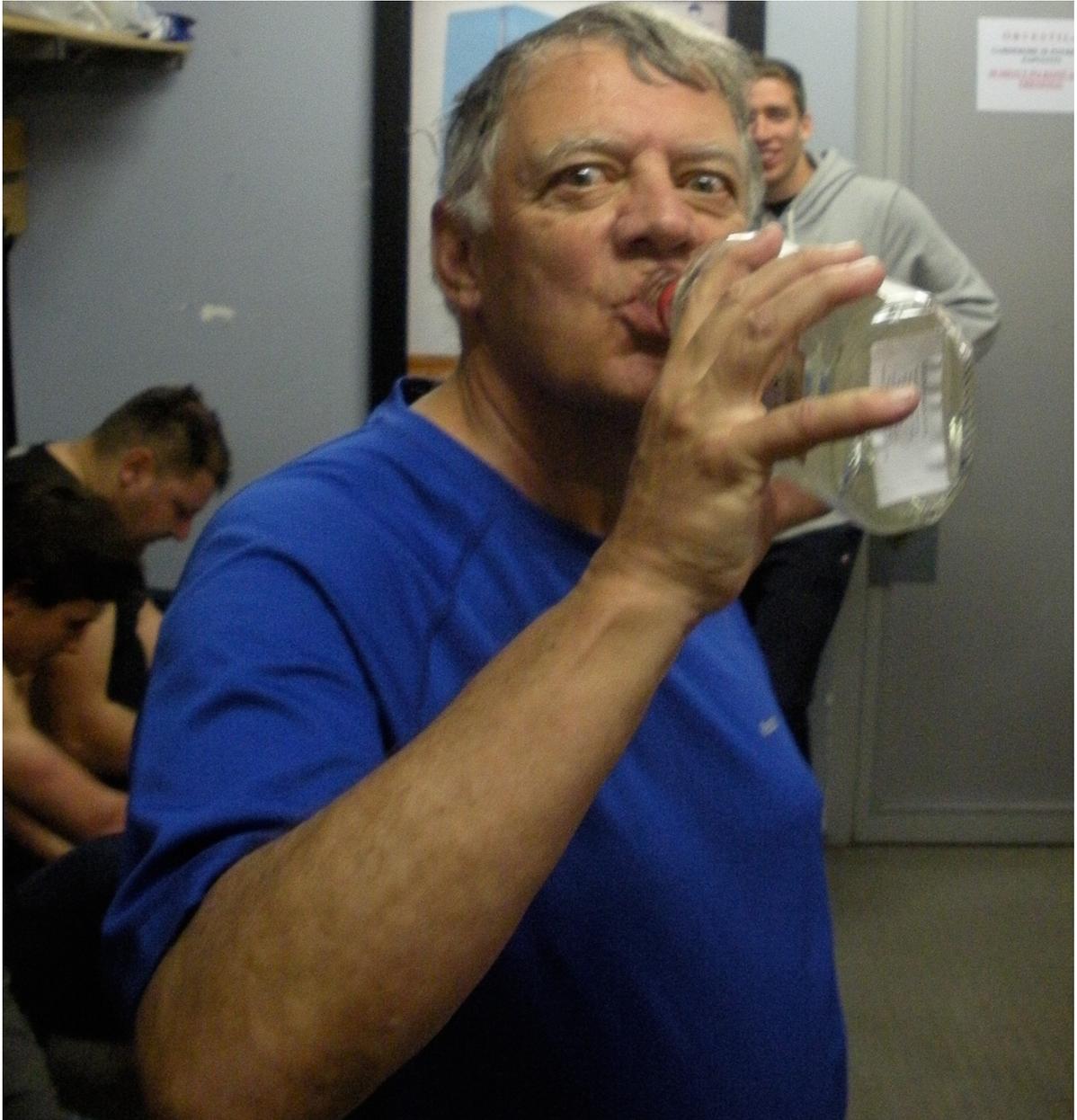


Men Lite



By Coach Thomas Smythe

PROLOGUE

To quote Ward Bond in John Ford's *Quiet Man*, "I'll begin at the beginning. I like to laugh and I hope I can make you laugh. I'm going to poke fun at a lot of people and a lot of things so don't take offense if I hit a sore point. If you get mad at what I write you're taking yourself, your job or your life way to seriously."

Ok, I'm new to this book thing so you'll need to know who the hell I am and why should you be interested in my book? First, Let me tell you this; I come from a family that has chosen the written word as a hobby. My grand parents on my father's side of our family were college professors of English and all of their children dabbled in writing. Nearly all of us were born in the Midwest and nearly all of us at one time have attempted to write for publication. I'm not the first nor, I'm sure, will I be the last. A long time ago the family published a small book called "Kernels From A Cracked Nut". It was mostly a parody of famous poems. Most of the family members bought copies. No one else did

I'm an educator as well and have been for over forty-five years. I've lost count or I'd give the exact number. It's confusing because I've led the world in 'leave of absence' and retired and un retired at least twice. I think I got my wit from dad's side of the family and what I'm going to do here is pass on the Carlyle humor. Growing up in my family was a crack up. There was a lot of laughter and good humor and because of it I managed to get through the teenage years and lead a productive adult life as well.

Funny things seem to happen in life if you have a sense of humor. If you don't, you'll die young. Think about it, comedians seem to live longer than the rest of us. Milton Berel, Art Linkletter, Sid Cesar, Steve Allen, Bob Hope, George Burns, Jack Benny, Henny Youngman, Red Skelton, Johnny Carson oh hell I could go on and on but you probably get the picture. Something about laughing and making others laugh seems to keep the cancer away, the arteries clean and stroke something you take on a golf course. Laughing or making people laugh is the great elixir of life. The glass half full, the sun always shines, keep a smile on your face. We have choices in life and if you make the one to be happy, you will. What was that song? "Be Happy, Don't Worry" yep hum that when you get up every day. And enjoy. I hope this book makes you laugh. If it does tell your best friends about it. And I thank you. So, let's get started. I like this quote.

"If you can't annoy somebody, there's little point in writing"
Kingsley Amis

Way back in the fifties, as in 1950's, Jack Webb would announce during the TV show *Dragnet*, "The names have been changed to protect the innocent." In this twenty first century book the names have been changed to protect both the innocent and the guilty.

This book is meant to be a humorous romp through experiences in the life of the author. That would be me and I'm just a regular guy, but there is certainly a large portion of my conservative attitude thrown in as well. Which would in some eyes make me an irregular guy. Although my family was by no means affluent, I grew up in a wealthy suburb and at an early age was subjected to the privileged way of life. I spent time at a private college, Frontier Union Canyon College to be exact. I was there as a student, a teacher and as a coach where once again I ran smack dab into the elitist philosophy. In all three

instances my comfort level was challenged and many of my stories reflect this fact.

This is America and there is room in this country for dissent and discussion, its healthy. Those that would think their accident of birth, wealth, education or heritage gives them the right to feel superior to others of lesser fortune are a specific target of my humor. During my youth I never had a problem expressing my opinions to and about those groups and I won't stumble here.

Growing up in the innocent 50's had its advantages. I'll tell stories about my youth, my twenty's, thirty's and forty's and beyond. For certain some of you will see yourself in my essays. Hell most of you probably will.

I am a descendant of simple working folk who were educated and experienced in Midwestern ways of life. White is white and black is black in our Middle America world. There is little that is gray. Right is right and wrong is wrong and no hiding behind exclusiveness is allowed.

For the first forty plus years of my professional life I was a teacher and basketball coach, my avocation was writer. In this book I'll use some language that best be left on the courts and playing fields, except that today I hear worse language walking down high school halls. That bad language comes out of the mouths of the girls more often than from the boys'. The language isn't offensive to today's youth although it does bother me some.

I think I'm a pretty rational guy. I'm conservative but I'm not at the end of the spectrum and I certainly don't agree with most liberal points of view. However I don't see liberals and conservatives as always two completely separate entities. There are moderates in both philosophies. I am for example what most people would consider anything but a conservative coach, which is contrary to most of my views of the world.

Some of my humor is aimed at the female sex, so be it. Remember its humor so laugh. Please don't protest or picket, thank you very much. It's sort of like us guys telling stories up in the tree house when we were kids and girls weren't welcome there. Girls could come up for a price and remember we paid a price to go into that dollhouse too.

I'm well traveled, having spent a good deal of time in Europe both as a young man and in my later years. My admiration for culture and history and suspicion of youthful ancestry will become obvious. I have a natural respect for the working people of society, which lends a moralistic slant to my views about life. I am a simple man who would be perfectly happy to see all people in our world live in peace and harmony. Nothing would make me happier than a quick and decisive demise to bigotry, narrow-mindedness, intolerance, fanaticism, racism and injustice. But that would mean we would be living in a perfect world wouldn't it.

I quote from my favorite movies quite often. Here's one that fits those who would believe we live in that perfect world. It's a line John Wayne speaks more than a few times in the movie Big Jake. Some cowboy asks, "Who are you?" and he answers, "Jake McCandles". A funny look crosses the cowboy's face and he says, "I thought you were dead"... "Not Hardly".

Call me a satirist or humorist if you want but I'm going to give you a bit of Midwestern born philosophy here. 1940 December 13 in Omaha, Nebraska, to be exact. All of these stories happened to me. Some are just my philosophy colliding with my sense of humor. Most of the stories are meant to be funny. A

few are sad and all of them are true. I'm passing them on to you and I'll let you decide which is which.

I call them "It Say's Here," which is a takeoff from a Jack Benny radio show in the fifties. Good enough for Jack, good enough for me. Enjoy

Book One

Authors Note

Funny things seem to happen in life if you have a sense of humor. If you don't, you'll die young. Think about it, comedians seem to live longer than the rest of us. Milton Berel, Art Linkletter, Sid Cesar, Steve Allen, Bob Hope, George Burns, Jack Benny, Henny Youngman, Red Skelton, and Johnny Carson oh hell I could go on and on but you probably get the picture. Something about laughing and making others laugh seems to keep the cancer away, the arteries clean and stroke something you take on a golf course. ! Laughing or making people laugh is the great elixir of life. The glass half full, the sun always shines, keep a smile on your face. We have choices in life and if you make the one to be happy, you will. What was that song? "Be Happy, Don't Worry" yep hum that when you get up every day. And enjoy. Hope this book makes you laugh. If it does tell your best friends about it. and thank you.

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Chapter One

Confused

I don't read many magazines anymore. I still get Sports Illustrated but it's not the same and I read it in about ten minutes. Actually I only read the small part of it I can relate to. Time and Newsweek spend way too much time talking about politics or liberal causes so they're totally out. I haven't looked at a National Geographic since I quite worrying and wondering about naked animals and naked people living below the equator.

About six months ago, fulfilling an obligation to purchase a magazine for the Boy Scout next door, I chose the magazine Men's Health. This was during one of my moments, ever decreasing thank God, when I wanted to trim down my overweight, old and tired body. It's actually a pretty good magazine. It has a lot of articles about eating right and exercising without killing yourself and the do's and don't for a good sex life. But to tell you the truth I am a bit confused about what to eat, when and where to exercise and I've always been confused about sex. Maybe its because my mom once told me that I got stuck with her sex drive and my brothers got dad's. Oh well.

I've always been skeptical about those tests that prove beyond a reasonable doubt that everything causes cancer in rats. Frankly I don't have too many rat friends, although a few former colleagues turned out to be rats, and I could care less if they die a slow painful death after digesting copious amounts of whatever it is the experts are trying to prove causes cancer.

Here's what I'm talking about. Let's take the Jan/Feb Men's Health Issue for example. There are articles about the 15 foods that fight fat. Thirty red-hot sex secrets and the easy way to hard abs. After reading them I'm more confused than ever. It looks to me, more and more, like it depends on which expert you listen to and there are too many experts. For example, one study says drink more and live longer. Moderate alcohol consumption may cut the risk of pre-cancerous colon polyps by 80%. What the hell is a polyp? Another study says if you take one more drink you're going to die and go straight to hell along with Robin Williams. Some health experts tell you to drown your kidneys with eight bottles of water a day, while another one says you get all the water your body needs from solid food alone. And to boot drinking too much water stresses your kidneys and encourages renal failure, whatever that is. Too much liquid can also dilute the potassium levels in your blood, raising your stroke risk. Ok that does it; hold the water on the scotch!

One study says exercise is the key to weight loss and a longer life. The next one tells me you only have so many heart beats and exercising only speeds up the process and gets you closer to the time it quits beating. Maybe that's why those healthy jogging guys are always dropping dead. About that sex deal, I don't have to read in any experts article to know the

three most important facts about sex; the position is ridiculous, the pleasure is momentary and the cost is prohibitive.

Here's another confusing item. These experts at some nutrition conference are always coming up with new health evils and new health cures. At a recent Cornell nutrition conference someone uncovered Conjugated Linoleic Acid, CLA for short. Seems it fights cancer at an off the charts rate. Look for your CLA pills at your drug store soon. Bring your checkbook. I think what really confuses me about all this is all these so called experts usually come from a foreign country or some small liberal arts college and their study is usually equipped with a standard, so you can't sue me, line like this; Scientists at the University of Oslo recently determined that eating kiwis may cut your risk of heart attack. It's that 'may cause' clause that confuses me. Does that also mean it 'may not cause' this, that or the other thing? Probably. And I'm sure I read somewhere where eating kiwis causes cancer in rats. Hell eating anything causes cancer in rats.

Another confusing conclusion comes from Scientists at Tufts University. Where the hell is Tufts and I want them on next years football schedule, have determined that eating eggs is one of the best ways to save your eyesight. In fact eggs are a powerhouse of high quality protein, including 13 essential vitamins and minerals. But the guys at Mammogram Tech insist eating eggs will nearly instantly lead to stroke. Look on the bright side, with your new and improved eyesight you can better see your arteries clogging, but what the hell. And this from researchers in Israel. Their study shows that vitamin E may help; there it is again, prevent and even reverse hearing loss. What? Repeat that. Ok, I'll add vitamin E to my shopping list along with kiwis. I'm still confused about the eggs though.

I really like this one. Danish scientists, in a six-year study, have found that men eating a snack in the middle of the night have similar weight changes than those men who don't raid the refrigerator by moonlight. These guys studied this for six years and came up with 'similar'. Think about that for a moment. Some guy had to get up in the middle of the night and eat Danish pastry for six years just to prove that his weight changed. The study doesn't say if the changes were weight gain or weight loss. I don't know about you but I'm not getting up in the middle of the night to do anything but pee.

In the 2004 March issue there is an article about cancer proofing your prostate. That got my attention. Sixty plus year old men should all be aware. The article speaks of eight reasons the latest lab research shows how you can prevent the disease. The two reasons I like best are these; drink more red wine and have more sex. According to the study any sex will do. In fact by studying 2,338 Australians masturbation habits they have concluded that there is a thirty four percent less chance to develop prostate cancer by the age of seventy if you masturbate five times a week. It doesn't say what the chances are after seventy but I would say if the

seventy year olds in Australia are still masturbating five times a week their health is outstanding. I am wondering who counted.

Sometimes I follow the suggestions I read about in Men's Health. But there are other times when it doesn't make much sense to me. For example they suggest doing interval training to improve my fitness. Run as hard as you can for 30 to 60 seconds followed by three minutes of easy jogging or fast walking. I don't know about you but if I sprint for 30 seconds I will spend the next three minutes vomiting. But when they suggest eating more I generally follow their idea to the max. Eat every two to three hours, says one Los Angeles based trainer. Your body doesn't need to store fat for energy if you're feeding it all the time, he says. Makes good sense to me. Pass the jelly doughnuts.

There is always good advice in this magazine. For example it's nice to know that a McDonald's Quarter Pounder with Cheese has about 300 less calories than does a Burger King Whopper with Cheese. Also, that more men join health clubs during January than during any other month. Moral, if you can make it past the Super Bowl, without joining, you probably won't. If you drink only light colored alcohol you are less likely to have a hangover, says another "expert". I'm guessing that would mean drinking in moderation and that a quart of Annie Green Springs or Smirnoff's at a time might cause as much grief to your head as a similar amount of Jack Daniels. I did believe the article about drinking and sex that warned me that too much alcohol would reduce my ability to think straight or to get straight, so to speak.

Helen Fisher, PhD says real competition can drive up testosterone, which boosts libido. I know what testosterone is but I thought libido was some kind of pasta. Anyway she swears that high intensity, high powered, high stress job will make you more sexually active. Hope so. And you thought I just coached two teams a year for the fun of it. I also learned in this issue that foreplay lasts an average of 12 minutes and women would like it to go on for an average of 18. This, I learned, was by a study at the University of New Brunswick in Canada. Why can't they have some of those studies in Aurora?

William Campbell Douglass II, MD, suggests that folic acid and hydrogen peroxide are the keys to good health. They will reverse artery disease, wipe out atrial fibrillation, cut cancer risk, oxidizes germs and fend off Parkinson's disease. He also thinks they might be the key to world peace. Look for all the Miss World contestants to get on that bandwagon. Dr. Douglass II also reminds us that high cholesterol is not a disease, but it's a fantastic business. Along that line my brother Dr. Paul tells me to throw my Lipitor pills into the nearest toilet and to eat more eggs.

At least I'm not confused about which magazine to read and I have a suggestion for you. Unless reading about Alan Iverson's crossover, Randy Moss's butt or Barry Bonds' biceps really turns you on, drop your subscription to SI and subscribe to Men's Health. The educational benefits in this magazine are real. Hell if you can help prevent cancer by drinking more and enjoying self sex more, why not. I'm guessing that

reading about healthy reasons to eat more, exercise less and eighteen minute foreplay will put a big smile on your face as well. And beginning in January your wife can subscribe to Women's Health. There is a God.

Chapter Two

Correlation

I'm sitting at the stop light under I-5 in Wilsonville, waiting to turn left to the on ramp. The light turns green and I continue to wait until the traffic coming off I-5 decides to stop at the stoplight on their side of the road. It was after the fourth car brazenly ran the red. I can remember a definite transition here in this phenomenon. Once upon a time, like in a fairy tale, people actually stopped for red lights. Actually they even began the stopping process when the yellow light came on. Somewhere around the turn of the century people decided that the yellow actually meant, slam down on the foot pedal and try to get through before that red light came on. That would be the turn of the twentieth century. Then somewhere around the turn of the twenty first century people decided to use that same philosophy on red. That's put the peddle to the metal and screech on two wheels around that corner. Now, they don't even do that. They simply keep going through the red light and cruise with nonchalant arrogance. I wonder, did they all graduate from a small liberal arts school? Their, I don't really give a crap if you have to wait for me, I'm more important than you anyway attitude is amazing. Welcome to the me first generation. On another thought, are these the off spring of the '60's hippie generation? Probably!

So what's this correlation thing? Well, as I was settled down comfortably on my couch watching the discotech-hindsight-penil dysfunction-Disney universe bowl the thought occurred to me that just maybe we have gone overboard on this football bowl game deal. Overload comes to mind. And how many times do I have to watch that awful commercial with the guy playing like he's on a bike with his two buddies and eventually falling face first down a hill. What the hell is that all about? Did they pay those clowns for that effort? And who Ok'ed that abortion anyway? Ought to fire that fool. But I'm getting off track. Seems to me that about the same time we went gunny-bags on bowl games, people began running red lights. Is there a correlation here? Let's see, guess I'll just sit on my butt for twelve hours today and watch bad football between two mediocre at best teams, with six and five win loss records, coached by two guys that got fired while ignoring that list of things my wife has for me to do. Never do today what you can put off 'till tomorrow. And on my way to the store to reload on chips and dip I'll probably ignore that red light on the corner too.

Back in the glorious fifties this country had the Rose Bowl, the Orange Bowl, the Cotton Bowl and the Sugar Bowl. Eight pretty good teams played each other on New Year's Day. The bad teams with six and five records, fired their coach, no they didn't, they just packed their gear and tried not to drink too much on New Years Eve so they could actually watch those bowl games. No one ran red lights either.

But we've progressed in our world. I grew up when "Wait meant Wait and you Cleaned Your Plate". The thought of running a red light never crossed my mind. I waited for the light to turn green. I waited at the corner when on foot for the Walk sign to flash and I ate everything on my plate. If I didn't I didn't get to leave the table until I did. So I took a deep breath and somehow swallowed that awful overcooked broccoli and moved on with my brothers to play a street game of baseball, football or basketball. That would actually be playing the game, like in real life, running and sweating and laughing and playing 'till in got to dark and mom called us boys in the house. Kids of course don't do that now either. Game boy and play station substitute for actually playing games and kids don't sweat anymore. It's against their rules.

Now we have one hundred and ten bowl games and none of them are called Rose, Sugar, Cotton or Orange. Now they're called the dot com, out of sight, hyphenated geriatric, lame duck, Charlie brown and poselukimoni bowl. That last one is an inside family joke. But there is a correlation there because most of the commercials I'm watching from my couch position are about individual sport sex and so is poselukimoni. Let me ask a foolish question here. Does taking that pill actually help your golf game? Just seems to me it might be hard to concentrate on the shot in that condition. Not that mine would get in the way, but yours might. And if it works would you actually consider going to bed with that woman? Not so fast. She belongs in the fifties and I don't think they did "it" way back then. Well, not with that smile. Too busy cooking that damn broccoli I think.

So here's some New Years advice for you to consider. Slow down. Stop on Red. Get off the couch. Ignore the commercials. Get started on that list. Don't take that pill. Play good or bad golf, it's better than sex anyway and a whole lot better than those bowl games featuring bad players and lame duck coaches.

Chapter Three

First Time

Ok let's talk about the simple things in life. You know something really simple like when your wife asks you to go to the store to buy this or that. She has something in her mind and you've lost your mind, thinking you could actually pull this off. Maybe you can, I can't, ever! Oh, sometimes I can do it partially right. Like this morning, Jackie gave me her credit union debit card to pull out \$80 in cash. We're going to a social event and her good friend has already purchased the tickets so we'll need to reimburse, simple. Uh huh.

Well I jumped in the car with my Dobby Joey, moseyed down to the Safeway and did the ATM thing, I've done this a thousand times with my own card or course so after I finally get it put in with the little Visa thing in the correct corner and the upside down or backwards direction finally right, after I've covered all the possibilities, instead of looking closely at the diagram the wise ATM people paint on the front of the machine. Then I punch the right buttons for; do you want a receipt? Do you want fast cash, never enough? Do you want this in English, Spanish or Spandlish? Do you want \$20 bills or \$25.00? Trick question, they don't make \$25 bills. Do they? So out comes the \$80, I grab my receipt, careful not to look at the balance and frankly I don't want to know. Then feeling very superior because I actually did it right I'm off to find the sour cream, the other part of the 'Honey' can you do this for me list? It's in the isle next to the butter, which is next to the yogurt, which is next to the cottage cheese, which is next to the beer. Of course, I knew that. Let's see what size did she want. Oh Yeh, that little in between size. I know it's not that big gulp size and I know it's not that mini size, so it's got to be the middle size. Not a chance in hell that will be right and of course it's not the first time I've done this.

Then I stop at the Starbucks counter to pick up a Sunday newspaper and a medium size just real coffee. This is really easy, not a problem, it's six AM on a Sunday morning and there's no one else here so I'm first in line. My line karma is ridiculously awful and I have a standard rule I follow, never get in a line behind a person with gray hair, ever. Fortunately on this particular Sunday I'm the one with gray hair and the only person in line, I win. Joey is yapping at me as I get back to the car and fumble for the keys and then the button that, it's a miracle, opens the car doors automatically. I fight off the temptation to place the coffee on top on the car, so I'll have no problem handling everything, recognizing there was a slight chance I would forget I left it there as I drive off. Slight chance? He's jumping around as if I've been gone for a month and he's really happy I've come to rescue him. It's a dog thing, Jackie never does that. There's a lot of things Jackie doesn't do but I won't get into that here, it's a story about simple remember?

We, Joey, the newspaper, the sour cream, the Starbucks and I drive confidently home. Joey jumps out the back of my Jeep Cherokee and takes

his morning pee in the empty lot next door after sniffing every blade of grass and finding just the right one. Not sure about you but when I have to pee, I pee in the first toilet I find. Well, if I'm in the woods I do sniff around a bit. Not. In the house I carefully place the \$80 and the receipt on the kitchen counter top along with the credit card. Oh hell, where is the damn card? The other pocket, no. The other slot in my money clip, no. Shit! Where the hell is it? Oh zipadedo-do, it's in the ATM machine.

I break the land speed record back to the Safeway, leaving Joey to sniff and only had to run two very red lights. How does that make me different than Mr. and Mrs. American? It doesn't, I'd be different if I actually waited for the green or stopped on the red. I race back to the ATM and bingo; there it is smiling at me from its perch in the little slot. Not! Shit! I quickly look for someone to help and the very nice lady at the '*I really messed up and I desperately need help counter*' was really nice. "I've left my ATM card in the machine and it's not there, I said." "I think the machine covers your ass," is what the expression on her very pleasant face said to me as we walked to the machine. We looked for a button to press, entitled '*this is the button you press*' to get your card back from the pile of left cards place hidden in the bowels of the ATM. There wasn't one. Why haven't they thought of that yet? Hell, there are machines that tell me when to turn left or right to find where I'm going. Of course I'm a man and I don't need one of those either, right. So the very nice gray haired lady handed me a leaflet that had an 800 number to call. Then I told her, "It's not really my card, it's my wife's." "Oh my, you are in trouble."

So I called the number and actually got a person after punching the correct number from the options the computerize voice, that I actually recognized, gave me. If your card has been lost or stolen, press number ONE. I did. That of course got me directly to the computerized voice, I didn't recognize, that asked me to push number ONE again, if it was my wife's card. Just kidding. I eventually did get a real person who was obviously a married lady because she completely understood my dilemma. I asked her, "Does the machine take the card I mistakenly left, eventually?" Her answer, "I think so," didn't actually put me at ease of course, but it was better than, "No you freaking idiot," or some such response that cursed my male heritage.

Back home I had another small dilemma. Should I wake Jackie and tell her the bad news or wait? I chose to wait while contemplating what to order for my last breakfast meal. When she got up and we were doing our morning hug/kiss, I love you because it's in the simple things you need to do to keep your wife from filing for divorce marriage manual, I was thinking how to phrase my do you want to hear the good news or the bad news first question?" It's a simple question. Right!

Chapter Four

Check Ups

Have you ever had minor surgery? I hope not. Tomorrow I have my bi-yearly checkup with my Cardiologist. Gives him a chance to review my body parts and hopefully tell me I'll live awhile longer and won't need any immediate surgery, minor or major. When people tell me about their minor surgery I always remember a quote from oft-injured basketball player Bill Walton, "There is no such thing as minor surgery." I'm also reminded that the life clock is always ticking.

I got married at age forty-six. Before that time I had no minor or major surgeries unless you want to count removing my tonsils. I don't. Hell, I wasn't even circumcised and I think that takes an operation of delicate nature. I had back surgery one week after I said, "Yes". I won't tell you what caused the injury. Hell, I'd waited forty-six years; you can probably figure it out. Then I had heart surgery. Then I had another heart surgery. None of them were minor. None of them were fun.

I had this problem called PRHB or periodic rapid heart beat. Had it since childhood. About once or twice a year the ticker would just up and go, trying to race itself I guess. It wasn't a problem until I was in my forty's and the episodes suddenly got more frequent and lasted longer. PRHB isn't in itself a major problem. It's really just an electrical deal. Wires get crossed and off goes the heart beat. You sweat a lot and in the worst cases you get short of breath and dizzy. But, it can be controlled by medicine or minor, oh yeah, surgery.

In my case while the doctor was checking me out he found I also had an aortic valve that wasn't in particularly good shape. Wouldn't close all the way, so the blood destined for the far parts of my body didn't quite make it there. Now I knew why the erection wasn't so erect anymore, and why my toes looked sort of blue at times. Didn't need those wool socks after all.

I sat with my wife in the surgeon's office and waited for my appointment. They were doing construction next door, I think it was next door, and someone was doing a pretty good job of sawing with one of those skill type saws. Ever wonder what unskilled saws were used for. Heart surgery maybe. Anyway, my imagination sort of ran free and I imagined the reason the surgeon was late was that he was sawing someone open at the chest using, I hope, a skill saw.

What he said was, "You need an aortic valve transplant." Turned out mine was deteriorating rather rapidly and the good doctor, as opposed to the bad doctor, wanted me and my wife to know the options. Seems there

were only four. I didn't like the first one, which was to do nothing and die. Ruled that out right at the get go. Options two, three and four were human tissue, pig and mechanical as in what type of new valve did I want. Seemed to me it was like choosing a new car. Do you want a Ugo, ford or a Mercedes? Hell, I wanted the Mercedes but turns out I couldn't afford the monthly payments. Well, I could afford the ugo but I didn't want an East German doctor who used to work at Dachau working on my inner parts, so I ruled that one out too. That left the ford. Had one of those once, they run forever.

Turns out the ford was a used car. The human tissue valve was supposed to be the top of the line ford though. Used to be a Fairlane 500. Don't think it is anymore. Anyway, I asked the good doctor if I got to choose the person the valve came from and he said they didn't do that anymore. Stopped somewhere around nineteen forty-four I think. Too bad cause I had this good looking big breasted jogger in mind. She had to have a great aortic valve. I think there was a major amount of blood in those two items that pointed the way she ran. Oh well, a guy is still allowed to dream I think. Hasn't been a politically correct law passed against that yet.

The night before the surgery this pretty nurse comes in a says she won the lottery in the nurses pool and got the opportunity to shave this handsome guy waiting for heart surgery. I thought that was pretty cool. I began to wonder though when she started to shave me considerably lower than the chest. I wanted to say it was heart not heart-on surgery but thought better of it; I was having too much fun. When she finished I looked just like I did at age thirteen. Not a pretty picture. Still isn't. She did get around to shaving my chest too, which gave me a great amount of relief. I had a fifty-fifty chance the doctor would be using his saw in the correct place.

I woke up after surgery with what seemed like an elephant kicking me in the back of the head and a baseball bat stuffed down my throat. I kept thinking why doesn't someone come along and feed that animal and where the hell has Joe DiMaggio gone, cause he forgot his bat. It was actually my oxygen breathing tube but it didn't work very well because I kept choking and setting off an alarm that brought all sorts of nurses running into my intensive care space. The good news was I did wake up. My wife Nancy came by and she didn't look good at all. She had this look on her face that spoke volumes about what she was looking at. That would be me and it didn't give me a lot of confidence that I would still be breathing through that baseball bat in an hour or so. But I managed to make it somehow. I guess doctor Strangelove knew what he was doing after all.

Five years later they did it again. Seems the human tissue valve didn't come from any jogger. They had an emergency just before my operation

was scheduled and gave my valve away. I think for me they used the valve they got from the wino down on the corner who just died of an overdose of bad Chianti. We chose a mechanical valve the second time and made sure the elephant was lifting weights at the zoo and gave Joe back his bat. Went pretty smooth, practice makes almost perfect. Not everybody gets a second chance and I'm real grateful, as opposed to the Grateful Dead Bill, for the fact I did. Thank you Jesus.

PS. Bill Walton is an honorary member of the Grateful Dead. I think they're a rock group as opposed to a lot of dead people grateful for leaving this planet for all the right reasons. Bill had a great aortic valve that allowed him to throw the best outlet passes ever made. That would be in basketball, but that's another story. Tick, tick, tick.

Chapter Five

Croutons

In the spring of 1987 eight months before my forty seventh birthday I got married, for the first and last time. I should have gotten a clue when during the previous March on the day of the NCAA national championship basketball game I was in Medford along with my wife to be. We were staying at her mother's home and wanting, I'm sure, to impress her soon to be son-in-law my soon to be mother-in-law had a big meal planned. The table was set and we had finished our before dinner cocktails and with impeccable timing just as I sat down in a comfortable easy chair in front of the TV to watch the title game I heard, "Dinner is served."

I should have known it wouldn't get any better....ever. There are women in the world that accept the fact that us men want, no need to watch games on TV, especially national championship games. Men do games. Some ladies, I would include most of the Pigott women in this category, might even want to watch with us. Unfortunately for me, Jackie is among the 'batteries not included' group.

I'm not a particular fan of either USC or the University of Texas, but I am a fan of excellence and both of these teams fit the description. Jackie had planned a chicken dinner and I would do the honors cooking the foul on the bar-b-q. No problem. I would watch the game in front of the big screen TV and my wife would watch a movie in the dining room. Then about the time the first half ended Jackie informed me one of our good friends was going to join us for dinner. No problem. Except for the fact that when we have company we all get the honor of sitting at the dining room table.

I managed to get the bird cooked in between commercials, which wasn't an easy task, so I had that going for me. Of course as the game wound down and the lead changed hands and the underdog Longhorns began their last desperate drive, I heard once again, "Dinner is served." Both our friend Joan and Jackie graciously allowed me the opportunity to sit where I could watch the game but it was far from a comfortable setting. "Who's playing," said Joan? I tried to explain that it was the final two minutes of the national championship game but I could have said it was a peewee league rerun for all she cared. Jackie chimed in, "It's been a close game I think." How she knew that I'm not sure because although my wife has graciously sat through way too many of my football games without complaint, the truth is if she wasn't married to me the last football game she would have watched was the Medford Vs Corvallis state championship game her senior year of high school. She had to be there because she was on the rally. To her credit, unlike most rally girls, she does know the difference between a first down and a touchdown.

And then about the time Vince Young began his final heroics Joan asked, "Can a player just stop and kick the ball?" Relevance? That would be the first thing that came to my mind but I politely said something like, no way Jose as I tried to concentrate on the small TV set. USC had just stopped a third down pass five yards short of a first down near midfield when Jackie asked, "Isn't this the Rose Bowl?" I missed the facemask penalty that gave the Longhorns a first down and nullified what would have been a fourth and five play, trying to explain that yes it was the Rose Bowl. "Well, I thought the Rose Bowl was an important game, why is it being played on a Wednesday night?" "Pass the salad," I'm not sure if that was Jackie or Joan, I was trying to peek at the scrum in the Rose Bowl even though it couldn't be much of a game, being on Wednesday night, right?"

One of the women wanted to know which team was which and who had the ball and who was ahead about that time but I managed to ignore the questions, they really didn't want to know. Then I made a fateful error. Joan asked whom I was rooting for, in between asking which team had the smarter players and shouldn't that determine who won. I wanted to say this wasn't a spelling bee or Jeopardy but I managed to ignore the second question and say, "Well USC is a west coast team so I guess I'm rooting for them. I said that just about the time Mr. Young crossed the goal line with the winning score. My concentration was hindered somewhat and I didn't hear pass the bread so I apologize for that.

Sometime during the meal Jackie had pointed out that tomorrow night's dinner at Joan's with some friends from Europe would be great and we were going to use one of our Austrian tablecloths. I guess that topped the title game in importance and hindered their concentration on the 'game' because both women were nearly ecstatic about the tablecloth fact. I didn't give a hoot and didn't even want to go. Socializing with snooty friends isn't on the top of my want 'to do' list. When on the last play Matt Leinhardt had to scramble and the final eight seconds expired I mentioned the game had ended, neither women noticed, and in unison they both offered their condolences because "My" team had lost. I tried to explain that I wasn't disappointed about the loss, but to no avail. "Poor Tommy's team lost," speaking as though I was an eight year old whose dreams had just been shattered. Ok, sometimes I act like an eight year old, but my dreams weren't broken, shattered or crushed. What I really wanted to say was, no I'm not upset that USC lost, I really didn't care that much. But, I really did want to watch one of the most exciting football games, ever played for the national championship. I wanted to scream, "You'll never get it!"

But, I've learned some things over the years, which is good. One would be never try to justify watching a Wednesday night football game to two home economic majors who are just worried about the table presence and whether or not we were using the correct forks. Luckily for me I remembered to tape the game so sometime tomorrow, when

Joan is setting the table for tomorrow nights gathering and Jackie is cleaning teeth Joey and I will sit in front of the big screen TV and watch the National Championship Game. I'll give you five and take the Longhorns. Go Trojans! As we were getting into bed Jackie asked, "Do you remember how to do those croutons for the soup?" "Huh?" Coach tom

Chapter Six

Minor

On Tuesday I turned 65 years old. Tomorrow at 6:30 AM I'll go to OHSU for a procedure they call 'ablation'. The definition of ablation is, the removal of diseased or unwanted tissue from the body by surgical or other means. Mine is supposed to be surgical. Ablation is also defined as the melting or erosion of the protective outer surface of a spacecraft during reentry through the earth's atmosphere or the removal of snow and ice by melting and sublimation from a glacier or iceberg. Ok. I'm hoping my surgery works better than the spacecraft deal and I think the iceberg melt might take until I'm 85. Anyway it's minor heart surgery to fix an electrical problem. Seems the electrode connecting part A to part B in the heart that control the speed of the heartbeat has a short. It's all about nodes, chamber's and impulse's. That's why every once and a while my heart begins to race at about 165 beats per minute with zero motivation, say like one of those impulses to do something with that naked twenty something beauty asking for a lift. Not that 165 beats per minute would allow me to complete the mission with said frauline, completion hasn't happened for me since my second aortic valve replacement. I get free parking which is good because the procedure costs \$10,000. But the good news is I won't have to take medication to control the problem any longer. The pills cost about a buck. But I buy them mostly while in Europe where the cost is about .20 cents Euro which currently is about .25 cents American. My math isn't very good but it seems to me I'd have to live a very long time to go through \$10,000 worth of pills. Oh well, it seemed like a good idea at the time. Oh another thing, I can't eat or drink anything after midnight tonight, which is a great disappointment. No it isn't. I haven't been awake after 10:00 pm since before the last time the 165 beats per minute helped me complete the sex act. That was a long time ago. Hey, hold on there is hope. In the fine print I find the following news. "Some patients cannot or do not wish to take life-long anti-arrhythmic medications and other drugs because of the side effects that interfere with their quality of life." I think they mean my upcoming catheter ablation will help me consummate my marriage. That would be good. For your information the CA (catheter ablation) does not require open-heart surgery. In the procedure, the catheter is inserted into a vein through a nick in the skin, usually near the groin. Somehow 'nick' has me worried. Can you do a nick with a scalpel? And I'm not sure I want a knife close to my groin which quit growing a long time ago but I don't want it to get any smaller. Anyway this catheter is guided through the blood vessels to the heart using x-ray to keep it on course. Do I have to ware a lead shield like in the dentist office? The cardiologist who specializes in heart rhythm disorders carefully places, God I hope he is careful, the catheter and then a burst of radiofrequency (RF) energy is sent

through the tube to burn and destroy the small cluster of heart cells that are causing the arrhythmia. Makes you wonder how many ear cells are burned and destroyed by teenage America talking on their 'cell'. What? Repeat that. So they say I'll only be required to stay inactive for a few hours after surgery before resuming normal activities. Well, Nancy thinks I've been inactive for a lot of years so a few hours shouldn't be a problem and come to think of it normal activity for me only requires that I know how to use the remote control. I should come through this ordeal ok. There are certain risks and complications of course. Anytime an invasive procedure that involves the heart and blood vessels there is some potential risk. Then they give a long list of possible complications. Humm, not sure I like that. Reminds me of the latest miracle drug advertised on TV, usually to rectify penile dysfunction that is followed by ten minutes of possible side affects that make penile dysfunction pale in comparison. The good news is now that I'm officially a senior citizen, Medicare pays for my eight-hour hospital stay and I won't have to sell the farm after all. Well, I think Medicare pays for it unless George has screwed that up too. Maybe I should check with Hillary before I go through with this.

Chapter Seven

Doogie

Ok, I'm back and I guess that means I made it through the catheter ablation surgery. I did. Let me run through what it's like for you. First off, you have to get up at 5:30 in the AM, which isn't a problem for me, but my chauffeur isn't a morning person so I had to cajole and sweet talk my wife more than I'm accustomed to doing. I've been sleeping with Joey, our Doberman, in my office because he doesn't like sleeping alone and cry's a lot. Nancy cry's a lot when I sleep with her, but that's another story. Joey's inside because it's been too cold for him or me to sleep in the garage. It's really dark a 6:00 AM, I noticed as we wound our way up I-5 towards Pill Hill. That would be where OHSU is located. We checked in and after signing some forms we found the appropriate floor and room where I was assigned a small cubicle which fortunately had a large drape covering the glass front so no one could watch an old man undress. I'm, not sure who invented the P.J.'s hospital patients are forced to wear but they put the buttons on the wrong side. They belong in the front. You see someone has to help you button them where they're in the rear or your bare butt is in plain view for all those nurses, and passers by to ogle. Actually now most of the nurses are about my age and I don't think they ogle anything except their morning porridge. Speaking of morning I'm very regular as in bathroom duty but because it was so early I didn't perform as usual so my biggest worry was the possibility of passing gas during the surgery which would have been embarrassing enough but at my age it isn't always gas, if you get my drift. My first decision was do or don't I keep my underpants on under the hospital P.J.'s. Nancy assured me I should be nude for easy access by those performing doctorial and nursorial duties. I'm not very pretty naked but Doogie Howser didn't seem to mind. He's the doctor that asked me a lot of questions and told me what to expect as I lie in the very comfortable hospital bed hoping I wouldn't fire off a wake up call. He was going to be the assistant and I was glad because I wanted a grey haired guy to do the surgery. I've found that grey haired guys handle unexpected challenges with better control than the Dr. Howser's of the world. You know, been there, done that all before, so when the tailback fumbles or the anesthesiologists hits the wrong button they don't panic. I felt fine until the teenage doctor laid the last paragraph of the legally driven explanation of what was going to happen to me in short order. The 1% who don't make it out of the surgery and the 2% that can't do this or that anymore sort of set me on my ear but I smiled and acted like I'd been there before. Which of course I have, twice. But both those times they were going to cut me in half and this time all they were suppose to do was run a laser up the inside of my body while I was half asleep. Before wheeling me still in my bed down to the operating room a nurse, who probably lost the office

pool or the coin flip, expertly shaved the hair from around my groin on both sides until my pubic region had a distinctive Mohawk look, while never missing a beat, so to speak, in her non-stop once upon a time story of her life. I'm thinking this poor lady spends her days cutting hair not unlike my barber but at a lower wage and certainly around a lower bodily part. She was American, thank God, so I was confident she knew what and where to cut. Not all the bad jobs are taken up by foreigners, yet. So I'm lying under the lights of the operating room and half asleep/awake my mind began to wonder. The assistant was doing something south of my navel while the head whistle, surgeon, was up in the press box or the doctorial equivalent because I never saw him but I could hear his instructions to Doogie. I hoped his play calling was as good as mine has been and the quarterback was a good as most of mine have been. I've been calling plays for gifted kids to run for fifty years and I don't think he's been doing this surgery that long, but he's in the big leagues so he must be pretty good. He was. I don't remember much else and the next thing I knew I was back in my large front window room recovering and it wasn't long before my groin nurse friend was asking what I wanted for lunch. The thought crossed my mind that if she moonlighted as the cook I hoped she used rubber gloves. Anyway the turkey on rye sandwich was pretty good and since I hadn't eaten for forty-eight hours I didn't care anyway. Nancy was there to drive me home and Joey was very happy to see both of us. I walked with a slight, Walter Brennen, limp and had two holes in my groin but I wouldn't have to take those pills anymore or have my heart rate suddenly jump to 170 beats per minute anymore. That is unless I try to run a 4.4 forty. Remember when 4.4 was fast? I do. And Doogie assured me I would recover fast and my limp would disappear. I'm just glad my recent gambling luck held and the 1 or 2 per cent chance of loss of life or limb won't be cashed in until later. Much later I hope.

Chapter Eight

Karma

The weather in Oregon this winter has been different. Like warm different. So yesterday I played nine holes of golf at Mc Nary. I hit the ball pretty well for not playing in four months and I only lost two balls, buried in the middle of the second and eighth fairways. It's soft out there in January. The only downer was as I walked from the second green to the third tee I noticed a twosome just leaving the tee. They were no where to be seen as I played the second hole and the thought crossed my mind that they must have taken as long to tee off and it did for me to play the second, including extra time to search for my under the weather drive. When it took the two players ten minutes to get out of my driving range I knew I was in for a long afternoon. You see I've always had bad golf karma.

Karma is the Hindu and Buddhist philosophy according to which the quality of people's current and future lives is determined by their behavior in this and in previous lives. Anyone think reincarnation here? Also, it's the atmosphere radiated by a place, situation, person or object or destiny or fate in general. For me I see Karma as fate in general.

Growing up in the little Portland suburb of Lake Oswego I had the luxury of playing a lot of golf. In the summer my father would drop my brother and me off at the country club and while my brother spent most of his time on the practice tee I played thirty-six holes nearly every day. Except for Thursdays, men's day, I pretty much had the course to myself. I would play two or three balls on every hole and imagined myself as Dr. Carey Middelcoff or Julius Boros winning the Masters. I don't think either one did but that didn't keep me from becoming golf spoiled.

With the exception of time spent in Ireland in the seventies before Tom Watson arrived and made it nearly impossible to get a tee time at the best courses, I haven't played golf with that much freedom in over fifty years. The combination of a more popular sport and slow play by everyone has limited my desire. And then there is the Karma deal. It seems like whenever I decide to go play a few holes by myself, doesn't seem to matter which day of the week, I quickly get stuck behind the tortoise and his buddy. Doesn't anyone work?

On the way home I stopped to buy a few dinner items at the local Albertsons. Arriving at the check out counter, I had two choices. I chose to wait behind the stand with one lady instead of the one with three people. Bad decision, again. You see I've got bad line Karma as well. I bided my time reading the Enquirer, Globe and Readers Digest while this lady with a bigger diamond on her ring finger than either Tom Brady or Donovan McNabb will show off

after the Super Bowl, had more coupons than items in her cart. I stood by reading great gossip stuff while ten people paraded through the other isle. It's not like this was the first time, it happens nearly every time.

It's a good thing I didn't stop at the bank on the way home. It would be a line and you know my Karma there. But I did stop at the corner six way stop. It's really only four but when adding in the two left hand turn lanes it adds up to six. I passed basic math. Of course I had to wait until the other five directions got to go before I limped around the corner towards I-5 south. Bad stop light karma. Happens All the Time!

Later that afternoon I got quickly bored with the TV show I was watching and switched channels. Of course what I got was a commercial, again. There is never a channel that isn't on a commercial break when I change channels? Bad TV Karma. I switch channels all the time now, bad TV. When I was growing up I didn't have to get off the couch to change channels, no remote in the fifties, because the TV was pretty good. We had four channels in the greater Portland area, the three networks and KPTV a local.

But the TV was worth watching then. First we had Dragnet with Jack Webb. Then we had Gunsmoke, Have Gun Will Travel, Wagon Train and Maverick. Later we watched The Fugitive, with David Jansen and The Untouchables. We even stopped study hours at ATO house and bet on how many bad guys would get killed. Somewhere along the line color overtook black and white but even the colorless programs were better than the reality crap we get today. Then there was The Game of the Week. That would be "Game", as in singular. Didn't matter what sport season, it was the game of the week and we all looked forward to watching. Now we have the bad game of the minute and I won't watch, except the World Series if the Yankees are involved.

I do have one good Karma courtesy of my Hindu and Buddhist friends. It seems I have not just good but great parking place Karma. I always find a spot next to wherever I'm going and it doesn't matter if its downtown Portland or downtown Vienna. Of course in Vienna I can never find where I'm going and I rarely go to Portland, but what the hell, I can't be choosy.

I'm going to challenge you to think about your Karma. I bet you can come up with both good and bad. Why don't you send me yours and if I see you on the golf course, get the hell out of my way! I'll be the one wearing the robe and I won't be eating a ham sandwich.

Chapter Nine

Handy

I hope you all had a wonderful Christmas. Mine was great although I had a moment of stress when I wanted to strangle the two four year old girls fidgeting in front of us at the evening candle light church service. I really don't have a problem getting along with women, although I've had my fair share of confrontations over the years. But I've had an equal amount of disagreements with men, so I've got that going for me. I've had three incidents this past week that remind me of how selfish people can be and all involve cell phones and women. I'm standing in the grocery store line, and remember my 'line karma' isn't good, and the thirty something lady in front of me is trying to work the credit card gismo, while talking on her cell with her two brat kids are pulling items off the shelf next to the counter. It took her ten minutes to get her five items checked, all the time oblivious to anyone else and anything thing else. Parenting 101, she failed miserably! Not to mention, ok I'll mention, she was a selfish, yuppie bitch. The next day as I'm attempting to drop off some Christmas, yes Christmas, cards at the drive through lane at the post office I run into another t.s.y.b. (Thirty something yuppie bitch) who is out of her car, on her cell phone, trying to stuff hand full after hand full of letters bound in packages of at least twenty, into the three inch slot in the @#*.ing drive through. It's pouring down rain and the wind is blowing the precept sideways and she has no clue as the cars piled up behind her. well maybe she did have a clue, but just didn't care. While walking Joey along Miley road, which has a forty-five mile an hour speed limit that is mostly exceeded, a car up ahead suddenly stopped right in the middle of the road. I thought they must be having car trouble so as I approached about to ask if they needed help I noticed the lady driving was simply stopped while talking on her cell phone. The advancing Mario Andretti impersonator behind her managed to go around without incident as Franz Joseph and I lunged out of harms way. Finally the oblivious woman slowly moved along and turned into the Charbonneau entrance. I know this will piss off all the women on my list but in my wildest dreams I can't imagine a man performing any of these 'me' acts. To be fair, we men have our own thoughtless moments for sure, at least Nancy says so as I'm ignoring the passing world watching another 'game', lounging on the sofa. But I'll tell you this, I own a cell phone and don't know the phone number and have never taken a call because it's never on. It's safe in my glove box and I use it to call Nancy when I'm heading home from work to see if I need to stop at the store. Period. I'd probably use it if I rear ended a motor vehicle stopped in the middle of the road as well. In Vienna everyone has a cell phone, which they call 'Handy's'. Most of the people and all of the teenage girls walking down the beautiful historic boulevards surrounding the Ringstrasse are talking on them. Understand, in Austria it is cheaper to use a Handy than a phone

line so I can understand why Austria is the largest per capita user of cell phones in the entire world. However, I'll never understand, short of calling 911 because you are having your own heart attack, what is so important? Trust me, it can wait! Really, it can! Yes, it can! Please, it can @#*..ing wait! In Vienna, last year I succumbed to technology and bought a handy, actually Nancy bought it for me; sometimes I even have it on. Mostly I leave it at our apartment but quite often forget to plug it in at night so the battery run's out. For most folk I guess plugging in the cell has become the nightly ritual. Brush teeth, kiss wife or plaything, pee, plug in cell, sleep. Oh, pee comes before kissing wife or plaything. I know that because I have always been very good alone, no high school sweetheart, hell I didn't have a date until I was twenty and didn't get married until I was mid forty something. Didn't get laid.... well that's none of your business. Never spent more than two minutes on the phone to anyone, anytime, anywhere. Can't imagine what people talk about for over thirty seconds. "Hi, I'm late, I'll be to work in five minutes." "Hi, honey, I'm late, I'll be home in five minutes." Hi, hold my tee time, I'll be there in five minutes." "Hey, asshole, take this job and shove it, I quit." What else is there to say? Ok, I'm a little different but I have to wonder what people did to waste time before cell phones? I bet the lady in the grocery store might have had some control over her brats and could have deciphered the credit card machine in a sensible time frame. And, the lady in the drive through might have been able to use two hands to stuff her Merry Christmas and @#*...you letters to her fans into the box before she caused major traffic problems in Wilsonville. I hope the Charbonneau lady doesn't stop on I-5 for her next caller. I'm sure Willie Nelson, Dierks Bentley, Toby Keith, or Kenny Chesney will come up with a song soon that will cover this issue. Actually come to think of it... Clint Black has already written it. "And you may not understand, it's a mystery to me. Love a lady a lifetime, you still might not see. There's no use in trying. You won't have any say. A man has his will but a woman has her way." Guess that about sums it up. So hang in there my friends and wish the lady in your life a happy new year, give her a hug and a kiss. Treat her right. Love her. Coach tom.

Chapter Ten

Packaging

I bet you're like me, frustrated and wondering why it's nearly impossible, without Devine intervention, to open anything anymore. Just this past week I've lost it, as in temper control, trying to open my cold medication for allergy relief, my new automated toothbrush that's guaranteed to stop plaque buildup, my rented home video and the new TO321 black ink cartridge for my printer. Consumer items are nearly impossible to open. I've failed with knives and scissors too many times to count. I've used pliers, screwdrivers and shears to no avail. Next up are a machete and a blowtorch. I can understand why off the shelf medicine needs to have some security in packaging, but when the item comes directly from the pharmacists is it necessary to dead bolt the stuff? I really don't believe the terrorists of the world are going to sabotage my new toothbrush either. It took me twenty minutes to free the damn thing from bondage and I'm thinking is this really necessary. Do the folk at Hollywood video really think their product is a prime target for the nutcase living next door? What are the sadists of the world going to do with the ink in my printer cartridge make it suddenly spit out fumes that will put me into convulsions. It's well documented how we in America over react to everything but shouldn't some common sense prevail, sometime?

I know how the drill works and so do you. Someone, probably a graduate from some liberal arts college with no job and time on their hands, has the misfortune to find a dead rat in their subway sandwich and begins a process that ensures that every American will waste a large portion of their lives trying to open packages. First the unlucky lib arts grad will get some of their buddies who couldn't find a real job either and work for a activist group to investigate. They'll enlist the ACLU, the PTA and the inventors of TAG to help in their crusade. Suddenly every hamburger and or sandwich joint in the USA will have to encase their food in bullet proof Kevlar to ensure that the other lib arts grad who couldn't get a real job and decided to attack those that do by putting dead animals into their lunch, wouldn't be able to do it at the local fast food dive.

Let's just assume that half of the non-working lib arts grads actually attempt to do something gruesome to your food or your toothbrush or your toilet paper. What are the odds you'll be the one trying to wipe with damaged goods? Pretty small I would think. Will it really be necessary to wrap all the two-ply stuff in King Arthur's protective mesh for all of us to attempt to cut through? Couldn't we just call it bad luck, misfortune or happenstance and move on. I don't know about you but when I'm ready to get off the throne I don't really want to be waylaid by over protective plastic.

I want to scream, "It's only Advil" for Heaven's sake when I have a splitting headache and need some instant relief. By the time I've gotten

through the first layer of defense, the over-protected cardboard box with the consistency of steel plate and somehow manage to open the “Child proof” container after throwing the damn thing against the wall with Clemens like velocity and break through the krypton covering that leads me to the actual medicine my bleeding ulcer has overpowered the headache and I’m in need of a blood transfusion. I hope the bag of good blood isn’t too difficult for the doctor at the ER to open in time.

So you say I think coach has finally gone over the edge and he’s over reacting to all this nonsense. You might be right, but I still yearn for the days when I could actually open a package in less than an hour and didn’t need a blow torch to do so. If you need further proof just take a look around for the next few days. You might begin to agree with me when you realize your bread is double wrapped and its not to keep it fresh and the new batteries for your digital camera are encased in a NASA approved protective covering. I would have hand written this memo except I can’t figure out how to get into the package of my new techniclick 0.5 mechanical pencil. But if you’re reading this at least you’ve been able to open your e-mail. Stay tuned.

Chapter Eleven

Moon Shot

If understand it correctly, Mickey Rooney is pissed that the commercial featuring a moon shot of his 84 year old butt has been crossed off the 'commercials to be shown' during the super bowl list. I'm sure his backside is prettier than Janet Jackson's boob but don't we have to draw the line somewhere? Of course Randy Moss has given the pro football TV audience his version. Just a guess here but if I had to make a choice I think I'd rather get a glimpse of Randy's butt over Mickey's.

I'm obviously not offended by skin but somehow I just can't imagine what showing Mickey's backside on national TV has to do with anything they are trying to sell. Unless it's some hemorrhoid ointment or some such similar medicinal product. Come to think of it hemorrhoids and halftime shows do have a lot in common.

I have zero clue as to who is choosing half time entertainment for these football games we're forced to watch during the bowl season and the NFL super bowl, but I do know this, they don't have a clue either! Thankfully most of the NFL playoff games don't have a halftime show, thank God. And when are they going to have someone sing the national anthem without their own individual interpretation, which usually means a whole lot of out of tune ahs and drawn out oous that make the song nearly unrecognizable. Seems most of them are trying to make the damn thing last through the first quarter. Where is Kate Smith anyway? Probably playing with Mickey Rooney somewhere.

So about these half time shows. Do people actually watch these things? First off the networks must be aiming at a very young audience and that would be teen-age folk. Hey network big shots, teenagers don't watch TV unless it's the new rock, hip-dip, rap thug soon to be in jail foul-mouthed one cd phenom channel. And as for us old folk. We tune in to watch the game. Halftimes are on mute and we're puking, scratching body parts or passing gas and blaming it on the dog. Either that or reaching for another beer and asking on the way past the rec room if our wives would like help on the puzzle they've been working on since November and where's the guacamole dip honey?

It all reminds me of the high school band instructor who thinks his little part of Friday night is what people come to see. He wants equal time on the field and wouldn't know a first down from Mickey's hemorrhoid. Hey fool, no one cares! Ok, mom and dad saxophone care. They're the people who have the bumper sticker that say's something like, "My son is Talented and Gifted", which makes him superior to your son's athletic ass. Imagine what these folk would think if I had a bumper sticker that read, "My kid kicks fifty yard field goals". But the pair of sax parents do sit on

the fifty-yard line, ignore the game, complain about the noise and leave before the second half kick-off.

Don't get me started on support groups. We don't have them anymore. They all think they are the show and the rally, flag, band and drill team have their own state championships to prepare for. Which is attended by mom, dad, little brother and a female reporter. We'll show up for your game if we can work it into our schedule. Where did all the envy and jealousy come from? All athletes don't kick sand in the trumpet players face. We're not all jerks. Don't prejudge those of us playing with a ball based on your past experience with a fool who wore a jock.

I've supported your team at concerts and musicals. I've gone to state cheer championships. I might be wrong but I would guess that if your team wasn't on at halftime you wouldn't be caught dead supporting our little team of mostly just kids who choose to play a competitive game instead of blowing a horn. Just understand this, if you had a Friday night event and at intermission you had a football, basketball or baseball team play a game you might have more than three spectators, the chair of the PTA and an investigative reporter witness your excellence. Ok, got that off my chest.

Do your own thing. It's Ok. It's actually cool. Just don't act as if the sport people are all too stupid to understand your passion. They're not! Well some of them are. And why are they the ones interviewed on TV by some drone with a mike in his hands acting like he actually knows something about a game he never played. The guy being interviewed can play, well sort of, but can't talk.

Back to network halftime. Smoke, loud noise, thirty twenty something drummers who look like they're forty something because they've been on fast track meth for a month won't draw back the audience from the beer keg or the chips and dip. Neither will the latest doped up, lip synch, crotch scratching, fly open, boob showing, body pierced, no-talent teen age heart throb idol sweating testosterone by the bucket load. Personally I'm for bringing back, straight from Sherwood Forest, the high flying falcon and those acrobatic puppy dogs snagging Hula-Hoops and Frisbees out of rarified air.

Here's an idea. How about the halftime show being.... nothing! Give the fans a break and quit trying to entertain those that just need a breath of fresh air from watching another bad game played by over-paid fools that think their own game plan is more important than the team's game plan. Come to think of it maybe we should just turn the flat screen TV off and walk the dog. He doesn't care either and just wants companionship which most of us need more than ever anyway. So, Mickey give it a rest you old fart. Keep your pants on and try like hell to enjoy what's left of life. Go Colts!

Chapter Twelve

Morning Ritual

So God invented the earth and put old Adam and young eve in a garden to pick apples. No, not to pick apples. First of all I think God had an anterior motive, why else would he put two naked folk that had some very distinct differences out in nature together. I'm not talking about differences in attitude that would be another topic altogether. Differences biologically speaking. You know the guy has his things and the gal has her thing. Not sure when that fig leaf came off but I know when I wake up in the morning I usually have in my possession a rather obvious condition. Now add a beautiful naked woman and that obvious condition goes on depthcom one real fast. I think God knew that. Somewhere along the line He must have had morning sex and wanted all us Adam's to enjoy that pleasure as well. I got that picture fairly straight about the age on eleven or twelve and it didn't require a woman lying next to me either. Morning sex, no matter how it is performed, is well, it is just the best time for that sort of thing. Start the day off with a bang. Oh my.

My wife used to like morning sex as well. That was real early in our marriage or maybe before our marriage, not sure. I was forty five and my wife was thirty five when we got married so we both had an understanding of what that morning deal was all about. I say used to because one of the best kept secrets in the entire world is the fact that shortly after the wedding vows are completed the woman of the house loses interest in morning, afternoon or evening sex. Goes with the territory. Didn't know married men masturbated until I got married. When you think about it the older you get the younger your sex life gets. That middle part is pretty good but there comes a time when the result isn't worth the effort. The problem is in women that time comes about forty years before it does in men. Oh well, maybe next time God will get that straightened out.

So the morning ritual is reduced to shit, shower and shave and not necessarily in that order. For me it's usually shave, shit and shower. Sort of depends on what I ate the day before. But talk about regular. I think most men have a real ability to dump that will never be equaled by women. I know the equal deal people won't like that, but why is it they, women, want only the best things that we men do and not all the things. Does your wife take more than thirty seconds to take a dump? Mine doesn't. Gotta go, swoosh, done flush. Wow. How do they get any reading done anyway?

I think there were only two things I for certain inherited from my father. First the ability to take every day, day after day, through rain, snow, sleet, hale and anything else mother nature has to offer, outstanding dumps. Doesn't matter what I ate the day before. Doesn't matter what I drank the day before. Morning comes, I dump.

The second thing was, taking long dumps. Doesn't matter what or how much I digested yesterday, it takes twenty to thirty minutes to empty out the tank. Gross, well maybe but what's left. Is there anything you can do anymore for twenty to thirty minutes. Lets see. Sex, no. Naps, no. Read, no. Watch TV, no. Exercise, no. I can't come up with anything. Can you? Doubt it. So hell, enjoy it. Read the paper, read the last sports illustrated and read the top ten best seller. Used to be it took three weeks to do that. Now days, about twenty to thirty minutes will do just fine. Then shave. Then take that shower and if you need morning sex do it in the shower. Takes about five minutes. Oh my.

Chapter Thirteen

Sports Page

I grew up in a household with four men. Dad and his three boys, Mom was by herself. She was a short order cook, buss driver, doctor and sometimes lawyer called in to settle the main dispute in the Smythe family. Who gets the sports page first. Actually you could count my younger brother out of the mix. He slept late and had absolutely zero interest in sports. Dad, my brother Jerry and myself on the other hand had a daily morning fight over who got the sports page first.

Our home had three bedrooms but only one bathroom. Dad had a morning ritual that lasted at least an hour, or so it seemed. Jerry was quicker. The trick for me was to be first up and first in the bathroom. That way I could do my ten minute bathroom deal. It doesn't take long when you don't have to shave, didn't do that till I was about twenty three. Come to think of it I began that daily deal about ten minutes after my first sexual encounter. I wonder if there is a correlation there? Do you suppose those junior high kids that look older than Walter Brennan are sexually active? Well, that's another story. So, no shave a quick brush of the teeth and even quicker shower. Then I could get down to the real beginning of the day, reading all about what happened yesterday in the sports page.

If I was second or third up I had no chance to get the newspaper until somewhere around noon. If it was a school day I would bolt out the door after breakfast dutifully prepared by Mom. I'll have a short stack with a couple of eggs over hard Mom. That was of course in the fifties when mom's actually did things like cook breakfast. My mom did it every day of our family life. Know what, she liked doing it. Sorry about that Martha. Bet you haven't a much as made toast for your kids, what the hell you can't possibly have kids. Don't know and don't care. I know this they would sure as hell make their own toast. Anyway, out the door and off to school. Sprint to the library and snatch the morning sports page and proceed to memorize it. I swear I could give you every box score, didn't matter the season, every outcome of every game and quote each article about Joe DiMaggio, Jackie Robinson, Bill Russell or any number local athletes. Those were the days.

Sports writers actually wrote about sports. Athletes actually got all their publicity by playing sports. Times have changed. Today's sports page looks like a Hollywood gossip column. A few sports scores then all sorts of stuff about what the sports writer thinks we readers want to hear about. About half the time the article is written by a woman who decided that although she hated men she just had to be in the locker room to watch the athletes undress. If men sports writers can be in there so can I. Wonder why no man sports reporter has ever, in the entire history of sports writing, demanded to be in the women's shower? Of course these ladies don't really want to write about sports. They really want to write about the injustice done women in our society. On the sports page? Why?

Call me a sexist if you will but I have a hard time reading someones story about a game they never played. Doesn't have to be a woman who didn't play of course. How do you know what's going on in the mind of the QB if you've never felt like every bone in your body was broken after taking a Butkus-like blitz in the chops. How do you know how hard it is if you've never gone from first to third or dished off a behind the back assist or sank a four footer on the eighteenth to win the "Usual". How the hell do you know? Don't.

There aren't many Yogi's or Casey's or Billy's to interview anyway. I'm not sure when the "Jurisprudence" section began in the sports pages of our newspapers but it's right there, every day, day after day after day. Sometimes its only three or four incidents but most times it takes up a rather large space. This guy was arrested for attempted rape, attempted murder, attempted dope smuggling, attempted abuse, attempted armed robbery, attempted assault. Why is it always attempted. Can't these guys do mayhem any better than they can play? Like attempted tackling, attempted blocking, attempted passing, attempted receiving, attempted throwing and attempted catching. Hell, guess they're aren't very good at anything so let's make sure some twenty five year old team owner who made his fortune of the internet can pay the loser five million bucks a strike out, fumble or turnover. They need the money so they can buy a seventy seven bedroom, forty four car garage, two bathroom bungalow on a ninety nine acres estate so their posse of homeboys or homegirls or Homo's can live in the style to which they have become accustomed.

Oh, my. Now I read the "sports" page in about two minutes. Lets see today there was, in no particular order, a story on; Hoottie and Martha, Alan his lawyer the judge and the cross-over dribble, some soccer player's anger management problem, the world ice golf championship and ex-Kansas coach Roy Williams pissing off half the people below the Mason-Dixon line not to mention John Brown and all his abolitionists buddies, because he had the audacity to take another job. How many people would be worked up over your changing jobs from Jiffy Lube to Midas?

The good news is the older I get the shorter amount of time I need in the bathroom. Don't care if I shave every day. Don't care if I shower every day. Still brush my teeth every day, but I'll be damned if I'll floss. Still take nice dumps and I save a lot of money on toilet paper.

Chapter Fourteen

Nicknames

Whatever happened to nicknames? Golf had Fat Jack, Champaign Tony, Wee Ice Man, Slammin Sammy and Porkey Oliver. We're talking about Jack Nicklaus, Tony Lema, Ben Hogan, Sam Sneed and Lou Oliver. Baseball had Joltin Joe, Splendid Splinter, Stan the Man, Pee Wee and Bullit Bob. That would be Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Stan Musiel, Herman Reece and Bob Feller. Football had maybe the best and the most monikers. Slingin Sammy, Crazylegs, the Galloping Ghost, Hurry'in Hugh and Choo Choo. Real names of Sammy Baugh, Elroy Hirsch, Red Grange, Hugh McIlhenny and Charlie Justice. How about Bronko Nagurski, Alan the Horse Ameche, Big Daddy Lipscomb and one of my favorites Clyde Smackover Scott. Coaches even had great names. There was Forest Evasheski of Iowa, Benny Oostabahn of Michigan, Biggy Munn of Michigan State and Woody Hayes of Ohio State.

Sportswriters spoke and wrote about "The Four Horsemen" and "The Seven Mules" from Notre Dame, "The Seven Blocks of Granite" of which Vince Lombardi was a member, at Fordam. There was "Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside" who were Doc Blanchard and Glen Davis from Army. Coach Paul Dietzel's "Chinese Bandits", way before political correctness ruined nearly everything, from LSU. In the pro's there were "The Monsters of the Midway, Chicago Bears, the Los Angeles Rams "Fearsome Foursome". They were followed by "The Purple People Eaters" of Minnasota Viking fame, "The Alphabet Backfield" of the 49ers, (I still stump everyone with the question, name the alphabet backfield. But I knew them by heart, J.D. Smith, R.C. Owens, C. R. Roberts and of course Y.A. Tittle) "The No-Name Defense of the Miami Dolphins. "The Over the Hill Gang" coached by George Allen with the Washington Redskins. And finally "The Steel Curtain" defense of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Then there were the immortals. The "Flying Wedge". Roy "Wrong Way" Riggels and my all time favorite the "Serpentine Huddle" at UCLA. Mention any of those or them or they today and you get nothing but blank stares. A lot of these names were read on the sports page or listened to on the radio. Most of these monikers were coined way before TV took over our lives.

Sports writers of today don't seem to be nearly as creative. Maybe they're too busy trying to uncover some evil secret. Too many investigative reporters even in sports. Makes me long for the days when the sports writers rode the same train as the players. The socialized, drank and partied together. Many times they were friends. Now day's sportswriters see themselves as critics. Hey, don't show any favoritism. So lets just assume John, Jim, Bill, Harry, Larry, Mike, Spike and Luke are all just as bland as the writers writing about them. I was told by a sage old friend never to piss off anyone who buys their ink by the barrel and I've tried not

to do that. I'm hoping they take the hint and come up with some creative nicknames for today's athletes.

Chapter Fifteen

Emancipated

Webster defines "Fired" as; Dismissed, Liberated, Emancipated, Released or Discharged. If you look closely three of the definitions could be interpreted as Positive. Being Liberated, Emancipated or Released (from Bondage) would most likely leave one elated. I was elated one time. It's a good story, so I'll tell it to you.

The corporate world is an interesting place. I would put a small college environment into the same category. In both places you are expected to obey the party line without asking any embarrassing questions. Just nod your head and say "yes boss", not unlike, I would guess, the slaves in the south would have done prior to our civil war.

As I've said, I worked for a short period of time at my alma mater, Frontier Union Canyon College. Remember we're calling it FUCC to save space. Later the school passed its SAT test and became a University. The short version says just about all I want to say about the place. It's known now simply as FUCU. Good description of the place it turns out. It's located on the only hill overlooking Seattle and was originally an estate that belonged to a local businessman. Damn can't seem to get anyway from that man thing. Sorry.

Let me give you a glimpse into what happens in those worlds when you dare to express an unpopular opinion. In both places you get fired. They have a regimen that they follow. They've all been to firing school. They've listened to their lawyers and have left no stones un-turned. It's like a page by page homework assignment. On day one you will do this, day two that, day three etc. Covering the firing bases before you fire does a number of things. Not the least of which is cover your own ass. They do it a lot, so they are very good at it. The comical thing is they have no idea that their bright little scheme is so obvious. Their goal is to hit you with a "blind shot", but any fool with half a brain will see the mortar shell a'comin. Incoming! You see they give the fire-re no credit at all. They really believe you are as anal as they. If you are, you deserve to get the ax and the ax handle.

FUCC was a place that by comparison gave the cold plastic no personality work place environment a good name. No smiles were allowed. If you ever laughed the hidden Saddam fed-e-yeen would want to know what the hell you thought was so funny? They would jot notes down in their little books and silently sneak around being as obvious as was the white stripe down their back and smelling just as bad. They never suspected you might notice. These people only communicated by voice mail, being incapable of carrying on a real person-to-person conversation.

With that environment as the norm it wasn't very hard to tell when the ax was about to fall. It was as obvious to me as ugly on a blind date. Suddenly no one would look at, nod at or gesture in any way to indicate that my body was actually in residence. To do so would have been to

recognize that I actually was alive and well. It was almost as if by acknowledging my presence they would somehow be seen to be in my corner and might very well find the noose tightening around their skinny little pencil neck's next. No one was about to take that chance.

And those were the one's I worked with on a daily basis. Those that hated me on principal, he's the football coach gotta' hate him, would walk past with an undisguised countenance that screamed, "Was that rabbit Caspser or Harvey?" Alfred Hitchcock's 1950 funny picture starring James Stewart, you fool. I played the part of the invisible Rabbit. Gotta ask my agent where those residuals are?

As the judgment day approached it became somewhat of a "Who's on First" routine. That would be Bud Abbott and Lou Costello. Then on the designated day the athletic director was an MIA and the secretary who hadn't missed a day since arriving by wagon train with Merriwether and Jack, no he was a baseball player, Dick, nope he played music and watched the ball drop on new years, it was that other Clark, William. Anyway she was nowhere to be found. All the other normal inhabitants also must have been afraid of coming down with the SARS virus because they were out to lunch as well. Probably lost their face masks.

I called the VP for firing's office to see if the execution was still on, the secret hour was set to co-incide with the beginning of football practice that afternoon. Say "Duh" here. Also to tell him I would be bringing a friend to the meeting, who just happened to be my lawyer. He wanted no part of my friend. You see at firing school they learn the routine and it doesn't allow the condemned to be accompanied to the gallows by anyone. He said, "No you can't". I said, "Yes I can". No you can't, yes I can. Together we must have sounded like John Rait and Doris Day rehearsing for "The Pajama Game". I was John and he definitely was Doris.

Anyway, me and my shadow, that's a line from the Fred Astair-Gene Kelly musical "Singing in the Rain in case you happen to be an uncultured football coach, arrived at the execution chamber on time and were met by a very flustered VP. We went back and forth arguing yes or no until he finally said to my lawyer, "Look, I'm just going to have a conversation with my colleague, no need for a lawyer." Right Sherlock. That would be Holmes as in detective. What the hell, I said to myself, I'd been given last rights and was ready to go. I'd gotten the reaction I wanted out of the firing clone so I left my shadow in the reception room dancing with the VP's appropriately stern looking assistant. She reminded me of Jed Clampett's secretary on Beverly Hill Billy's and I believe she even had the identical stick up her red ass.

I entered the execution room and low and behold my MIA AD was crouched in a corner white as my buddy Casper and shaking like he was in the final stages of MS. Before the door had closed the executioner barked out, "You're Fired." Naturally fully believing what he had said about just wanting to chat with me, I was caught totally off guard. Well I would have been if I'd of been hearing impaired, mentally challenged and sight deprived. That would be deaf, dumb and blind to all you conservative

commie pinko republicans. "We want your keys and we will have you escorted off the property". Enter, I think its called stage right, the head of campus security all decked out in his rented costume. I was truly surprised he wasn't accompanied by twin Dobermans or at least snarling German shepherd's snapping like crocodiles after fresh meat. The meat would have been me. But the VP simply symbolically tore the epaulets off my shoulders, much like Van Heflin did to Gary Cooper in "French Foreign Legion" or was it "Beau Geste?" Not sure. It actually was the keys off of my key chain, but what the hell. I merely stood accepting my fate.

I tried to look guilty and show remorse but I was laughing too loud and couldn't pull it off. The VP was really pissed. I wasn't supposed to be enjoying this. That part obviously wasn't covered in the manual. Like, here's what you do if the fire-re laughs. Oh well, maybe they'll cover that in the next edition. These guys, Jerry and Dean, Bud or Lou, take your pick just didn't get it. They actually think people want to work in places like this. I'll tell you who works in places like this, people with zero talent, zero ambition and zero principles. That would be a .000 batting average. Some baseball owner will probably pay you millions of dollars with those stats. You see it's very easy to get lost in the corporate menagerie where being quite average but silent is OK. I guess that should actually be personagerie, sorry.

They offered me the obligatory confession to sign, I think it makes them feel good to offer a closure possibility. Don't you just love that word 'closure'. Had to have been made up by a chairbitch. It's actually on the next to last page of the how to fire the dumb funk manual. On the last page it says, offer your hand to the condemned. Last chapter of firing 101's book demands that. Its suppose to dignify the proceedings. Naturally I grasped his limp dick, oops hand, shouting, "Hey Buddy, no hard feelings, nice working for all you wonderful clones, say hello to Saddam for me." Or maybe I didn't. My good buddy GAB, that's gator aide boy, chapter fifteen, who was also my AD, never said a word. He was too busy puking in his second grade corner. He was just there taking notes anyway. They get witnesses.

As I was escorted off the property by the keystone rent-a-cop the staff infrastructure and other pedophiles were peeking out from behind nearly closed doors or through windows set slightly ajar, to get a last look at the condemned man. I wanted to shout "Free at last, Free at last, Oh Lord I'm Free at last," but thought my newly former colleagues might not understand. I hadn't seen the token black, once again oops, I mean African American in months. I think he was recruiting in Russia. Lot's of Africans there. I also considered a lively tap dance, doing my best interpretation of Tiny Tim singing "Tip-toe through the Tulips but in the end I just accepted my fate and walked slowly into the sunset as the music from the school marching band faded into the background. John Ford would have been proud.

Post Script. One year later my good friend the VP in charge of execution was put to death by a firing squad made up of Curly, Moe and

Larry. Their first round missed, hitting GAB in the ass as he cowered in his private corner. He still limps today, I'm told. It's said the VP's last words were a sobbing, blubbery version of "Bill or Mickey or Saddam, I'm innocent." That would be chairprick of the board, nepolionic presidential look-alike or dick-tater, in order.

Those of you who have had similar experience's I'm sure are belly laughing and to the rest of you when you are told you have a mandatory meeting with the VP at the same time as your daily dump, be sure and put on your dancing shoes. "I was looking for a job when I took this one, Asshole!

Chapter Sixteen

Animal Rights

*"The lion and the lamb may lie down together,
but the lamb won't get much sleep."*

Woody Allen

The three closest friends in my entire life have been three dogs. King, my collie buddy during my teenage years. Wally our border-collie Australian Shepherd mix and his litter mate Molly. They were with my wife Jackie and I during the first fifteen years of our marriage. Franz Joseph, we call him Joey, our new one year old Doberman may yet prove to be number four. Since Jackie and I have been married we've also had ten cats. I really like animals, well most animals. I'm not fond of anything that slithers or wants to take poisonous bits out of my ass. I also am not a member of the "Save the Buzzard" society. Don't lie to me, I know you're out there somewhere.

A few years ago one of my football players got himself and ultimately me into all sorts of trouble. What he did was this. He killed a wild animal that was trying to hurt him. Bad idea. The feral cat, that's a cat that is wild and wants to eat you for lunch, had jumped through his bedroom window and attacked him. Step-Mom, on a break of the remake of Cinderella XX, called the Animal Rights SS and turned in the wicked son. I know its suppose to be the wicked Step-Mom but she can't be wicked she belongs to the save the bar fly society. O.K., bar fly's aren't actually animals but some of them smell worse and they're protected by the small print in the Animal Rights "Little Red Handbook." Anyway, back to the story. The SS saved the day by throwing the boy cat killer in jail with the Seattle raper's and pillager's. Step-Mom went back to work.

Along came an investigative reporter who seized the moment, on the faro cat's behalf, and naturally equated football with killing animals. So she, why did I know it was going to be a she, called the football coach. "I demand to know what you are going to do about your player killing Puss or Boots or whatever that poor defenseless creature's name was while she was sipping milk out of Grandma Mosses bowl? Of course I reacted like all commie, pinko right wing conservative football coach's would have and said "It's none of your fucking business, or something close to that. Another bad idea.

Next thing I knew the Seattle Police were guarding the school and monitoring my mail for letter bombs. All of them except the two motorcycle cops protecting the populace from those who would make illegal five mile an hour left hand turns onto River Rd. Cousins of the Animal Rights SS and the Politically Correct Gestapo. Got off the track there, sorry about that. Anyway safe to say the next six months of my life I was forced to wear a scarlet letter on my forehead. It was an "F", and stood for "Fraid I Fucked up there on that cat deal".

Can't go into pet store's anymore. Think my picture is up on the wall. Jackie buy's the dog and cat food now.

Chapter Seventeen

Higher Education

"Nothing in education is so astonishing as the amount of ignorance it accumulates in the form of inert facts."

Henry Adams

Ever get the thought higher, from what? Or even from who? We have been programmed, mostly by the liberal faction, in America to think that it is impossible to achieve anything unless we have a diploma from college. Gee, wonder what Bill Gates would say about that. For the liberals amongst us it can't be a "public college" either. Gotta be from a *Private* College or University. Ivy works. That, for you people from Spokane, San Antonio and Scarsdale means an Ivy league college. One like Ha-vard, Yale, Princeton or Brown. Brown are you kidding me. "Where'd you graduate from son"? "Brown", sir. I didn't ask, "What color your shoes are", I asked.....get it. Even the private college's have their pecking order. Doesn't Ivy league conjure up thoughts of Oxford or Cambridge with Ivy covered walls eight thousand years old. Course it does, only nobody will tell you that the term Ivy league was invented by a sports writer. "How so", you ask? The original Ivy league had four members and were identified by the roman numerals IV. I and V, get it. The sports guy changed that to Ivy sort of as a play on words or would that be a play on numbers?. Presto-Chango, Ivy covered walls of the socially acceptable elite. Can you imagine for one tiny moment the president of Ha-vard giving a sports guy credit for that? Oh my.

Back to higher education. I went to three schools of higher education. I was taught by college professors. Guess what, none of them were brilliant. Most of them got "there" because either that was their sole goal in life and they shot their grandmother and their mother-in-law, not unlike the D-1 coach, to pave the way. Or, they graduated, became a graduate student, became a graduate assistant, became an assistant professor, became a.....get the picture. This is America anyone can do anything if the desire is there. Let's see, if you're "there", you're better than that crappy high school teacher that only teaches because, to quote some other asshole, "Only them that can't, teach." Whoever that fellow was, wasn't including Professor's in his "only them" smart-ass comment of course. So I got educated by people that never, I repeat Never, spent one minute out in the real world. And what doctrine do you suppose these Prof's were telling me was Gospel? Clue here, the Prof. wasn't born in Omaha either.

I usually wasn't taught by the Prof. either, but by his young assistant clone. The Prof. was on a leave of absence. What was he doing? Writing a second edition to his 1948 published book titled, "The Theory of the Affect of Liberal Philosophy on Anthropology." The '48 book was

published by the "Blue Herron Press" and sold fourteen copies, before the Prof. made it mandatory for his students in Anthro I at his *Private* college.

Ever wonder why those who "Never Did" are always experts on everything. I really see very little difference between the lifetime "American Can Co." workers who would sit around at lunch and offer their opinions and solutions for the world problems to us college guys who couldn't handle the "Gallon Line", and the Prof. who never did anything either. If we flipped the ACC workers and the Prof's around, no one would be able to tell the difference, except that the Prof's. wouldn't be able to figure out the "Gallon Line" and the Anthro I book would be titled, "The Theory of the Affect of Liberal Philosophy on the Gallon Line". It would still be required.

One more thing about the private elite small college. It cost's Dad about \$150,000 to send Jack or Jill to one of these places to be taught by someone who has never done anything but criticize those who have tried to do something. How smart is Dad, to send his kid to be educated at a place like Ha vard, or does he care. Hell, good baby sitters are very hard to find these days.

Chapter Eighteen

Hot Dogs

*"I prefer rogues to imbeciles, because they sometimes take a rest."
Alexander Dumas*

That would be Dumas, as opposed to Dumb Ass, which would make in some people's mind's more sense. I wouldn't be one of those people. I had never been an educator that felt that meetings were every important. In fact my view of meetings was that 99% of the time they were a colossal waste of time. My first principal had it right. We had a teachers, faculty, meeting the day before school opened in the fall and another one the day school ended in the spring. The rest of the time we concentrated on teaching kids. How novel.

I was, for one long year, the department chairman of the PE department at one of the schools at which I taught. That's right, chairman. Of course the time in history was before all the pseudo intellectuals decided to screw up nearly everything in our human routine by challenging everything they saw as an injustice to someone. Anyone would do, but women and bleeding heart liberals were at the top of the list. The two female department members had gone to the principal complaining that I didn't have enough department meetings. So I called one. "Any questions," I asked? Silence. "Any thing we need to discuss," I followed. More silence. "Meeting adjourned," I said. I resigned my position as department chairman about ninety seconds later, or as long as it took me to walk to the principal's office.

Some people just like to complain. Some like to disrupt. Some like to listen to themselves talk. Some like to spend time discussing little things that don't matter to anyone but themselves. Most of these people are academics. I prefer silence. I smile, I nod, I grin, I sometimes frown. I try not to speak. No matter what one says, it manages to piss off about half the people listening. I'm what one would call a reluctant participant in department or faculty meetings.

Then I moved on to higher education, teaching and coaching at Frontier Union Canyon College. It wasn't a smooth transition. I had managed in just a few short weeks to cause more problems for the college than I or they had ever dreamed possible. Winning football games would turn out to be a very big problem for the on campus mainstream to deal with. How dare you win football games at this intellectual bastion. Made a lot of enemy's doing that. Sound mind, sound body? Not here asshole. Made more in my own department by not doing things like good old Fred. The former coach who liked to spend most of his time complaining about what we couldn't do and what our like minded sister schools, that we competed against, could do. Of course 'competed' would be stretching the definition a bit.

The first game week on the job at Frontier Union Canyon College we had a crisis. Seems because there were many more people at the football game than was anticipated, they ran out of hot dogs. Big problem. Of course they hadn't won enough football games in the past ten years to inspire many people to attend or to eat hot dogs either I'm guessing. There was a lot of barf inspiration though. Seems the dozen hot dogs they had on hand for games were usually more than enough. Not sure what they did about the mustard and catsup.

We all filed into the conference room and the chair-whomever opened the meeting with a long drawn out explanation of the problem and promptly suggested that we discuss it at length and try to come to some kind of a solution. I could have volunteered to sabotage the team, ensuring defeat and thereby eliminating the problem but chose to keep my silence. Just love to listen to morons masquerading as people with common sense talk. After about an hour we had discussed buying more hot-dogs but the consensus was that might be a big gamble as there was no guarantee that the team would keep winning and the crowds coming. Besides, where would we store said hot dogs anyway? There wasn't room in the department freezer for more than two dozen. What to do? Oh my. Decisions, decisions.

Another problem was what to do with the profit. The women wanted the proceeds to go to women's athletics and the club sport advisors offered that club sport could certainly use some extra cash. No one thought that football should receive any of the profit after all it was the football program that was causing the problem in the first place. Good rationale.

We had also discussed not buying hot dogs and eliminating the enigma but we had to consider the public relations problem that might cause the college. Other equally important aspects of this dilemma were certainly discussed but truthfully I can't remember what they were. We did manage, and I remember this quite clearly, to stay in that conference room for two hours before finding a solution. As is usual in most cases like this, when brilliant minds get together, the answer was to do nothing. We would allow the person in charge of concessions to gamble on the purchase of hot dogs and if we had any leftover we could give them to the homeless. Well maybe that wasn't the solution but seems like it should have been.

You don't want to know how many phi beta kappa, cum-laude's and PHD's were in that room, it'll blow their cover. Suffice to say that people who see themselves as more intelligent than you and I will find something to make into a big issue no matter how hard they have to look. Exercises their like-minds I think.

Suppose I should have began my job search immediately after the chair-whomever dismissed the meeting, but I've never been very quick on the uptake. Besides I like hot dogs and I love listening to pseudo-intellectuals make mountains out of mole hills. In my short six year tenure at FUCC I managed to cause these fools to spend more meeting time than even they wanted to. Understand, these folk lived for meetings. Hell, it gave them a

chance to form committee's to complain and report back. Wonderful. Sort of an intellectual heaven, huh.

What is it about these people that they are hell bent on spending major portions of their day's worrying, studying, discussing, contemplating and dissecting matters that mean nearly nothing to real people. Problems that fall near the bottom of the who care's chart. My simple football mind won't figure that out in a thousand years. Pass the mustard.

Chapter Nineteen

Lower Education

"Stand firm in your refusal to remain conscious during algebra. In real life, I assure you, there is no such thing as algebra."

Fran Lebowitz

I thought Fran Lebowitz was the dead girl that Tim Matheson tried to date in the very funny movie *Animal House*. Guess not.

If we refer to our colleges as places of higher education, that must mean that high school is a place of lower education. I spent the last thirty nine years of my adult life in one of those places. Actually it was in five of those places. I lied, and for six of those thirty nine years I actually taught in what we call higher education. It ain't.

Lower education is called that for a fairly good reason. It's the only place in the world where folk have to go to six years of college to get the degree needed to go to work and then allow an elected bunch of cause driven pseudo-politicians with absolutely no expertise run the business. Think IBM would like to have a 'Board' of teachers and college Prof's. telling them how to run their business. I guessing not on that one.

In the fifty's, when I went to high school, it really was high school back then, things were much different than they are today. Are they better different? Good question. Let's examine that question. In the good old days, pisses off the new generation I'm sure but I really don't care. In the good old days, high school had eight periods a day. Students had seven classes and a lunch. They got to class on time. They showered in PE. There were no study halls, free periods, early departure's, late arrival's, co-ed PE, smoking area's, alternative school, TAG, or ESL. That's English as a second language. Back then they went to every class, every day.

Students weren't allowed to wear baseball caps backwards or forwards or sideways, or carry walk-mans and cell phones. There weren't either of those back then but kids sure as hell wouldn't have been allowed to bring them to school. Knives, guns and bombs weren't allowed either. Neither were hula hoops. School used to be a place for school. Boy's weren't allowed to wear their pants down below the crack of their ass. And not one boy in 1950's America would have been stupid enough to think that it looked cool. Girls weren't allowed to show their bare midriff or bare knees for that matter. Students dressed appropriately for school. But, then so did teachers. The men wore business shirts and ties and the women dresses. The PE teachers wore white uniforms and the kids in PE wore matching outfits.

Kids didn't roam the halls. Everyone made it to class on time. Classes were sixty minutes long and the teachers taught the entire time. They gave homework, which the students did, at home. Amazing how things managed to get done when there was a lot of respect, self-discipline, discipline and expectations. Kids had a sense of responsibility and were

glad of it. If you fouled up enough at school to have a teacher call home you were in trouble twice. First at school and second at home. I back-talked my speech teacher once and when I got home Dad put me in my proper place. "You will apologize. Then you will shut your mouth and do what you are told to do. If you can't do that you have two choices. Get a job or join the service." That would be military and there are three Army, Navy and Marines. Guess which one I chose to do.

What happened? Well first the home broke up. For richer, poorer, sickness and health as long as you both shall live, not likely. If you found someone prettier, or younger, or richer, or nicer you got a lawyer, battled in court and went your separate ways. Kids, two weeks at Mom's and two at Dad's and his new squeeze who was younger than they were. Fun. Kids played one against the other and ended up doing what they wanted to do which was nothing.

Kids today, who are smarter, bigger, faster and stronger somehow manage to do nothing better than anyone ever did. They are masters at it. Give them a choice, something or nothing and they will choose nothing every time. Then spend their nothing time bitching about everything that comes to mind. If they have a mind, most don't use it. Those without don't use it either. Well, some of them do sometimes. Used to be kids played games. Baseball, football, basketball, cops and robbers, cowboys and Indians, red rover-red rover, games. They ran, they played, they exercised, they laughed, they enjoyed doing things. Now they sit on there sour ass and play game-boy on their cell-phone. They sit at their computer and pull pornography off the internet. They lay around and listen to the most God-awful, foul language crap on head sets with the volume turned up to the maximum. They get zero exercise, they never laugh and they hate everything. The experts on the school board call it progress.

Can it be fixed? How can we fix it? The answer to the first question is yes and here's the answer to the second. First, anyone getting a divorce wins an all expenses vacation to the middle-east. They are required to wear an American flag draped around their shoulders while walking through, take your pick, Beirut, Tehran, Abu-Dhabi or Damascus. When you come home you get to go see a lawyer who will arrange for your burial.

Before you choose to have kids you are required to take a good-parenting class. The teacher can't teach the class unless he/she has had at least three kids and none of them are currently in drug rehab or have rings in or around anything but fingers and earlobes. Maximum one of each. Hair color must be natural.

Gotta be careful here. I still work in public education and Jackie says I need the job. I feel lucky though so I'm going to take a chance and give you my advice. Here it is. Everyone involved in education must teach. Want to be principal? Good, we need one. They built a principal's office in every school, might as will have someone sit in it. After you teach your seven classes we'll pay you a stipend, same as the football coach gets, and after school you can sit in the principal's office. Want to be a counselor? Good, need those too. Except after school when you have taught your

seven classes you will actually counsel kids. So, you want to be superintendent. Great, after you teach, well you get the picture. How many millions of dollar's are wasted paying for people that don't teach one minute? If it's one nickel it's too much. Education happens in the classroom, between the student and the teacher. And while we're at it, outlaw ad-hoc committee's.

Here's a question for you. Who was the last superintendent to have a positive affect of education? I know the answer, his name was Ray Anderson, and he was the principal, superintendent and social studies teacher at Willamina High School in 1965. I know because that is where I began my teaching career. He was also the best administrator I worked for. We had a teachers meeting the day before school began in the fall and one on the day the school year ended in the spring. The rest of the time we concentrated on educating the kids in our classrooms. Novel idea.

Make the administrative office downtown, doesn't matter if it's called the central office or the resources center, a bingo parlor. Just accomplished two things and put the school district in the black. Saved millions of dollars in unnecessary salaries. We don't need people that do nothing but cause problems for the classroom teacher in our school system's. Made a dung-pot full of money off the bingo game. Hire a legal secretary to pay the bills and issue pay checks to those who teach. Stand at the front door on the first day of school and send home anyone wearing a baseball cap or carrying a walk-man or cell phone. Any boy showing up with his pants below his belly button doesn't get in. For any girl wearing nothing around her midsection close the door. Smokers can go to Europe where they're welcome.

Eliminate study hall and free periods. Eliminate the do nothing choice. No late arrivals or early departure's. Get to school on time and stay all day. Co-ed PE for individual sports only. Team sports are played boy Vs boy and girl Vs girl. Sissy Vs sissy and tomboy Vs tomboy is OK. Resurrect prison and dodge ball. Turn the showers back on and make the kids take one. Eliminate alternative school. Your alternative son is get a job or join the military service, there are three. TAG my blue butt. Throw that out and the school board fool who invented it. Outlaw school boards. Let professionals in education, the teachers, run the school system. Novel concept. ESL, excuse me this is America and we speak English here. If you want to be an American play by our rules. Figure it out or go back to wherever the hell you came from. If you want to bring your language and your culture here keep on walking. I thought you came to this country to get away from that fourteenth century culture anyway.

Now, those administrators who are teaching class make sure they spend as much time keeping the kids from slashing tires in the parking lot and robbing the concession stands as they do keeping kids from standing to cheer for their team at the basketball game.

Make sure that all extra, that would be after school, assignment folk get the same salary. Football coach, band director, flag team coach, administrator. Oh, and if the band director gets a class for his team he can't

require them to work after school as well. If he does, give the football team, the dance team and every other team a class too.

Cleaned that up. Now we can call it high school again. Oh, one more thing. Eliminate school busses. Give the parent some responsibility. Drive the kid to school or let him walk. Just saved a lot more money. Give it to the teachers and that legal secretary. And at least that kid will get some exercise.

Chapter Twenty

Correct Politically

"Suppose you were an idiot; and suppose you were a member of congress; but I repeat myself".

Mark Twain

Told you I was a football coach. Mostly a high school coach but I did a short stint at Frontier Union Canyon College, my alma matre. I hadn't taught my first class at Frontier Union when the department chairman came into my office. She wanted to be sure that I could handle the class load and wanted to give me some tips. I listened politely and after she was finished I said, "You know I've been teaching five or six classes a day for about twenty three years, I believe I'll be able to handle five classes a week, but thank you for wanting to help." She was a very nice lady one of the few I was to later learn. Come to think of it there weren't many nice men on campus either.

Not long after that I was walking through the campus and couldn't help but notice that most of the women were smiling. I noticed because no one smiled on this campus. Later that day we had a department meeting and our department head made the announcement that the college had decided to refer to department leaders as department "Chairs". It would no longer be "Chairman". No wonder I saw teeth on the women that day.

At first I thought it an insult. As in you're a chair, how cool. Why not a tree or hub cap, what the hell. Then I thought, why not chairman for a man and chairwoman or chairlady or chairbitch depending on the person involved. I guess I was out of step.

I began to wonder though, who has the time to sit around and worry about those kinds of things. Certainly not real people. People who go to work. People who raise a family. You know, those real kind of people who make up the very large majority of our society. Nope. Its people who take life way too seriously and think they were put on this earth to right every wrong. In their eyes of course their Right actually was left and very

liberal and your Wrong was right wing commie pinko conservative shit like "Chairman".

Being involved in sports I wonder how long before I'll have to refer to the Kingsmen as the Kingspersons, the Beavers as the Lady Beavers, oh my, or the Beaveresses and their masculine brothers as Beaver Guys in orange shorts. I suppose Celtics could refer to either sex but we wouldn't want to confuse either, so it really should be, Celtics with balls and Celtics without balls. Can't imagine that would be too big a controversy would it?

Here's some more food for you to digest. Not long after 9/1/1 some FUCC grad, that's Frontier Union Canyon College not misspelled fornicating, thought up the term "Racial-Profiling". Because Jackie and I travel to and from Europe quite often we get to see first hand how the system works. Jackie is short, blond and obviously not of middle-east decent. So who do you think quite often gets the royal strip search at American airports? Got to be fair. Don't want to piss off the young, middle-eastern men that are trying to kill all of us Americans do we. We're not ever going to be accused of "Racial Profiling", that's for sa-damn sure.

I've been looking for the liberal-feminist, but that's redundant isn't it. Have you ever seen a conservative-feminist? I'm guessing not. Anyway someday I truly expect to see the racial-profiling Gestapo sneaking around the airport, goose stepping between concourse A and concourse B, looking for non-middle-east women to abuse, don't you?

