

Running for my Life



I was born on what is fondly called “the Irish Riviera”, a stretch of rocky coastline south of Boston. My father worked first as a boat builder, then as a furniture maker. My mother’s job in life was to craft me into the first Irish Catholic American president. I’m the one with the Navy hat.

I was 15 when John F. Kennedy beat me to that Washington job, but his victory only reaffirmed for her the road on which her oldest son was meant to travel. Before you could say “fish on Friday” I was sent off to the proper boarding school, then on to Harvard and finally stuffed into a naval officer’s uniform and pointed to a war in Southeast Asia. If all the PT boats were not in mothballs I am sure she would have found me one to captain.

It's not that I was all in favor of my parents' program. Sometimes things just happen, especially when you are young, confused and a child of loving parents who have strong ideas for their children's future. I was a pretty good kid, wanted to be liked and had little experience in making waves. It was really quite impressive how far Mom's program progressed before it finally came apart.

I am writing these first words on a paper towel that I scavenged from the bathroom of a Russian train heading south towards Moscow. My wife is asleep in the adjoining seat and my normal writing materials are in a knapsack wedged under her legs. I have put off writing this story for too long now.

I have early memories of my running by the ocean, first heading out into the waves that were over my head, then sprinting back to the beach, fighting the undertow. I always could beat the ocean. I ran track and played soccer in prep school and college. But no matter how hard I ran I could not save my men in a war.

I have been running for seventy seven years but had to stop for the last two. Because of a knee and leg injury I can no longer keep up. My horses greet me every morning, hoping that a harness would follow the grain and hay. But every day now they are disappointed. They stand around waiting for the brushing and harness. Even when I remind them that they too are no spring chickens, that I bought them home as colts and brothers 25 years ago, they still roll their eyes as they munch their morning hay. Who am I kidding?

The kitchen couch felt welcoming this afternoon and the sun reminded me that it was nap time. Returning from a very reasonable walk down the road, my leg was throbbing and my knee was talking to my

buttocks, reminding them that my days of running for my life were coming to an end. The tide is out, the soccer ball is flat and our horses are grazing. Who am I kidding? As I lay on the couch, fear of the future once again started tapping lightly on the door. But out of nowhere, a most wonderful memory came knocking.

I am almost five years old

It was summer and I would be five the coming September. My father's mother Josephine lived next door to us with her friend and cook Mrs. Toomey. Although they came from radically different backgrounds, Josephine from Radcliffe College and Mrs. Toomey from first generation Irish immigrants, they were both inseparable and my best friends.

Nana Josephine was the first woman of Irish Catholic descent to graduate from Radcliffe College in 1906, then purchase shoreline property from the Yankee stock in Cohasset, and finally to build a house that was one day to be called the Irish Riviera. Not only did she "rock" Boston's South Shore but she hired two Jewish architects recently fleeing from Nazi Germany who had created the Bauhaus School of Architecture in Berlin. Walter Gropius designed and oversaw her new home along with Marcel Breuer and Mies van der Rohe who did the furniture. A Filipino abstract artist, Alfonso Angel Yangco Ossorio, roamed the three floors chewing peyote and, dressed in Franciscan attire, prayed to St. Francis of Assisi.

And every afternoon at 4:00 Boston's Cardinal Cushing came on the radio with the rosary and Josephine required that all work on the house stop. It was mandatory that every furniture designer, architect, four year old child or stoned out monk, all kneel or be seated and silent.

Every morning I would arrive at first light at the back door of Josephine's new home to wake her. We would start the day with fresh corn bread baked by Mrs. Toomey and topped with black honey

Josephine imported from Cuba's Romelia flowers. I was four years old and because I was too young for school, I would be welcomed by the morning crew.

This being my 'first summer on the job', enough of the house had already been constructed so that I had many places to explore. And I had plenty of opportunity as a four year old to listen to German, Latin, French, Spanish and English as I made my way from basement to third floor. What I remember most of those summers were the Sunday mornings when Grandma would be alone in her new home and Mrs. Toomey and I would go visiting other "nannies" in the neighborhood. My favorite gathering spot was the summer home of the McElwayne family who lived at the other end of Sandy Beach. Our house and theirs were both perched on rocks at either end of the shore, acting like book ends. My parents knew how much I enjoyed these outings so our family would attend the eight am. Mass and I could still attend these morning gatherings.

As I sit on the couch this evening nursing my sore leg, I remember how Mrs. Toomey would look for me at home around ten o'clock on Sunday mornings and together we would walk down Sandy Beach. The wealthy homes in my neighborhood often made me embarrassed as I knew that Ms. Toomey had grown up in a poor section of Dublin. One morning as we walked together she told me this story.

"You know Peter," she began with her heavy Irish brogue, "when I was a girl, the garbage man would come down our street every Monday and yell to my mom, 'ah good morning to you Mrs. Toomey, any garbage?' And mom would yell back 'aye, I'll take three bags'. And we all would have a good laugh."

As we made our way past the early Sunday bathers, some with children, others with small dogs, I realized how they all looked like me, tanned, not overweight, with new outfits or trunks. And for a moment I felt for Ms. Toomey, overweight and wearing the same dress she had worn all week.

There were stone steps leading up to the McElwaine house and at the top was a wooden green door leading into the basement with a sign which said 'servant's entrance'. At the time I gave it no mind because I knew what lay beyond.

As we entered the cool basement, a substantial group of "kitchen help" from ten or more local area estates jumped up to greet us. I was just starting to play a small four string ukulele which lived in this basement but I had been too shy to play in the past. But my dad had showed me some very simple fingering from his guitar. So this day I placed one finger on the "g" string and sang "we had some chickens but no eggs would they lay."

Well, you'd have thought I was Lawrence Welk or something. I don't know what else transpired that day but I felt such a comradeship with all those "house help". Now years later as I lay on the kitchen couch here in Maine with my aching leg on a pillow, I feel the same element of safety that came from those women that day in the cool basement at the other end of Sandy Beach.

That was seventy years ago and it's the Fourth of July today. The sky is crystal blue, the breeze is bringing relief to the farm and memories of my childhood are running wild in my mind. Modi is lying in the shade of the back door, Weyland is passed out, exhausted from playing with his new best friend Luna, Brenda's Golden. My leg has been bothering me

and I am forced to stop moving. A tractor is cutting hay in the distance. Depression is calling me from around the corner. Writing is once again my life jacket, saving me from drowning in sorrow.

In today's memory I am ten years old and the Cohasset beach of my childhood is jammed with people. My grandmother Josephine who lived next door with her cook, Mrs. Toomey, is helping to prepare my breakfast. One key to staying afloat is the memory of Mrs. Toomey's breakfasts. Fresh orange juice (which gave me heartburn), then a boiled egg and a piece of toast covered with butter and honey. But this was no ordinary honey. No, this honey was from the Cuban flowers of the Romelia and the Wild Chamomile. My nana had a long love affair with honey, only slightly interrupted due to her death during the rise of Fidel Castro.

Nana Josephine was the first woman of Irish Catholic descent to graduate from Radcliffe in 1906, then purchase shoreline property from the Yankee stock in Cohasset, then build a house that one day would be called the Irish Riviera.

<https://www.dwell.com/article/bauhaus-by-the-sea-465b9778>

Not only did she "rock" the old Boston's South Shore community but she hired two Jewish architects recently fleeing from Nazi Germany who had created the Bauhaus School of Architecture in Berlin. I have often wondered what effect all her history had on me. As a child I would ask her about her growing up and she was very forthcoming.

"My father was a policeman in Brighton right next to Boston. We were poor but we never went to bed hungry." I don't know how Josephine ever got into Radcliffe College. She was the first student of her lineage

to do so. And the wanted ads at that time for college grads in Boston all read 'Irish need not apply'. I am not sure how she and her husband John met but before long there were three children, my dad Francis, my uncle John and my uncle Robert.

Josephine's husband, my grandfather John, was not blessed with a long life but managed to leave a lineage of personal stories that I still hear from time to time.

Apparently Grandpa John developed a truce with the local Italians who would "bootleg" booze during probation. I recently discovered the address of his Dorchester undercover liquor operation from the label on a whiskey bottle in my brother's pantry. John had unfettered access to the whiskey drinking Irish folks in Boston while the Italians oversaw the market for wine. High speed night boats delivering goods from Canada serviced both markets and helped pay for Grandpa's sons tuitions at Harvard, Johns Hopkins and MIT. The more I learned about my uncles, the more eccentric characters they became.

I was visiting a logging buddy of mine years ago who lived in Maine on the Airline, a highway affectionately called such as it is the fastest way to get from Bangor to Calais and the Canadian border. Over lunch at Bill's house a neighbor dropped by. Mike's gnarly fingers and scarred neck attested to a lifelong history working in the Maine forest.

"Hagerty," he mused. "I knew a John. It was back in the 30's."

"Well, that might have been my grandfather", I enthusiastically added.

"He was an avid hunter and had a dog named..."

"Bear, his name was Bear," Jack excitedly shouted. "I was working for the hunting lodge at Second Chance Lake. Your grandfather had been

guiding a family who were hoping to go home with some trout. Well, that last day the trout weren't biting and the folks were some disappointed. As soon as these sports departed for home, your grandpa John headed out in a fast canoe, trolling for a bite. In those days the train went up around the top of the lake to Wesley and by the time it came back down the west side of Second Chance, your grandpa had three trout waiting by the side of the tracks for these folks. People around here still tell that story."

Jack had an audience and continued.

"There is another tale still told of the day John's dog Bear ran faster than that train. One of the guests heading home to Boston had heard John extolling the virtues of his dog, not the least of which was speed.

"Now looking at Bear, he did not look like much, not especially athletic. So this passenger put down ten bucks that Bear could not outrun the train. Three miles into the race and there was no sign of the dog. The passenger claimed he had won only to be shown by the conductor that Bear had temporarily drifted from sight as he was running on two legs and urinating on the wheels of the now fast moving train."

One day my dad Francis and I were driving through Dorchester and crossed a street that rang a bell for me. "Hold on, Dad, why do I know this street?" Dad was quiet. "Dad, please stop!" which he did do and I jumped from the car and jogged toward a very modest single family home.

"Dad, why do I know this house?" Silence.

"Because this is where you grew up, isn't it?"

Silence.

I headed for the driveway.

“Please Pete, not today,” he said but by then a woman with a kind face was standing by the front door. “Can I help you?” she asked. I started walking towards her as my dad climbed out of his Buick.

“We are sorry to interrupt your morning mam”, announced Dad “but this is the house where I was born and raised. My name is Francis Hagerty and this is my son Peter.”

“Well Peter and Francis, please come inside. I have just made a fresh pot of coffee with no one to share it with.” And Margaret Kenny gave us a tour of her home. But the most interesting information surfaced as we entered the basement.

“Can you see this beam with all the marks?” Margaret pointed out. “This is where your grandfather John practiced knife throwing. Apparently he became an expert.”

My dad was reluctant to talk about those years and I mostly forgot about my grandfather John as I headed off to college and beyond. I met my wife Marty and fell in love. One fall Marty invited me to a wedding in Vermont of her best friend from high school. The ceremony was on a beautiful hillside with the leaves turning and the first snow in the distant mountain tops. I wandered around a bit because I knew no one and soon found myself in the upper end of a hillside dinner tent, empty except for one older gentleman. He would soon again remind me of how small the world really is.

“I knew a John Hagerty,” my new friend announced. “Was yours the outdoors type?”

“Yes,” I smiled.

“Well this John was from Dorchester and he took sports up into the wilds of Quebec hunting caribou.”

“Yes sir, that was most likely my grandfather.”

“Well son, he knew how to hunt and man could he throw a knife. This was back in the mid- thirties when I was guiding a father and son team to hunt caribou near Moosonee in Hudson’s Bay, Canada. The train dropped us off in the late spring and we were surprised to learn that another hunting party was already camped on the far side of the normally deserted lake. We met them on the second day and I was pleased to be greeted by your grandfather John, his sport and his native guide Baptiste. I had known John and Baptiste from the past.

“Well, his Baptiste and my Mi”kmaq guide Aubois were both from the same tribe and started up a rapid fire ‘catching up’ while John brought me up to speed on where to find the caribou. We invited John and his “sport” over to our campsite for a supper of fresh lake trout. As the sun set somehow the word got out that your grandfather John could split a Canadian silver dollar at twenty paces. My party, father and son, agreed that this was not possible and a small pile of paper money appeared on the ground. Baptiste trotted out to the appropriate distance, notched a shelf on a stump for the silver dollar to lay upright and before you could say “Jack Robinson” a knife appeared in your grandfather’s hand, was air born and split the coin in half. As the party ended, Aubois gathered our winning pile of crumpled bills and with a nod from your grandpa,

split half of them quietly with his native guide. We spent a magical week fishing but saw no caribou.

Grandfather John and Grandmother Josephine ended up raising three boys in what was now Margaret Kenny's house. John barely finished high school but ended up married to Josephine, a Radcliffe grad. He died in 1924 and did not live long enough to see his own sons John graduate from Harvard, Robert from Johns Hopkins Medical School and my dad Francis from MIT. And most likely the business of prohibition whiskey provided the leverage for grandfather's early demise. But his persona lived on in the many acquaintances I have met over the years, from whom I have learned a great deal.

My uncle John excelled at Harvard, meeting Walter Gropius and facilitating the design and construction of his mother Josephine's home on the rocky shores of Cohasset. My dad Francis and his wife Mary, my mom, designed and built first rowing shells, then PT boats for WW 2's Pacific Theater, then finally Cohasset Colonials 'make your own furniture'. And my Uncle Robert became a well know surgeon in Charleston, South Carolina.

But Uncle John struggled with his homosexuality at a time when it was rarely acceptable. He was visiting an old friend in Athens, Greece and suffered a massive terminal stroke on the steps of the Parthenon. I was in my senior year at Harvard when dad called and asked if I could be with him when John's body arrived by plane at Logan.

My dad internalized much of this emotional drama. Josephine had been a quiet force that had kept her family together. But she ultimately left us in her Bauhaus home surrounded by discord. I lost a strong and loving friend when she died.

After the funeral and Catholic Mass on Beacon Hill there was a reception at Phil and John's apartment and all the members of our family were invited. I had never met John's partner but found him most affable and friendly. He invited me into their library where a scrap book was lying open by the window. And attached to the pages were stories and photos on my athletic career both at Milton Academy and Harvard. These were followed by more upsetting pictures taken from the ocean in front of our home, followed by profiles of the Gropius house and my brother John and I swimming and playing on our small beach. Phil explained.

"John hired a private motor launch from Boston to take him down to Sandy Beach. He would then sit and, with a pair of binoculars, would cry his heart out. He knew he had brought pain to your family but he had no skills to ask for forgiveness."

For the most part I was not old enough to be a party to the Hagerty family's discord. My grandma's death happened suddenly during a summer night when I was seven and her passing precipitated a fight over who would inherit her home by the sea and its architecturally progressive contents. I was the one to find her dead in her bed as I had been the one, at her request, to wake her before sunrise every morning. That was the first day that I saw my father, her oldest son, cry helplessly like a child.

Soon after she died my uncle John threw a few valuable Breuer chairs in his car and headed south to live with his brother Robert who was practicing medicine in Charleston, South Carolina. He occasionally returned to Boston's Beacon Hill but wintered with brother Bob. My dad internalized much of this emotional drama. Josephine had been a

quiet force that had kept her family together. But she ultimately died in her Bauhaus home surrounded by discord. I lost a strong and loving friend when she moved on.

Hurricane Season

When I was a bit older, I would await the end of summer and the arrival of the hurricane season and I usually had the run of the beach and the ocean. The September sun yielded to the cooling air and was a reminder that school was just around the corner.

The wind was off the land today and sea birds were making their way south, announcing that the party was coming to an end. My summer jobs and tennis lessons were finished, our sail boats were headed for their last race and my home suddenly became strangely quiet.

Tears unexpectedly came to my eyes on days like this and I would retreat to the giant cleft in the rocks in front of our home where I would be hidden from the world, unseen by everyone, that is, except my Boxer Lady. Her contribution to the effort was dragging all manner of “flotsam and jetsam” with her mouth into our secret stone hideout, building a wall of seaweed and broken lobsterpots to fend off the coming storms.

Today, sixty five years later, this same air is pushing the same giant cumulus clouds over our farm. Our last sheep Katy who is too old and weak to move, watches from the open barn door and reminds the nearby horses that they need to grab their last snack of the evening if they want to stay dry.

Cohasset, Massachusetts 1956

I am walking in a forest near the ocean. Fall has arrived and my dog Lady and I are watching the wind as it leaves the waves and roars across the trees. I am eleven years old.

We are safe here but I am still afraid. Something sad had happened on a day like this long ago.

Lady scrunches down in the tall grass and I feel alone. It is then that I hear the voices, first the cries of older ones, then those of children. They are calling out but the wind carries most of their words away.



“On a day like this you will come to your end,” are the few words I hear. I glance toward Lady but she is busy scratching her belly.

“I am safe, God will protect me,” I cry back at the black clouds. Lady scratches more intently.

“It’s only the near misses that matter,” a new voice with a strong accent replies from the storm.



Years later my father will paint this picture of the brig St. John as it comes apart on the Grampus Ledge just off our home. Most of the immigrant passengers fleeing the potato famine perished in the cold

October water just short of their crossing to Boston. Of the 143 passengers on board only 9 crew members and 11 passengers survived.



Life Guards searching for survivors on Sandy Cove, Cohasset

Maine 2022

Sixty six years later I am walking in our forest near our farm in Maine with our two dogs, Modi and Wayland. It is early morning and the frost is still on the leaves, making the going slippery. The dogs are out ahead on a scent.

All at once there appears ahead on the woods path a yearling moose rubbing his newly emerging antlers on a broken oak tree branch. And flanking our guest, like guards at the gate, are Modi and Wayland. Even today I can find no explanation for their behavior. Wayland's barking is well known in our neighborhood for treeing squirrels and Modi's nose keeps him moving all the time, sometimes closing in on his prey. But today they are quiet, today they are still.

The yearling moose pays no attention to the recent arrival of guests and keeps on rubbing and the collective noise he makes rises into the forest, slowly becoming the sound of braking waves and the wind off the ocean. All these noises then merge into one and there, standing watch on the path ahead is my childhood dog Lady.



Peter and Lady

Tears swell into my eyes and my mind obliterates any attempt at reason. Lady was a lickster, not a cuddler and she makes her way around the moose, sniffs Modi and Wayland, and joins me kneeling on the ground and begins licking the sweat off my neck.

“What are you doing here?” I ask her. “You have been gone for over sixty years!”

Her response is to roll over on her back, reminding me of her favorite place for a scratch just below her collar. The wind is growing and the darkness is soon upon us. All at once a branch from a nearby pine breaks off and crashes to the forest floor just inches away from Lady and me. But nobody moves, the moose and the dogs seemingly in a trance.

“It’s only the near misses that matter,” comes the voice from the storm with the strange accent of years ago. “Miracles are just a waste of time.”

The wind dies, suddenly Lady is gone, and I am shaken that my mind could play such tricks on me, like bringing her back. She seemed so real. As we leave the forest and enter our hay field, I notice a bit of shining metal on the ground and there attached to a worn collar is a small tag reading “Lady, Atlantic Ave. Cohasset, Mass”.

The Portland-Montreal Express

The train came through the kitchen window this morning as I was just finishing feeding the dogs their breakfast. Claude Milton was the engineer, a good one at that, and stopped the train before the coal car dirtied any of my recently washed dishes.

“Oh my dear, Peter,” cried Claude. “You are sweating like a pig. I know what that feels like.” I like Claude but not when he goes on and on about his ailments.

“Do you have any cooked kale?” he asks.

“Yes,” I reply ‘But it is all gone. I had it with my eggs this morning. I will have some on the return run”.

It is company policy that employees of a railroad cannot receive food on route. But that does not stop them from asking and I have been known to have given Claude carrots and tomatoes when the season is right. Just then Bill Jeaneau, a Canadian with an accent, comes through the kitchen door.

“Bon jour Peter, got to get a move on. Already behind schedule. OK Claude, let’s go!” And with that Claude looks at me and rolls his eyes. The train then curved past the woodstove and, as I stepped back, it moved on through. I waved back at the passengers that were waving at me through the train windows.

The engine slowed again to make room for the caboose to clear the back door. This car is at the end of the train where the track workers ride. They will soon be called to shovel coal as the train crosses the state line and begins its climb up and over Mt. Washington on its way to

Montreal. But for now they are resting, a few of their legs propped up against an old wood stove.

Then all at once the serpentine beast is gone, at least I thought it was gone. But over by my fridge there remains a dense patch of smoke no larger than our bath tub, the only remnant of my morning guests. As I move cautiously over for a closer look, I notice something shiny sitting in the middle of the cloud. As I peer inside the smoke I suddenly feel cleaner, both in body and mind. Then I see something smooth and strong.

There, coiled and stuffed next to the fridge, is the remnant of a retired clothes line. I tie one end onto the kitchen table leg and the other end to my wrist. All at once the floor gives way and I am lying on moist grass with seagulls calling above me. As I gain my balance and stand, there in front of me is the gift that made my tenth birthday the very best one. Here is a brand new American Flyer bicycle; the very one I had ridden double with Bobby Donovan into the Cohasset town pond. And next to the bike is again my boxer Lady, barking.

“It’s just not fair,” Bobby is shouting. “We have sat next to each other since kindergarten. Why do you have to go to a special school?”

Tears run down his face, then the fog rolls in and he is gone and I am sitting alone in my kitchen with no answer for Bobby. My parents weren’t interested in ending my friendship with him. It was just that we had a new president, a Catholic who went to Harvard. Here was the opening for a “Peter” run through the middle but it would take my parents energy and a few years for me to follow Jack to the White House.

The Kennedy brothers went to Milton Academy and so would I. And my grandmother Josephine was the first woman Irish Catholic to graduate from Harvard. So it was all set. I would walk in their footsteps.

I stand up and brush the dirt and grass off my pants. All-important memories that woke with me this morning are gone. All I have is the “now”. I then realize that I need therapy from the Portland to Montreal Express more often, not just three times a week.

Fall is upon us and the smell of burning leaves mixes with the train’s coal smoke. All seems normal now except as the air in the kitchen becomes clear there is an older gentleman now standing by the sink. The first time this happened years ago I thought a passenger had fallen off the train.

“Good morning,” he announces in broken English. “I hope to not interrupt! My name is Abu Abed.”

Fortunately I have traveled the world a bit so I reply “Maya Salaama Abu” (may peace be with you Father) in Arabic.

“Shookran” (thank you) he replies as he sits down in one of our wooden kitchen chair and I hand him a cup of hot coffee. “Afwan” (you are welcome) I say back. My dogs then come bounding through the back door, eager to lick the extended and welcoming hand of our guest, then curl up by the kitchen stove.

“My Arabic is very limited,” I confess.

“I do not agree,” he smiles. “Your accent is very genuine, like a Bedouin shepherd from the Negev. But we can speak English as well.”

“Thank you for welcoming me into your home,” he continues. “I am returning to Canada after a tour of your country and the train engineer is

an old friend of mine and insisted that I meet you. So he kind of kicked me off the train as we reached your farm. Claude is very passionate about certain subjects. So here I am!”

I smiled as I thought back over the years and remember the characters that had been “dropped off” by Claude. There was Pedro the guitar player from Brazil, Sasha the symphony conductor from Kaliningrad who had performed Prokofiev’s Symphony #6 in New York, Eric from Cape Town who had been a close ally of Nelson Mandela’s, Alberta who was the rodeo queen of Missoula, and Jo Anne who works at a US/Mexico border crossing, just to name a few.

I remember them all and I remember also that they each had a specific message for me. And now here was Abu!

I invite him to see our farm and as he and I walk through the kitchen and out into our hayfield, I am greeted by a group of strangers, mostly men but some women. They are smiling as we approached and warmly shake my hand but they also seem a bit cautious. In the distance are a series of greenhouses which were not there yesterday. This was my hayfield after all. Abu detected my discomfort and patted me on the shoulder as we began visiting each greenhouse.

A need to explain

I am sure that some of you are now graciously putting down this story, thinking that your friend Peter has always been a bit odd but not delusional. And this is a new side of him you have never really experienced! So let me put the coming events into context.

Back in 1845 the Portland to Montreal railroad, now known as the St-Laurent et Atlantique Quebec (SLR) was formed, its cargo consisting of farm and seafood products, lumber and cement. Elmer Walker, my neighbor who is now deceased, worked as a young man in a forest not a mile from our farm. Beginning just after the end of WW II he drove a team of drafts hauling wood products five miles every Thursday to the SLR at Brownfield Station .

As Elmer aged, he began to imagine that a new SLR train line now ran by our farm. So every Thursday I would greet Elmer as he arrived at our front door, no longer with lumber but rather with fresh carrots, lettuce, and kale from his garden for Claude the engineer. At first I tried to explain how the real train never did run past our farm. But to put his mind at rest I paid him for the vegetables and told him that Claude sends his best. Several times after one of these visits, I gave Elmer a short ride home and he seemed please when I handed him the reins. In spite of struggling with mental challenges his entire life, he spoke to my horses as a true teamster.

But today, as Abu and I walk through the kitchen and out into the sunshine, we are greeted by a group of folks apparently from the mid-east, the men wearing pants and long sleeves and the women covered as well. They are smiling, shaking my hand somewhat cautiously. Just shaking hands was a big deal for some cultures.

“Bevakasha” a well-dressed woman addressed me with a smile, a welcome I might use if I were in West Jerusalem.

“Assalaam alaikum” a young Palestinian man smiled. “Wa 'alaikum assalaam” I replied as if we were somewhere in the West Bank.

I look to Abu for an explanation but he points at my hayfield to the north. Today, in front of us, are a series of greenhouses, each one filled with laying hens, some brown, some white. Inside on the tables are eggs, some brown, some white. They had not been there yesterday.

“Jew or Arab, we can all enjoy eggs for breakfast,” Abu smiled. Just then a man and woman approached us.

“You may take some,” they announce in perfect English. I immediately pick a dozen brown.

“But why the brown eggs?” she inquires.

“They are much healthier,” I reply and with this she hands me the eggs and flees across the field to join her fellow workers where, upon her arrival, a level of consternation could be seen passing through the group.

Rack

He was in the corner of the workshop after lunch watching me select lumber for my latest project. He had been in that corner since the arrival of the new Amish clothes line last year. His role with the previous drying apparatus was central to his success. His wooden arms would stretch skyward daily like a symphony conductor, employing all the other parts to bare the weight of our clothing in spite of its waterlogged state.

He was nothing fancy mind you, just the old fashioned look of a disheveled umbrella, stained by the summer sun and the winter snow. Marty and I had picked it up at a yard sale on Rt.1, knowing that its best years were already behind it. But it had character, was made of maple and we used it for years exclusively for drying woolen sweaters and socks. The remnant of this forgotten tool now leaning in my shop today seems to me profoundly lonely but too shy to remind me of our long history. His name is Rack.

I was building a storm window for my 2nd floor bedroom, framed in rugged slats to discourage our ninety pound Bernese Mountain dog from breaking out and landing with a big smile into the arms of an unexpected guest one floor below. Today I had come out to my shop right after breakfast. I needed three 1 x 4“ pieces of 35 inch long maple slats but, hard as I looked, I could only find two. Then I spied Rack, thin as a rail, storm weathered with a rusted hinge for a neck and a head permanently tilted back as if to say good-bye to the last of the Canadian geese heading south.

Rack had stood in the corner, unnoticed and unappreciated, these past winters, listening on occasion to “All Things Considered” or the New

York Philharmonic. But now as I studied him, really for the first time, I felt his loneliness. And what would his chances of survival be if he became the third slat in the window to be devoured by Wayland?

The rain came down and I lingered for a moment in my workshop. If I made the purely emotional exception for Rack, then what about all these other wooden tools that had served me over the years, old whiffletrees, worn out pitch forks and Peavey handles as well as hay rake shaves? All these wooden items had, in their own time, saved the day. Can I leave them in good conscience lying in the corner of the barn?

Before I left the shop that night, I set an adze handle that my dad had made next to Rack and left the shop lights on so these farm implements might share their life stories more easily. As Marty and I retired that night, I noticed that the shop lights had turned off, signaling time for bed, even for the wooden tools on our farm.

Two Oaks

*My mother and my father both sailed the seven seas,
When the sawmill crew in '42 brought them to their knees.
My father was the main mast and my mother was the boom
And the oak from which our ship was made was stronger than the moon.*

*The clumps of hardwoods growing here grew stronger by the day,
Drinking water from the brook, roots firmly in the clay.
Children ran the winding path to Destiny Rock on high
Under which the leafy limbs grew old and slowly died.*

*The softwood trees our forest birth aren't thriving like the oaks.
Our cousins, they are slow to grow, but shade us with their cloaks.
Each year the south bound geese arrive and bring us all the news
Of the voyage of our parent's ship, their spars and sun tanned crews.*

*The saws are once more running but no timber is to fall.
We are staying put to clean the air and make life safe for all.
Maybe someday all the children and the families of the crew
Will come here to the forest and see what's left to do.*

5/20/21

Hurricane Carol

August 25, 1954

The clock by my bed said four o'clock when it rang. My family had just one phone back then and it was in the kitchen. Cohasset 4-0377. Mary Bristol, the night time operator, would be on the other end and, if I hustled, I could answer before my folks did.

“Good morning Peter, sorry to have to wake you up.” I am nine years old and talking to an adult in the middle of the night. I feel very cool.

“Peter, I have a message from your dad and Cliff Dixon.” Cliff Dixon was Cohasset's harbormaster and my dad's best friend.

“The dam at Government Island has been breached and all the water from the Gulf is flowing into the harbor. High tide is due at 8 am and they are afraid of the harbor being flooded. Can you bike down to Doug Martin's house and the two of you meet your dad and Cliff at Kimball's? Take Beach Street cause Atlantic is already under water.”

I have always liked Mrs. Bristol. Her son and I are pals at school.

I check into my parents' room and see mom still asleep. Lady my Boxer dog is waiting at the front door. I soon am on my bike with no flashlight and Lady leading the way. But the rain is warm and slacking and the morning is announcing the storm's arrival.

I take a few back dirt roads to get to Doug's and apparently he too got a call from Mrs. Bristol because he is out by his mailbox sporting two life jackets and a bicycle. I start putting two and two together and gulp. He acknowledges my arrival with a nod and takes the lead with no offer of an update. He's got two years on me but I have the legs. I pump past him

when we reach the hardtop and shout ‘hey, what’s going?’ All he does is point to Kimball’s Restaurant in the distance.

I see Cliff and my dad and a fire truck in the parking lot and they welcome us as if we are fellow workers intervening on an emergency. “Chief Barrows, you know Fran’s son Pete and Doug Martin.” Chief Barrows tips his fireman’s hat. I wave to my dad. Cliff brings us up to date.

“What we are experiencing today is a Perigean tide, usually occurring in the spring. But we have a hurricane named Carol making her way slowly up the coast, forcing the pressure here to drop and thus pushing marshland water out here into the harbor.

“This summer Doug and Pete measured the weight of the anchorage of every single mooring in the harbor. How long did it take boys?”

“Six weeks” replied Doug.

“Six weeks,” repeated Cliff. “These two boys with wet suits and a face mask dove at low tide five days a week to ensure that the size of the craft, both length and weight, matched the holding strength of the moorings, mostly large concrete blocks. Over half of the larger craft (over sixteen feet or six tons) did not meet this standard and required extra mooring weight. These were the larger fishing and lobster boats. The smaller boats, four times the number of the 110’s and 210’s and Herreshoff 12’s, were more casual with whose buoy they tied to after weekend races. We hope they will ride this out with their corrected moorings.

“So the problem we face is whether we have any commercial boats tied to any recreational moorings. And the only way we have to check this is to visit every one of our twenty heavy boats and dive down and measure

the concrete. That is what we are asking these two boys to do today. We have a low tide at noon. We have approximately four hours to check moorings. Some of the commercial boats had already headed out to sea but have been called in by the Coast Guard. The storm's center will be here tomorrow at this time.

“So I have asked the boys to do this job. They have been looking at so many moorings that they can easily sight an infraction. We have extra cement blocks on shore at the ready. We are calling all boat owners tied to a mooring to secure their boats. There will be a lot of activity very soon. Peter and Doug, your wet suits and gear are in the upstairs lockers at the boat house. You will have the Whaler at your disposal. Good Luck.”

It made no sense to head home for breakfast and dad showed up at the Yacht Club's boat house with rolls and juice and Lady riding shotgun. He suggested that we get dressed in our gear and be on the water ASAP before anyone official arrived with a different position on putting two twelve year old boys under water in the face of a hurricane.

There were many days that summer when the water was warm and we left the wet suits on shore. But today we were glad for the rubber layer. Doug would sit in the Boston Whaler and write on the grease board the name of the craft and I would surface with the painted number and size of the mooring. We first worked with the sail boat area where some folks had already pulled their crafts for the season. But by late morning we ran into a challenge we had not faced before. There was a large sail boats, say in excess of thirty feet, which was tied to a small boat mooring. We had a ship to shore radio and called Cliff for advice.

“We have no record of this boat in our anchorage” replied Cliff, “most likely an unregistered guest. Is there a chance that there might be an extra heavy duty mooring in the commercial boats area?”

“We doubt it” replied Doug. “Anyway, the cabin door is locked.”

I had surfaced to listen to the exchange and marveled at Doug’s overall perspective. I then felt a tropical breeze on my forehead. The storm was ahead of schedule.

“We are about done here with the light recreational boats and ready to tackle the commercial boats,” Doug replied. “How about you drop a “big boat” mooring for this ‘guest’ here? Then you are covered.”

“OK Doug, will do,” replied Cliff.

The big boats ended up being a piece of cake. All had 12” high registration numbers on their bow, large enough to be seen by planes patrolling from the air and safely tied to commercial sized moorings. The tide was on its way in and the water cooler. Doug was now in the wet suit and I was on the radio. Right when I could see the end in sight Doug surfaced. I gave him the radio.

“Mr. Dixon, we have a mooring line wrap between MS 25567 and MS 14887. There is a strong incoming tide and both cabin doors are locked. What I am worried about is that with the incoming current and onshore wind, commercial mooring number one could become dislodged and bang into commercial mooring number two, dislodging them both. The bottom here is hard pan gravel, no mud or sand and the blocks are sitting with nothing to obstruct both boats dragging.

We were so close to the end. And now this hitch.

“Mr. Dixon”, Doug offered, “what if you were to swing both 67 and 87 into the wind with a powerful craft, just enough to have a diver undo the tension on one of the shackles, remove the twist, then re-shackle the cable to the correct mooring. Then have one of the boats towed to safe distance where it is attached to a new mooring. Two boats, two moorings.

“Great thinking Doug. We have a scuba diver on the way. But we may be able to do it an easier way. What if we just cut 87’s mooring line, let her drift free except that we have a new mooring line already attached to a new mooring twenty yards distance from 67 which we now attach to 87.”

“Thanks Mr. Dixon, “replied Doug. “What I am worried about is whether we have a large commercial boat powerful enough that could handle the ever increasing wind and current and make this hand off workable.”

Silence on the line. Then “Romeo five this is MS 423359 heading home to Gloucester. Am presently two miles off Minots Light and ETA your site in 45 minutes. I have the horsepower for the job if you will put me up for the night.

“Hey Bob, this is Cliff. Have you cleared this with Margaret? Over.”

“All good Cliff” and just before you could say Jack Robinson, Bob and his giant oceangoing lobster boat were leaning into the wind and I was in my wet suit in ten feet of water undoing and retying one of the renegade shackles from MS 14887. No one outside of the group that was present has ever spoken of this risky role to the general public.

Sixty five years later I had a dream covering a very similar topic. This version placed me underwater in Cohasset Harbor during Hurricane

Carol but all the small boats' mushroom shaped moorings are rising and pounding to the ocean floor like pistons in a commercial vehicle. Not sure of the connection but grateful that it got me in front of a keyboard to write this story.

The Boy and the Talking Horses

By Peter Hagerty

June 29, 2018

Chapter 1

The boy scratched his sunburn neck as he climbed down from the school bus. It was early May and way too early for this heat. He walked up the dirt path to the yellow farm house where he and his family would be spending the next six months. He would be glad when his fifth grade class sang its last song and he said good-bye to school for the summer.

There were no cars in the turn around, only an old draft horse named Bud out grazing in the field. His dad would still be at work and his mom probably shopping for supper. Yesterday he had fallen asleep on Bud's sway back and got the sunburn.

"The flies are fewer under the tree," the horse thought to himself as he chewed a mouthful of grass. "And there is that young boy. I hope he is not planning to spend more time on my back."

Bud began to walk away towards the ice pond, then stopped. "I'm an old fool, a lonely old fool," he said to himself and turned back to meet the boy now heading towards him.

The boy led Bud to an old stone wall where he could climb up and jump on. Bud stood very still and, when the boy was on board, carefully stepped back into the tall grass just in case he fell. The boy

then stretched out, resting his head on Bud's rump and straddling his feet on Bud's neck. As they slowly walked along the boy felt his young body bend and curve with Bud's. Then the horse heard the boy's story start up where it had left off yesterday.

"So this kid who is always bullying me, he sits right behind me and when the teacher is not looking he jams my chair forward with his feet so I can't move. I have tried to be nice to him but he won't stop. I told my dad I just wanted to pop him one on the playground but he was against that idea."

The horse and the boy made their way over to a giant white oak where a light breeze always seemed to blow through the branches, even on the hottest day.

"So what do you plan to do," Bud said out loud, then suddenly stopped. What had he just done? He had never talked to anyone before, much less a small boy. He had talked with trees, birds and clover on occasion. Now what?

The boy's eyes were shut when he heard the question. Actually he had not heard the question so much as he felt it. He smiled.

"Bud is a talking horse," he said out loud as if such a thing was a daily occurrence. Bud heard this and remained silent.

But as the spring turned to summer and school ended, Bud and the boy talked of many things. The birds in the trees only heard the voice of the boy.

Farmer White's wife told the boy not to swim in the Ice Pond but that was impossible on the really hot summer days. One afternoon she

found the boy swimming and hid his clothing. Bud led the boy to the hiding place.

Farmer White lived with his wife Neillie and son Frank in the woods not far from where the boy and his family were staying. He hired the boy that summer to clean out the horse stalls in the morning and harness the big team, Bud and his partner Bill, for haying in the afternoon. Bud asked the boy not to talk while Bill was around, especially when they were mowing or raking. This was difficult because the boy had grown used to telling Bud everything, especially those things he could not tell anyone else.

One June morning, Farmer White harnessed Bud up to a small wagon with a seat for the boy. “Now today I want you to go down to Sandy Beach and pick up any seaweed that washed ashore from last night’s storm and we will put it on the hay fields. Here is a pitch fork. Bud knows the way. Head back when you have a full load”.

So off they went down Nichols Road and pretty soon the boy could hear the waves breaking in the distance. As they reached Atlantic Ave. the boy looked over at his regular home, under repair after a bad winter storm.

He kissed Bud up over the sand dunes and down to the water’s edge. The storm had washed the seaweed up at the high tide mark and beachgoers had to make their way through it before they could dive into the waves. He climbed down and began loading the wagon.

Every once and a while he looked up at his ocean home. He could see the carpenters replacing the red tiles on the roof. He had been so upset when told that he would be leaving for the summer. Then he looked over at Bud. “You know Bud, I don’t miss it that much anymore.”

Bud turned his head and whispered “someone’s coming” and sure enough it was Frank, the kid from school.

“Hey you,” Frank said, “What are you doing here?”

“Cleaning up the beach,” the boy replied.

“It don’t figure. Your dad owns a business here in town and you live up in that big house on the rocks. Seems like you should be out playing tennis or something.”

Just then Bud turned his head towards Frank and let out a big sigh which made Frank step back.

“It’s ok,” the boy said. “His name is Bud. He’s a good guy. Go scratch him between the ears. He loves that.”

“I don’t know. I ain’t been around too many horses.” But Frank slowly put his hands on Bud’s forehead and began scratching as the boy continued pitching the seaweed up onto the wagon.

“That feels good,” Bud whispered and the boy smiled. Soon the wagon was full and he took the reins and turned Bud up and over the dunes and down onto Nichols Road. “Have a good summer,” the boy said to Frank. But Frank ran to fetch his bicycle and together the three made their way back up Nichols Road toward White’s Farm.

2.

The boy, now a grown man, was far from home in a cold, snow covered land. He was visiting his friend Pavel and wife Galina. He looked out over the fields to a young stallion in the distance. His mind drifted back momentarily to another horse, another farm, another time.

“He is our new colt, Valiet,” said Pavel in Russian. “I want you to ride him.”

The man walked out to meet the horse, a simple rope halter in his hand. As he approached, Valiet stood still, not moving a muscle. The man lifted his right hand and slowly began stroking the horse’s neck. Then he heard a voice.

“Не ездите на меня. Я боюсь, и я буду вам больно”. “Don’t ride me. I am afraid and I may hurt you.” Tears formed in the man’s eyes and rolled down his cold cheek.

“Спасеба! Я понимаю,” “Thank you, I understand,” the man said. The horse turned as the man gave one last stroke and walked away across the snowy field.

3.

Many years passed, the man married, had a family and now lived on his own farm. Sheep, chickens and large horses ate the grass in the surrounding pasture and tall trees climbed the hills beyond the brook. The man often left his wife and children to try and heal the world in which he had traveled for many years. He would come home tired, worried, often more afraid than when he left. He had seen dark times in places where the forest turned black with the fire of war. Some of his men had died. He often wished he could talk with Bud, tell him about the sadness he now carried with him and ask him what he should do.

His horses, both brothers, watched the man as he grew old, wondering how long they would be working together. In the summer Willie and Nick mowed hay with him and in the winter they harvested wood for the stove. Like him they were slowing down and like him they were sometimes afraid.

“What is to be done?” they wondered aloud and the man heard.

“What is to be done?” the man replied, as if talking for the first time to an old friend he had not seen for years. “Fires in the west, hurricanes to the south and the seals are dying in the ocean.”

“We must be careful what trees we cut and what we leave,” a voice whispered from the forest. The world depends on us.”

“Sounds like a tall order,” the man replied.

“Don’t worry, we will help,” came a voice deep in the forest, a voice the man now heard for the first time.

It was early spring and the snow would not stop falling. The horses were grazing needles from the hemlock trees high up on the hill. Here the snow was deep and when they stretched their necks they could reach the branches.

“We will only eat a few,” said Willie.

“Thank you,” replied a voice from the forest over story. Willie knew to browse only the healthy hemlock, green with needles, not the brown. For those trees were sick and fighting to stay alive.

The man would usually harness the horses after his lunch. The harness was heavy and the man, older now, teetered on a wooden box as he threw it over their shoulders and backs. He would often be rushing because he knew that the sun would be dropping over the mountains in the next few hours and the afternoon would grow cold.

“Why the rush,” the horses would ask but the man would not answer. Willie was the first to react.

He began by refusing to open his mouth to receive the bridle. The man responded by putting molasses on the bit but Willie shook his head and the molasses ended up on a nearby wall. Then the man screwed an eyebolt onto the barn floor to force Willie’s mouth to open. Willie tore that out with one pull. On some days the sun would be dipping behind the hills before the bit and bridle were in place. The man became very discouraged.

One Saturday the man harnessed the horses. When he came to Willie, he left the bit and bridle on the barn wall and faced his old friend. He

watched the horse for a long time, then touched his forehead to Willie's, breathed deeply and said, "I am lost. I need help."

Nick was still in his stall but his ears went up. Neither horse moved. Then the man heard, "Drink a cup of tea slowly". This made no sense but he had no choice. He went into the house, heated some water, drank a cup of tea and returned. Willie then opened his mouth.

"Why?" said the man.

"Because you are never here," was the reply.

And for the first time the man understood. He could not be with Willie because he was busy managing his fears, his sadness. "I will try and do better, I will work to be here," he promised. "We will help," said Willie.

Last winter's weather was hard on everyone. Christmas saw a week of sub-zero temperatures and by New Years it was up in the 70's. The change was very hard on the horses and might make them very sick. The man gave them salt every morning so they would drink lots of water which he warmed with a heater.

Across the country there were forest fires and hurricanes and tornadoes. Everyone was talking about the climate. Some people said we all were doomed. The man grew more afraid, more helpless.

One day when the team was up in the woods the man set his saw down on the snow without starting it. He looked over at the team and closed his eyes. "I don't know what to do."

The team stepped forward slowly, stopping at a beech tree. "We can take this tree," said Willie. "It is injured and cannot be healed."

The man walked up to the small grove of trees and saw one in the center. Its top had been eaten by a porcupine and the tree had stopped growing. By taking this tree the others around it would prosper. It was a good choice.

Slowly they began working. The horses moved around the woodlot, listening carefully to the trees before deciding which ones should be harvested. The man rarely heard from the forest but trusted his team. He marveled at what was happening, found himself worrying less but still needing a reminder from Willie 'to be here'.

Spring came finally and the man took a long overdue trip to the town of his childhood and the yellow farm house near White's Farm. He walked out into the field, lingered by the stone wall and then visited the ice pond. It was a warm afternoon and he sat down by the tree where farmer White's wife had hidden his clothes. The sun was setting by the time he finished telling Bud all that had happened.

"So what are you going to do?" came a voice from the nearby trees. And the man smiled because he knew that his answer had changed.

"I will listen for your voice because I now know it is really my voice. I never knew that because I was not listening. And I cannot listen if I am not here. So no matter where I am, I will work to be where I am. Then I will never be alone. I will always have you. "

Good by to the Navy

June, 1968, Graduated in a Naval uniform from Harvard.

July, 1968, Drove to Prairie View A&M Texas in my British made Rover sedan to join the ROTC teaching staff at this primarily all black college.

August, 1968, Arrived at the campus to observe a poorly orchestrated exercises in drilling with a rifle, then standing at attention in the Texas sun while NBC reporters filmed midshipmen from helicopters.

Nb. The percentage of Black officers in all the branches of service in Vietnam had become staggeringly low while numbers of drafted men and women of color were skyrocketing. Student uprisings had closed ROTC units across the country as the war became less and less attractive. Soldiers of color represented an alarming percentage of the injured and killed. Thus a full or albeit somewhat disorganized operation was underway here in Texas to fit uniforms, handle a weapon and march in an orderly fashion. My course called Afro American history in the US military was actually doing quite well when the ROTC building and other classrooms were burned by student protesters in the early fall. My time in Texas came to an end

September, 1968, I was re-assigned to the destroyer USS Lloyd Thomas based in Charlestown, Mass. I had made a deal with the Navy that if I accepted my commission, they would assign me to non- war time duty like teaching at a ROTC unit. Somehow that paper went missing and I found myself on board a ship in Boston that was preparing for Vietnam. I was at least close to home and assured by the fellow officer staff that all would work out.

We spent that winter in the North Atlantic storms chasing Russian subs by a captain that was clearly deranged. It was a miracle that we were all not lost at sea. He found some solace in me as we had both gone to Harvard. I would often be roused in the middle of the night somewhere off the Canadian coast to meet the “skipper” on the bridge as we plowed through forty- foot seas and as the ship began to fill apart.



Freeze Up in the North Atlantic

The night is bitter cold. We are fighting a nor'easter and the seas are building to 20 feet. Both port and starboard watches on the Lloyd Thomas are strapped to the hull with safety lines and the ship is rolling and pitching.

“Change heading to 045 degrees and reduce speed to 15 knots” says Lt. Jack, the officer of the deck for the midnight to 4 o'clock watch. I am the junior officer.

“Aye aye sir. Change heading to 045 degrees and reduce speed to 15 knots,” the helmsman replies and the quartermaster notes the change in the ship's log.

“Mr. Hagerty,” says Lt. Jack, “Send down some of your crew to assess ice on the main deck. We don't want to roll over. Make sure they are all wearing safety harnesses.”

I head below to wake some of my men and when I return to the bridge, Jack says, “I am sure glad the Captain is out cold. I hope he stays that way.”

We were somewhere off the Grand Banks and we are getting a dose of typical November weather. We passed the New Bedford fishing fleet around 2300 hours and their crews were all out on deck, sliding around

with no safety harnesses. We could not fathom how those guys could keep from falling overboard. Their ships were maybe 150 feet in length and ours was over 400.

All at once the sonar man comes on the line.

“Sir, we have contact with a submarine, bearing 094 degrees with a subsurface speed of 22 knots.”

“Quartermaster,” replied Lt. Jack, “give me the coordinates of our present position.”

“Sir, estimated coordinates are 42.5 degrees north, 61.5 degrees West”

“Does that put us in International Waters?” asks Lt. Jack.

“Yes sir, we are approximately 300 miles off the US coast and 240 miles off the Canadian coastline”.

“Thank God,” Jack whispers under his breath. “The old man is no fan of subs, no matter where they are from.”

“Sonar to bridge, we have confirmed contact with a submarine, probable nationality Soviet, probable Class Akula, 10,000 tons with a top speed of 52 knots submerged.”

The Lloyd Thomas had begun anti-submarine drills with the Brunswick, Maine Naval Air Station four days before. No Russian submarine had been detected in the Gulf of Maine in the last 60 days. We were now ready to go home and the last thing anyone wanted was a full blown drill, especially in the face of this northeast storm.

“Sonar,” Jack adds, “get me the heading and speed of this bogey and ask the Communications Officer to come to the bridge”.

Before you could say World War Three, Lt. Tom is standing next to us.

“Tom, do we know who this is?” asks Lt. Jack.

“We’re pretty sure it’s the Rostov. Captain’s name is Melnikov, 42 years of age. Left Murmansk 22 day ago. And by the way, the Rostov is nuclear!”

“You mean you don’t know Melnikov’s wife’s name or his shirt size?” Jack replied.

“We are working on it. Give us 10 minutes.” Tom laughs and disappears below deck to the Communications Center.

“Shit,” exclaimed Lt. Jack. “Standing orders are to wake the old man if we find a Ruskie out here. Pete, will you go down and wake the Captain?”

“Mr. Hagerty leaves the bridge to wake the Captain,” the quartermaster repeats out loud, then writes it verbatim in the log.

“Quartermaster” shouts Lt. Jack.

“Aye, Lieutenant.”

“Quartermaster, from now on, I want you to record every command given tonight here on the bridge.”

“Aye- aye, sir. That is what I am doing.”

“I know that. This is not a reflection of your work. I have just got to make sure you can handle this. It could get very busy here in a few minutes.”

“Thank you sir, I will get some support”.

Just then the old man appears, barely awake and in pajamas, wrapped in a Naval Academy blanket.

“What’s up Lt.?” he asks.

“Sir, we have a Russian boomer, heading east north east at an approximate speed of 22 knots. We made contact nine minutes ago and just confirmed its name and relevant specs.”

“Lt.,” orders the captain, “change course to 094 degrees. Increase speed to 22 knots. Let’s see what this son of a bitch is up to.”

This new course sets us directly into the path of the oncoming waves. The effect is immediate. As the ship plows thru the sea, we crest through one wave and crash down into the valley of the next. Spray towers over the hull and begins to immediately freeze to everything.

I suddenly remember my men working to chip ice off the deck. I make my way down three floors to the main deck and ordered them all inside. As we stand soaked and shivering in the passageway I begin to feel the full effects of the ocean on the ship. Everything that is not tied down falls to the floor. The Engineering Officer comes thru the bulkhead door and tells me that they have burst one high- pressure steam hose on the starboard engine.

I make my way back to the bridge and report to Jack on the conditions below deck. I watch the quartermaster writing furiously everything that I am saying verbatim. Jack is still in command of the ship until the Captain orders differently.

“Lt., what is the state of the HEDGEHOG anti-submarine rockets?” asks the captain. I know that we have these weapons mounted on the forward section of the ship, but they are closely guarded and rarely talked about.

“Sir, HEDGEHOG is at stage 3, covered and locked.” Lt. Jack’s first job on the ship was as the Weapons Officer so he is quick to respond.

“Lt., take the HEDGEHOG to Stage 2.”

“Sir, with all due respect, Stage 2 is called for only if we are provoked. This sub is in international waters and moving away from us.”

“Bull shit,” shouts the captain. “This Russian captain is no fool. Look what he is doing to us. He knows who we are and why we are out here and he knows the sea conditions and our top speed. He is trying to sink us by dragging us through this storm till our engines fall apart or we roll over. I know his game.”

“Sir, we are in international waters. He has as much right as we do to be here.”

“Lt., I am going below to get dressed. When I come back I want to see HEDGEHOG at Level 2. If we are still getting beat to shit, then I am prepared to go to Level 1 and a possible launch. Am I clear?”

“Yes sir.”

“Captain has left the bridge,” chimes the quartermaster. “Lt. Jack still Officer of the Deck.”

Jack’s face looks pale in the red light of the ship’s night controls but he is composed. “Peter,” Jack whispers as he takes me out aside. “I want you to go find the Chief Bishop. He is the Sergeant at Arms for the ship. He has a side arm and handcuffs. I want you to tell him to come

immediately to the bridge. If the Captain insists on going to Level One, I am going to arrest him and relieve him of his command. I will make this clear to the Chief when he gets here. Just tell him to hurry.”

Jack is a graduate of the Naval Academy. He has wanted to be the captain of his own ship since he was a small boy. He and his wife opened up their family to me and are willing to respect my position on Vietnam. I have the highest admiration for him both as a leader of men and as a husband and friend. I am now seeing the beginning of the end of his Naval Career. To relieve a Captain of his command is a career ender, no matter if the intervention is warranted or not.

“The Captain has returned to the bridge,” announces the quartermaster.

“Sir, do you want the con?” asks Jack.

“I will let you know if and when I will take control,” replies the Captain.

“Engine room reports damage to # 2 superheated steam lines,” announces the engine room radio.

“Lt., what is our present position relative to the bogie?” asks the Captain.

“Sir, we are approximately 3000 yards and slowly closing.”

“Let me know when we are within 2000 yards and take HEDGEHOG to Stage 1 immediately,” replies the captain.

I can see it now like it just happened. Everything slows to a crawl in my memory. Lt. Jack motions to the Chief who has just arrived on the bridge. They begin a conversation over on the port side, out of the

Captain's hearing range. I see the Chief look at Jack like he has misunderstood what the Lt. has told him. I see the Chief unclip his handcuffs, I see Jack make his way across the bridge and then I hear Lt. Tom's voice on the squawk box.

"Communications Center to bridge, bogie has increased speed to 48 knots. We have lost contact with the Rostov. I repeat, no contact."

The Chief takes a step backwards, steadies himself on the hand railing while Lt. Jack gives new orders to the helmsman steering the ship.

"Change heading to 240 degrees, change speed to 12 knots". The captain stands there silent, alone in his thoughts. His knuckles are tight in a fist. He then turns and without a sound, leaves the bridge.

"Captain has left the bridge. Come to new heading and speed. Lt. Jack has the con.

That spring we received orders to proceed to Newport, Rhode Island and the Naval Base tucked next to the Vanderbilt Estate. We could find on shore housing and I bunked in with two other officers. We watched "Woodstock" on TV and wondered what kind of trouble awaited us if we went.

Then one day the Captain announced that we would be leaving soon for the Pacific and ordered me to do a complete exam of the forward and aft gun mounts. I enlisted the help of my Chief Brodus Bishop and armed with a flashlight, hand-held mirror and manual, we worked tirelessly for three days.

"Look for cracks, both large and hair lined. These are indicators that the barrel may be worn and unable to withstand such a premature explosion, allowing for the fire to retreat back into the magazine rather than fall forward and out onto the deck." Such barrels must be replaced."

The barrels in our report could not be better examples of a disaster waiting to happen.

“Well, thank you gentleman” Captain Meanix said to Brodus and me as he slipped our report into his desk and directed us to leave.

“He’s not going to do shit, is he?” asked Brodus. I felt my life was really in danger for the first time.

The next day was Sunday. Fall was on the way. Our squadron had all come together, five destroyers and a tender, to carry all the parts we needed for the crossing to Vietnam. I found myself walking out in Portsmouth, a neighboring town and the home of our squadron commander. When he opened his front door, I briefly said who I was and what I was requesting, Before he could answer, I was on my way home. I had broken the most sacred rule of Naval ethics, never jump the chain of command.

Morning quarters was on the Lloyd Thomas’ foredeck at 8:00 am the following morning. “Excuse me sir, Mr. Hagerty is wanted on the pier.”

The Executive Officer running the meeting looked at me with dismay. Who could possibly want to speak with me? But as I approached the quarterdeck, I saw two burly Military Policemen nervously looking my way.

“Good morning sir, we are here to accompany you to a meeting.”

“What meeting specifically?” I queried. “To the Division Commander’s office,” they replied. “It is just a short walk.”

Our pier was one of the longest on the base, some claimed over half a mile. Summer was over and fall was on its way. And my birthday was only five days away. Everyone and every things was in motion around

me yet I imagined that all eyes were on a thin Ensign sandwiched between two burly associates with side arms and handcuffs. As we approached the shore, a building I knew quite well came into focus, Judge Advocate General, Newport, the home of the base's lawyers and their staff.

“Look fella's I have got to find a bathroom or I am going to piss my pants. This building here is a great little outfit, air conditioned and welcoming. I happen to know that they have fresh coffee and donuts every morning as I took classes here all summer.”

Hoping our friendships had improved during the walk, I jumped up a set of stairs and disappeared inside. There welcoming me was a hallway with twenty offices, each one containing a Naval Lieutenant and full-blown lawyer. I knocked on Door 8 and a voice announced in a mid-western twang “door's open, come on in. What's going on?”

Lt. Lowell Noteboom dismissed my escorts and did not say a word for over 45 minutes other than question me on clarification. He knew like a typhoon that I would soon blow myself out. When all was quiet, he left the office for another long stretch and returned with a glass of water for me.

Then, as he made himself comfortable, he announced “Peter, I hope it is ok that we speak informally. I have been waiting for over a year for someone like you walk through the door with such a challenge as you have described. If what you say is true and your ship is about to depart with a time bomb for its crew, there is no question for me that this is a violation of both the military and the moral code of ethics.

“I have the authority to begin an investigation and remove you from your ship until the investigation is concluded. I don't want to appear overly dramatic, but someone ordered you detained this morning. I need

to find out who that is and why. Can you now leave with me and all your possessions that might relate to this case?" I removed a plastic file from under my shirt which he took and then left the room, returning after several minutes.

"I have made reservations for you at a small but safe set of rooms on a submarine repair tender. I also have a chaplain friend there on that same ship who needs help counseling Naval personnel. Clients are scheduled from 10 am to 3 pm. Given what you've been through, I am sure you will be an asset to him.

"I have notified your Capt. Meanix that you have been sequestered as a witness to an upcoming trial and not permitted to leave this present location. Your ship is due to leave in five days. It will leave without you. I know things will lighten up when your squadron leaves port for good. I will send down staff for your clothing. Is there anything else?"

"I can't believe how prepared you are for this," I announced.

"Pete, Where do your parents live?"

"About an hour from here."

"It might be best if you call them right now, saying that something has come up and you might be out of contact for the next week. This is my private number. Have them give me a call this evening.

"I have a civilian attorney with whom I work on cases that involve the Rhode Island and Massachusetts press. The flotilla will stop in San Diego for last minute repairs. Perhaps we can address the issue of barrel cracks then. But let's be clear. For the Navy this is not about firepower safety. It is about one of its own officers who broke the sacred rule, never jump the chain of command, what you did last Sunday."

A member of Lowell's staff settled me in on the sub tender and went shopping for essential meals for the coming days. The sun was starting to set and an early autumn breeze caught my neck. "There are good people everywhere" I smiled and drifted off to nap.

Five days later the destroyer flotilla departed. Crowds lined the Jamestown Bridge as the ships slipped under head and dropped flowers down. That afternoon I met with Lowell and the Providence reporter. I had given him names of friends at the Globe. My Milton classmate David Taylor's dad owner the paper and quickly provided us with a treasure trove of sports articles going back to the ninth grade.

"Your college sports history is what we will lead with," suggested the reporter but I had temporarily lost any enthusiasm. And I was facing still two years in the service with no chance for advancement and few friends. In June of 1971 I would be the oldest Ensign in the Navy.

Never Alone

Lowell called every morning to see how I was holding up. Each day I would report to the Base Chaplain's Office where I met with servicemen in need. This was my salvation and very close to the work I had done at Harvard. But I missed my crew in spite of their rough edges. Then one chilly Saturday morning I saw a poster, Family Fun Day, come meet John Chafee, Secretary of the Navy, on a wall. I quickly dressed into clean whites and returned to an airline hangar filling with men, women and children.

Once governor of Rhode Island, he had a reputation as a fair person so I made my way up close and sat down. A band entered from a side door and behind it a tall tanned man smiling and shaking hands. He then took to the podium and waited for the crowd to quiet.

“Thank you for all coming today. I have such great respect for all of you, those that are returning from the war, those of you that are preparing to leave. I would like to send a special thank you to you that held the lines back home and did the essential work of keeping it all together. Both my wife and I have the utmost respect for all of you.”

Soon there was not a dry eye in the place. I had to admit to the sincerity in his voice.

“Today is a chance to ask me question, to not hesitate” and then he stopped talking. The hanger was quiet but voices began to speak. These were simple people, not ready to engage a popular governor and congressman, much less the Secretary of the Navy. But soon the raised hands slowed and out back you could hear the band preparing to march the Secretary of the Navy out.

I had been watching my right arm for several minutes, fluttering like a bird on my knee, wanting to rise. Secretary Chafee seems like a truly good man. Let's let him leave on a positive note. But over my best intentions, my voice rang out over the hanger.

“Excuse me sir. Would you have time for one more?”

He looked over my way as I made my way to a microphone. What he saw was a young man dressed in white uniform, white shoes with white gloved hands holding a white hat.

“Absolutely son, I am here for you today.”

“Thank you, sir. What would be your response to a young weapons officer finding a dangerously large number of cracks in the barrels of his 5” guns. Making the captain aware of this unsafe situation, this forward gun mount was deemed fit for combat by the captain and sent off to war in the Pacific. Could you share an initial reaction you might have?”

The hall was so quiet you could have a pin drop or a baby squirm. Most soldiers there knew what was happening.

“Thank you, sir” Chafee began. “What you just gave was more of a statement than a question and deserves some immediate attention. One of my aides is on his way out to you for your contact information.

“Yes sir, thank you. My name is Peter Hagerty, USNR 010-34-1385. Thank you for being with us today.

Three days later I was honorably released from active service. I left Newport a free man. Ironically I had no standing now in a military court. I wondered if Chafee had what it took. Lowell sent him the Globe articles with details of Chief Bishop and my examination but it seemed that the “boat had sailed.”

One year later, Sept 11, 1970 the forward gun mount of the Lloyd Thomas exploded, killing and injuring over ten of my crew members.

Latch Brewster

“Good morning. My name is Latch Brewster and I admit that this might be a strange way to begin a story about a piece of wood and the role it played in the lives of several families. Peter has agreed to help fill in the blanks and he will begin.”

Peter: “You were lying there, helpless on the floor by the barn door, one you had helped to open and close for almost two hundred years, until today. A dowel was inserted through the doorway at chest level and fastened to you by a pin. Twist the dowel to the left and you would rise, allowing the door to open. One day that pin broke, leaving you lying on the barn floor with the door all afloat.”

Latch: “A little background of how I became a latch to a barn door. Joshua Brewster had moved his sawmill up to Porterfield to build a house and farm for his family. He sawed pine logs from across the brook and by the following year the farmhouse was livable. Then came the Civil War and Joshua joined the North and died at Appomattox.

Of course Joshua’s family was devastated but his strong wife Mary and her son Adam and daughter Sara had the barn built with two teams of drafts and a milking cow before you could say “Jack Robinson”. But there were a few details which his wife Mary called ‘loosey goosie’ and one was the way the doorway leading from the back right corner on the barn down to the brook where cows and horses drank was secured every day. Adam tied the door shut with some cheap twine morning and night but this just drove Mary a bit crazy.

So one day Sara was over at the old sawmill site picking up sticking to help start the woodstove when she noticed a piece of sawn wood very

unlike the rest. It was no more than 10 inches long, 3 “ wide and was from an oak tree, not a pine. Sara remembered back to the day when she was helping her dad. It was early spring but still cool so the brook was frozen and the horses and sleds could cross with logs to the mill site.

‘Well, what do you know?’ her dad muttered and leaned over the log pile and brought out a thin stick of oak. ‘Just the thing for a peavey handle!’ He then took his sharp axe, shaped the handle just right and chopped off the extra which fell to the ground and became part of the wood yard rubbish.”

Until the day Mary brought me over to the workshop and formed me into the creature I am today. (Ha!)”

Peter: “And it was much a surprise to me that I found you lying on the barn floor yesterday, your dowel and pin missing.”

Latch: “So Peter, I have an old Maine accent so stop me if you miss something. Sara was tall for a ten year old girl whose job it became on her birthday to water the horses and the cow morning and night. She was excited because it meant that she could finally redesign the swing door to the brook.”

Peter: “But what was wrong with the existing system?”

Latch: “First because holding the door shut with hay twine was an accident waiting to happen. Mary had that right! But also the twine was so low on the door that any visiting child could untie it and let the animals out. That may not seem like a big deal but there was enough for the family to do each day and they didn’t need to waste time catching the livestock.

“So anyway, I convinced Sara and her mom to put the latch high enough to eliminate that problem. We then invented the pin and latch system which worked well till today. That’s not a bad track record.”

Just then neighbor Greg arrived and I had to stop my conversation with Latch. I gently covered Latch with a piece of paper and he took the clue and remained quiet. I was unable to return to our conversation until the following morning when I heard a cough coming from the kitchen table. I removed the napkin and gave Latch the light of day.

Peter: “Sorry” I said.

Latch: “No problem .The time I had under cover reminded me of our flight to California.”

Peter: “What flight was that?”

Latch: “Oh, we were going out to see Marty’s sister, maybe before you had your kids. Somehow I had gotten into your briefcase and had momentarily been questioned by security as a dangerous weapon.”

Peter:” Oh yah, that seemed to be a bit humorous at the time.”

Silence for a few seconds.

Latch: “I often wonder if you would have had me tossed into the airline waste bin.”

Peter: “No way! Do you remember the conversation we got into with the architect from Chicago sitting one seat over? He had noticed you in my brief case and, when I handed you to him, he held you like a precious stone.

Eric the architect: “You know I grew up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin. The smell and feel of this wood, oak if I am correct, takes me back like

it was yesterday. What is your farm like? Here, wait a minute Peter. I am an architect and can't think without a paper and pen."

And Eric reaches up into the overhead bin and places a 2' X 2' sketch pad into my lap

Eric: "OK, can you draw the layout pf your farm, your house, barn fields, forest. Take your time.

Peter thinking: "Oh my God, this guy is probably a big city, million dollar designer.

Eric responding: "Peter, we had twenty milking cows, two teams of draft horses and we put all our hay in loose. I had one pair of shoes to wear to school. So take your time."

So with Latch placed gently on Eric's pad and with Marty's help, I inked out the layout of our modest farm while Eric muttered his approval but with a few questions. Like "but where are your chickens?"

Marty: "Oh, that's my fault. Yes, they should go right here. That wooden latch that you admired earlier, that is what we used to open and close the hen house."

Then Eric tore off his first sheet and began a second.

Eric: "Show me your town road, then your driveway and then your house, your woodshed and barn, then hen house".

And, like magic, his work sheet soon mirrored, with a few modifications, exactly the design of Joshua Brewster's so many years ago.

Marty: That is amazing

Eric: “Yes those early farmers had a good eye for design. But I do have a suggested modification.

And he drew into the farm layout a hen house, separate from all the buildings.

Eric: “I have always had a great respect for heat in the winter, especially fire when it gets loose on a farm. My family lost a cattle barn when a water heater caught on fire in the night. I will never forget that disaster.

And his eyes watered as he momentarily turned away.

“Keep the hens warm and in a barn away from everything.”

He then tore off our working sheets and gave them to Marty. The plane was preparing to land at LAX soon.

Peter: “Eric, if you don’t mind my asking, where are you presently headed and is it for work?”

Eric: “I am the chief architect for my company which is building the Abu Dhabi International Airport. Would you like to see the plans?”

And until the seat belt sign came on, he enthralled us with the billion dollar project he has designed where passengers will arrive and prepare for departure under giant Bedouin style hangers where the temperature will never go above 60 degrees inside or out.

Latch: “May you be safe Eric in such a dangerous place and come to see the door I open and close each day in rural Maine.

Katy the Sheep

October 30, 2021

Katy, I can't say I know you that well even though we have been friends for over twenty years. But I think that we have a lot in common, physical pain to start with, but also hope.

You raise your head in welcome every morning, the same way I would greet a friend entering the yard. I never hear you complain even though you have not stood on your legs for many moons.

Your eyes, wide and bulbous, are the first of you I see in the morning darkness. Every chew of apples and grain ends with a smile. You welcome me even when I have nothing to offer. Burps resound off the caves in your body. You chew them again as they surface, then let them dissipate. No apologies from you, just a shift of the nose for a better scratch. You smell of the barn and the hay, nothing more.

As I lay down next to you under the horse blanket covers, you ever so slightly shift to be closer. And when this happens, all my doubts, fears, life's insecurities, seem to disappear, just for a moment. Your gaze does not seem to be compromised by your pain, but rather grows stronger the more I scratch. You try to move ever so slowly towards my face, only a few inches away now.

Then all at once, the belly belches. The breakfast grains, the apples for lunch, you have no shyness but rather share your fullness as the darkness of the evening softens both our beings.

Nov. 20, 2021

Katy in the daytime

Clara the chicken comes early for a visit. She “announces” that she is looking for food. Katy’s bowl is empty. She peeks at the page on which I am writing, then leaves in a huff.

Katy welcomes me with her morning belch, a really good one that starts in her third belly and makes its way to the surface as a gift to me. She smiles at me as she re-chews an earlier meal.

So what do I do with such a gift? I close my eyes and remember back to the mornings when I was a kindergartener, eating my breakfast.

My mother today would now be diagnosed with an eating disorder which apparently I, too, embraced, stuffing my breakfast as quickly and fully as possible, then making a bee line to the toilet where I would throw up all the eggs, bacon, toast and juice. Vomiting became a tried and true method for me to cope with anxiety which I exploited well into my college years. I am so grateful to a therapist, Myron Sharif, who handed me a waste basket when I first entered his office and helped me abandon these coping mechanisms which had burdened me since childhood.

I return to the barn a bit later with a dish of warm water which Katy happily drinks down. She rewards me by regurgitating her early afternoon meal, perhaps for the third or fourth time. Every morning I cut up 5-6 apples and mix in a scoop of grain and it is ideally gone within one hour. I just gave her a mid-day snack as a reward for letting me write about her. Marty does the evening feeding.

It is extraordinary that an adult sheep can live this long without movement. Katy has not been able to stand on her own going on three years now. Ideally she is repositioned every day when soiled bedding is removed and replaced with fresh hay. Katy has the genetics of our Metinic Island flock. All of that generation has moved on and she is the sole survivor. She was born during a time when spinning island wool by hand was the rage.

Three years ago I was injured and my energy and skill sets grew limited overnight. So in many respects Katy was and continues to be an inspiration for me. She has just one “baaa” and it is one of greeting and not complaining.

I most enjoy scratching her nose and ears to which she does not overly object. Her eyes are surprisingly big for a 100 lb. animal. Even though her face is as large as mine, she is not ready for the night until she finds a pile of hay on which to rest her head.

She is now pushing her white metal dish towards my chair where it comes to rest with a ‘bang’ on its wooden leg. She wants more feed. Her supper time is still a ways off and the temptation for me to feed her is strong. Her legs are incapable of moving her body but she does not know this as they push back and forth under her.

Friends have asked us if it would be better if she were put down. She has certainly enjoyed a long and full life. For those of our flock who were born on islands off the coast of Maine, often we would find the older ones choosing a cove or a small clearing in the forest to lie down and die when their time came. Sometimes they would choose the very spot where they were born or gave birth. It seemed the right thing not to intercede.

Katy and her mom came home to our farm when it was time to leave the islands. Katy is the last living member of that extraordinary generation and gene pool.

When Katy became our last sheep, alone in the barn except for the chickens with whom she occasionally shared her grain or the horses that looked across the aisle or the barn cats up for a new adventure with the ‘big wool ball’ who had her own stall and blankets, somehow she just became a fixture. She let us clip her fleece in the spring and welcomed the neighborhood kids to feel the lanoline in her wool.

So here we are, approaching another winter with Katy, burping and gurgling next to me in the barn. I am writing these memories because I think that Katy has a message for me, maybe a secret.

I am a bit confused about my own self. Like Katy I am growing old. I have arms that hurt and legs that need help. Yet I am drawn to her spirit. In truth, I have no idea what her days are like. Her head is often moving, either up and down or side to side. I don’t see any source of discomfort. Yet when I move around the barn doing chores, I feel sorry for both of us and all the relatively mild pain we must endure.

I have begun these “Time with Katy” stories in the hope that I may learn from her how to age gracefully and be grateful for every day. We shall see!”

Our Degrading Bodies

So Katy is with me again to help me come to terms with my degrading body. Maybe that is not an appropriate word for my condition. In any case she is taking the lead by working hard with her left rear leg, working to stretch it forward. I try and imagine what degree of pain she is facing. I have started doing my own stretching in her stall and try and reach these places I have not touched in years. I am surprised by what I find.

December 3, 2021. First real snow falls

“Katy, I have been watching your eyes lately, especially your left. It is the one that is closest to me. But just now I saw you turn your head so that both eyes seem to be working well. Your legs are quite beautiful, especially the hooves. They are very long and have the color of South Sea mahogany. We no longer trim them since you can no longer walk.

Today is truly winter. The mornings are dark and cold. But you are awake before everyone else, your head bobbing up and down, waiting to greet me. Not to disappoint you, I have in my arms a bowl of sliced apples, sheep grain and trace minerals like seaweed powder and a long drink of warm water. Over the past two winters you have not moved more than a few yards from your spot on the hay pile. Today your water pan has frozen and your feed bowl has slipped out of your reach. But look, the apples are not frozen. I then notice a subtle nod of appreciation as I push the pan within her reach.”

Katie’s parents and grandparents were part of our flocks that lived on islands off Mid-coast Maine. When that era came to a close, a small number of ewes returned to our mainland farm, most of them on dry

land for the first time. We think that her dad was a Finnish Landrace ram who lived not far from home. She inherited his short tail and fine wool.

Katie lived here on our farm when hand spinning was the rage, either on a portable spinning wheel or a drop spindle. Her fleece she is wearing today is as soft and lustrous as it might have back then when she was a yearling. Oh if I could only get her to talk.

The second best thing I might like to share with you the reader is some of the stories we experienced together. Her best stories were always just after supper.

“Do you remember the spring we moved the flock to Eleanor’s (Mart’s sister) just over the border in New Hampshire. You were on horseback with Rudder nipping at our heels most of the way to keep us moving. We were slow at getting underway and even though it was late May it began to get dark just over Norton Hill.

“The piano tuner’s farm was the last one we saw that night and about one mile beyond we made camp and began eating local forest flowers and grasses for supper. You tethered the horse to a nearby birch grove where there was abundance of forage. You said this had been an old logging yard. You then gave Rudder some ground beef and kibble.

“What I remember most about that night was how dark it was. You asked me to walk the outside around the flock that was now bedded down in a giant circle. You told me that you could not see your hand in front of your face so it would be up to me to keep all two and four legged animals together and safe. Now that was a tall order for a three year old dog but when the sun came up the next day we were all still together.

“We had five or so miles to go before breakfast so we started out at first light. As we came down the final stretch on Eleanor’s road we met a bunch of cars and trucks pulled over to the side waiting to guide us. It was a surprise to you and I heard you say under your breath ‘what the hell’. But I saw a smile return to your face as you were handed a cup of coffee and a donut.

“Somehow the local hunting club got word of our arrival which coincided with a coyote sighting the day before in the woods that were adjacent to Eleanor’s fields. This was where the sheep would be ‘till Fall. There must have been a dozen hunters wearing blaze orange and carrying high powered rifles. As they walked towards us, your horse became quite nervous and spun around several times. The groups then backed up and let us pass through the farm gate, sixty sheep, thirty lambs, one dog, one horse and one rider. I prayed silently that the same numbers would head back home in October.

“Rudder and Peter slept in the field with the sheep that night. They were a bit worried about the gun enthusiasts who kept insisting that we keep one of their rifles “locked and loaded” by our side at the edge of the meadow. But they ended up being considerate and helpful. Boy were our sheep happy, some of the lambs kicking and twisting into the air. And we never saw a coyote near that pasture all summer

“And you know, there was a ewe lamb in that flock named Bonnie who was to become my grandmother. That was almost twenty years ago when I was just a yearling.”

Reflection

As I read over my notes for this period in my life I wonder what Katy does with all those memories when she took her mobility for granted. Every morning now when I enter her stall, she looks up at me with what appears to be an acceptance of her physical condition.

And I wish there was something I could now give her to let her know how much I appreciate her attitude. My physicality has been a driving force for my own wellbeing since the day I was born. There was never anything special about my body other than keeping me alive. During college hockey I hospitalized a person I barely knew. But I spent several afternoons in the infirmary visiting him. He called after 56 years just to check in and say he is doing fine.

Another friend in college joined the Marine Corps because he felt it was unfair that he got off so easy. He died in Vietnam during our sophomore year. That summer I joined Naval ROTC and two years later was on a ship bound for the Tonkin Gulf. But no matter how awkward or dangerous the situation, I almost always came out unscathed.

The Beginning of the End.

Many soldiers and civilians were injured or killed by that war. And over the past several months, for some reason, I have started to come undone. I have spent a wonderful life raising a family on a farm here in rural Maine. I worked hard, some would say, too hard. My wife and I often traveled overseas to start what would be a thirty- year collaboration in wool, first to the Soviet Union, then the Middle East and finally home to our Native American flocks here in the States. But over the past year my body is talking to me. Hot flashes, soaking sweats, leg pain, exhaustion and forgetfulness have become an every- day event.

And as these events pass over me I feel them trying to unlock a jail I have created for myself. Could I have done more to stop the Lloyd Thomas? The memories I hold even today of those last few weeks are starting to cause a melt-down. The Boston Globe and our Providence lawyer might have gotten the ship to stop in San Diego. But this was Captain Meanix's swan song. This was his only chance to get the Vietnam Commendation Medal. He would be retiring soon.

So it was this guilt that sent me to Europe after leaving the Navy. There I met deserting soldiers in Paris and London who ran from combat and were now struggling with long, sleepless nights filled with drinking, carousing and nightmares. I then returned to Ft. Devens outside Boston and set up "The Common Sense Book Store" a GI coffee house where active duty soldiers could receive counseling. And I ultimately returned to Vietnam, if for no other than to keep the voices of these soldiers at bay.

Last week I went for a walk in the woods with a neighbor who I am just getting to know. Lo and behold, when we started talking, it was about

submarines. He was on a U. S. nuclear sub operating in the North Atlantic, the same winter I was on the surface looking for Russian “boomers” as well. At the end of our talk I walked back to my car and immediately began shaking. These were so severe that I had to wait for them to pass before I dared to drive. My teeth were chattering and would not stop. And for the first time I began to see a connection to the past.

The local emergency wards never thought about PTSD and I did not think to bring it up. My God, all this happened more than forty years ago. But as each new day arrived, with more chattering teeth and soaking sweats, I began to see an opportunities for a powerful conversation, letting go of all the harsh self-judgments I have made, the “could have done mores.” I will be back in touch in 10 years and report how I am all doing.

But now there is an envelope that is asking to be opened. It is called **EMDR. Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing.**

Now hold on Katy. You know I have tried all kinds of new age stuff and a few have worked. And I will continue to introduce you to all the principals. But you are the queen of eye movement and perhaps you can act as my guide as I explore this science.

Folks with whom I have worked and learned from.

Year 1, 1974

Bill Hall and his family lived on our farm back in the forties and logged with horses. Bill told me about Larry Walker and how he had a logging job going only 25 miles from my home. My neighbor Bob and I headed off to find him. Larry had two teams yarding logs with sleds and walked us back to the far corner of the woodlot so we could meet them.

“Here is where you boys can chop. One of the teams will be up around 11 to pick up a load.” Apparently because we knew Bill, Larry didn’t need to know much about our experience. We had one saw and axe between us and managed to create quite a mess by lunch.

“Jesus Christ boys, you’ve made quite a mess,” smiled Wilbur Lewis. He and his helper got down off the sled to straighten out the cross hatch of fallen timber. “Where you boys from?”

“Well,” Bob eagerly jumped in, “we live in Porterfield and I live with my wife in the Lewis home.”

“Well son, that’s where I was born and raised” Wilbur smiled and handshakes abounded.

Well, Wilbur and his partner had that load on the way to the yard in two shakes of a lamb’s tail and we were invited back for three weeks ‘till all the wood was cut and loaded. On the last Friday, Larry came in to thank us and told us about a rescue team just across the border in New Hampshire that had been starved down on Cape Cod.

“Best always to buy a thin rather than a fat horse” he announced. “Then you have a better idea of what is going on.” And I think that I bought the team for \$500. All brown Barney and all black Nigger, changed to Nicker. Bob’s wife had a job that would keep the dogs from the door as did I with wife Marty. The team lived at my farm for the next eight years and put on some weight and some muscle. Larry Walker later sold us an all-white Percheron named Jake so we had a “walk on” if one of the team needed a rest.

Our neighbor Lee Hamlin had a woodlot on a hill behind Bob’s and my farm and we cut maple and oak bolt wood for a mill in New Hampshire that first winter. We bought an International Harvester 1600 that coming spring and built a body to haul the horses. But we tried to stay near home and there were we plenty “back to the landers” like Bob and me to keep us busy.

I thought it might be fun to see how many folks I can remember that hired us to cut their timber to build their homes. Denny Welch had a saw mill in Kezar Falls village and a logging truck that would haul the logs to his home and return with the lumber required for the project.

<u>Name of Customer</u>	<u>where he/she fit into the community</u>
James & Joyce Syracuse	lumber, homestead, Fire Chief, Hiram
Bernie Mason	Mason’s Variety, commercial cut, Cornish
Merrymeeting Farm	lumber to be used on site, Parsonsfield
John Simonds	large commercial cut, pulp/logs E. Baldwin
Renardo Giovanella	commercial logs and pulp Porter

Laurence & Marty Eubank	home construction	Hiram
Camp Huckins,	commercial, pulp	East Madison, N.H.
Cathy Chaiklin	logs, lumber	Porter
Lance Cloutier	logs/ pulp	Porter
Doug and Lynne Barr	lumber, homestead	Cornish
Jeff and Becky Carpenter	commercial logs/pulp	Porter
Tom & Rhilda Rebmann	lumber, homestead	Hiram
Apple Acres	commercial, pulp	Hiram
Peter & Margaret Zack	lumber, homestead	Porter
Tom Earle	lumber, homestead/farm	Conway, N.H.
Cliff Krolick	Lumber, homestead, farm	Parsonsfield
S.D. Warren	pulp for paper	Parsonsfield
Diamond Match	wood for matches	Fryeburg
James and Joyce Syracuse	firewood	North Baldwin
Bruce and Lisa Pyburn	lumber, homestead	Hiram
Russell White	lumber, homestead	Hiram
Peter Nielsen	firewood, lumber	S.Parsonsfield
R.J. Walker	firewood, lumber	Parsonsfield
John Simonds	pulpwood	E. Baldwin
Tim Barclay	lumber, homestead	Madison, N.H

Teen's Friends.	Firewood	Eaton, N.H.
Land clearing,	farm building	Eaton, N.H.

Folks that did our trucking

Kenwood Frost	Porterfield Rd.	Porter, Maine
Ron Dunnels*	South Hiram Rd.	Hiram, Maine
Dwight Mills	Spec Pond Road.	Porter, Maine
Day Logging	Porter Center,	Porter, Maine

*My son's nickname for Ron was "Bobbie KewKew"

Sawing Lumber

Dennis Welch	Kezar Falls, Maine
LaJoie Sawing	Porter Village, Maine
Metcalf Sawing	Porter, Maine

The Tuba City Wool Buy
Peace Fleece-Navajo Wool Project
Summer 2015

The thermometer says that it is 119 degrees this morning. We started the Tuba City wool buy around 7:00 am. I was up at 4 for breakfast and as I put on my sweater it was hard to believe that this heat was around the corner.

We had a good turnout but no records were broken. Because I am not a buyer this year I spent my time walking down the line of pickup trucks loaded with wool, directing traffic and spending some well needed time with the ranch families, trying to better understand what keeps them going. Every truck answered my 'ee ya'tee pine' with a broad smile and a hand shake. I was so touched by their openness that I passed up lunch and a rest in the shade and collapsed in the shower when we returned to the motel.

I slept for an hour with the AC on high, then just laid there on my back staring at my cowboy hat on the shelf over the TV. Something kept bringing my mind back to my childhood summers. Maybe it was the heat. I remembered the days I spent underwater, my dad floating on top in one of his see thru bottom boats, making sure I surfaced occasionally. I remembered the cold of the deep water and then the heat of the sun on my back as I surfaced and kicked myself along, refilling my lungs with air.

I remembered swimming down the rocky coast past the million dollar houses looking down at me. Soon I would swim into the beach of our own fourteen room home where water was boiling on our kitchen stove, ready to cook the lobsters I carried in my net bag. Now as I lay on my back on the bed of my Dine Motel room in the Arizona desert, I wondered why these childhood memories surfaced here, what was the connection.

I dressed and walked out into the parking lot. Strolling in this heat was not an option so I started the car and began driving out of town. I am now parked in a quiet spot at the entrance to the Navajo Cemetery looking down over Tuba City. I notice that the temp has dropped to 93 degrees.

The homes below me are scattered, some broken, some neat and tidy. There are not many air conditioners in sight. Some have car wrecks out front, some new pickup trucks. I remember back to the trucks this morning. Some ranchers with thirty sheep were driving brand new F-150 diesels, others in thirty year old GMC's pulled horse trailers filled to the brim with wool sacs. Who owns these homes below me, are they the property of the Navajo Nation or privately owned? Where does the money come for their new diesel 4 wheel drives?

The sand here under my tires is brown, not like the beach sand of my youth. This stuff turns to mud with the quickest shower and will hold the footprint of a tire track for years. There is no grass here on the graveyard road, only juniper bushes. A stray res dog and a jackrabbit are my only living visitors. But I am beginning to feel the presence of the spirits gathered behind the nearby pinon trees.

Maybe I am comparing the wealth of my life with the poverty that surrounds me. But as I try this on I am immediately stopped by the memories of this past week, of the hundreds of ranchers with whom I chatted, some who shared their stories with me. These people have reason to be angry, resentful. They are the walking victims of an ongoing trauma. Just last week as the news reported that the Orlando, California shooting was the largest mass murder in American history, our Native American community was once more reminded that Wounded Knee is to be forgotten. Over three hundred women and children were gunned down that day. But why am I going there? This is not the energy that has surrounded me all week.

It's Father's Day at the Dilkon wool buy. Every time a truck arrives loaded with wool or mohair I stick my hand out in front of the man with a 'Happy Fathers Day' and he grabs back and shakes with a laugh and a welcome as if he has known me and my family for a lifetime. For a moment we are both fathers

All week I have been treated as an elder. Children laugh to my Donald Duck voice, grandmothers smile at my Navajo words, everyone wants to know where I live and roll their eyes when I say I am from Maine. I did not meet one person this year that had ever been to Maine. One had made it as far as Vermont.

There were many elders who braved the heat and the three hour lines. I was buying their wool but they aggressively negotiated their end of the transaction. Many were over eighty years old and some into their nineties. But there was beauty in the wrinkles of their cheeks and the jewelry and cotton dresses they wore did their colors justice.

I began appreciating these folks effect on me only on the last few days of the wool buy. Talking with these elders I began not to feel old. Because of these elders I began to forget about my heart rate.

These folks are revered in their families. They live with their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren until they die. And until they die, they have important work to do. Some leave the ranch every morning before dawn with their flock of sheep and goats so they can graze when it is cool. Their pace is adjusted to the animals they are watching. They pick a few flowers and plant leaves to color the yarns for the weaver in the family. They listen for the songbirds which also are out in the cool of the day. And they are back by nine to be of use where they can.

I am sure there are nursing homes somewhere but I have never seen one. I have never met a rancher who mentioned that his mother or father was now in a retirement community. And for the first time on a wool buy I began working on stuff that was appropriate to my physical and mental abilities. Our substantial crew of wool handlers did all the heavy lifting, the truckers who arrived with children and significant others in the cabs all stayed two extra days because they wanted to help. Our Peace Fleece volunteers from out East did all the financials, writing checks and grading the wool. And I did what I do best. I spent 7-8 hours a day in the 100 degree heat walking back down the line shaking everyone's hand and celebrating what was happening here.

It's the Fourth of July today and I am back on the farm. The sky is crystal blue, the breeze is bringing in relief from the heat and memories of my childhood are running wild in my mind. Modi is lying in a shade of the back door, Weyland is passed out, exhausted from playing with his new best friend Luna, Brenda's Golden. My leg has been bothering me and I am forced to stop moving. A lawn mower is running in the distance. Depression is calling me from around the corner. Writing is once again my life jacket, saving me from drowning in sorrow.

I am ten years old and the Cohasset beach of my childhood is jammed with people. My grandmother Josephine who lived next door with her cook, Mrs. Toomey, is helping to prepare my breakfast. One key to staying afloat is Mrs. Toomey's breakfasts. Fresh orange juice (which gives me heartburn), then a boiled egg and a piece of toast covered with butter and honey. But this is no ordinary honey. No, this honey is from the Cuban flowers of the Romarela and the Wild Chimamoly. My nana has had a long love affair with honey, only slightly interrupted due to her death during the Cuban missile crisis.

Nana Josephine was the first woman of Irish Catholic descent to graduate from Radcliffe and then purchase shoreline property from the Yankee stock in Cohasset, then build a house that was one day to be called the Irish Riviera. Not only did she "rock" the old Boston community but she hired two Jewish architects recently fleeing from Nazi Germany who had created the Bauhaus School of Architecture in Berlin. Walter Gropius did the construction along with Marcel Breuer while Mies van der Rohe did the furniture. Alfonso Ossorio, a Filipino artist, roamed grandmother's new house in Benedictine robes painting the walls while chewing peyote and portraying himself as Jesus.

I have often wondered what effect all this had on me. As a child I would ask her about her growing up and she was very forthcoming.

“My father was a policeman in Brighton right next to Boston. We were poor but we never went to bed hungry. When the garbage man came down our street he would yell out ‘any garbage?’ and my dad would yell back ‘yes, we’ll take two bags’ and we all would laugh.”

I don’t know how Josephine ever got into Radcliffe College. She was the first student of her lineage to do so. And the wanted ads for college grads in Boston all read ‘Irish need not apply’. I am not sure how she and her husband John met but before long there were three children, my dad Francis, my uncle John and my uncle Robert. Husband John was not blessed with a long life but managed to leave a lineage of adventure stories that I still hear from time to time.

Apparently he developed a truce with the North End Italians about “bootlegging” booze during probation. I recently discovered the address of his Dorchester undercover liquor operation from the label on a whiskey bottle in my brother’s pantry. Grandpa John had unfettered access to the whiskey drinking folks in Boston while the Italians oversaw the market for wine. High speed night boats delivering goods from Canada serviced both markets and helped pay for tuition at Harvard, MIT and Johns Hopkins. But the more I learned about Grandpa John the more of a character he became.

I was visiting a logging buddy of mine who lived in Maine on the Airline, a highway affectionately called such as it is the fastest way to get from Bangor to Calais and the Canadian border. Over lunch at Bill’s house a neighbor dropped by. Jack’s gnarly fingers and scarred neck attested to a lifelong history working in the Maine forest.

“Hagerty,” he mused. “I knew a John. It was back in the 30’s.”

“Well, that might have been my grandfather. He was an avid hunter and had a dog named...”

“Bear, his name was Bear,” Jack excitedly shouted. “I was working at Second Chance Lake. Your grandfather had been guiding a family who were hoping to go home with some trout. Well, that last day the trout weren’t biting and the folks were some disappointed. As soon as these sports departed, your grandpa headed out in a fast canoe, trolling for a bite. The train then went around the top of the lake to Wesley and by the time it came down the west side, your grandpa had three trout waiting by the side of the track for these folks. People around here still tell that story.” Jack had an audience and continued.

“There is another tale still told of the day John’s dog Bear ran faster than the train. One of the guests heading home to Boston had heard John extolling the virtues of his dog, not the least of which was speed.

“Now looking at him, he did not look like much, especially not athletic. So this passenger put down ten bucks that Bear could not outrun the train. Three miles into the race and any signs of the dog had vanished. The passenger claimed he had won only to have the conductor point down to the dog who was running on two legs and urinating on the wheels of the now fast moving train.”

One day my dad and I were driving through Dorchester and crossed a street that rang a bell. “Hold on, Dad, why do I know that name?” Dad was quiet. “Dad, please stop”, which he did and I jumped from the car.

“Dad, why do I know this house?” Silence.

“Because this is where you grew up, isn’t it?” Silence. I headed for the driveway.

“Please Pete, not today,” he said but by then a woman with a kind face was standing by the front door. “Can I help you?” she asked. I started walking towards her as my dad climbed out of his Buick.

“We are sorry to interrupt”, announced Dad “but this is the house where I was born and raised. My name is Francis Hagerty and this is my son Peter.”

“Well Peter and Francis, please come inside. I have just made a fresh pot of coffee with no one to share it with.” And Margaret Kenny gave us a tour of her home. But the most interesting information surfaced as we entered the basement.

“Can you see this beam with all the marks?” Margaret pointed out. “This is where your father John practiced knife throwing. Apparently he became an expert.”

My dad was reluctant to talk about those years and I mostly forgot about my grandfather John as I headed off to college and beyond. I met my wife Marty and fell in love. One fall she invited me to a wedding in Vermont of her best friend from high school. The ceremony was on a beautiful hillside with the leaves turning and the first snow in the distant mountain tops. I wandered around a bit because I knew no one and soon found myself in the upper end of a hillside dinner tent, empty except for one other older gentleman. Soon I would be again reminded of how small the world really is.

“I knew a John Hagerty,” my new friend announced. “Was he the outdoors type?”

“Yes,” I smiled.

“Well this John was from Dorchester and he took sports up into the wilds of Quebec hunting caribou.”

“Yes sir, that was most likely my grandfather.”

“Well son, he knew how to hunt and man could he throw a knife. This was back in the mid- thirties when I was guiding a father and son team to hunt caribou near Moosonee in Hudson’s Bay, Canada. The train dropped us off in the late spring and we were surprised to learn that another hunting party had camped on the far side of the normally deserted lake. We met them on the second day and I was pleased to welcome your grandfather John and his native guide Baptiste, both whom I had known from the past.

“Well, his Baptiste and my Mi”kmaq guide Aubois were from the same tribe and started up a rapid fire ‘catching up’ while John brought me up to speed on where to find the caribou. We invited John and his “sports” over that night for a supper of fresh lake trout. As the sun set somehow the word got out that John could split a Canadian silver dollar at twenty paces. My party, father and son, agreed that this was not possible and a small pile of paper money appeared on the ground. Baptiste trotted out to the appropriate distance, notched a shelf on a stump and before you could say “Jack Robinson” a knife appeared in your grandfather’s hand, was air born and split the coin in half. As the party ended, Baptiste gathered the crumpled bills and passed half of them quietly along to his native friend. We spent a magical week fishing but saw no caribou.

Grandfather John and Grandmother Josephine ended up raising three boys in what was now Margaret Kenny's house. John barely finished high school but ended up married to Josephine, a Radcliffe grad, and did not live long enough to see his son John graduate from Harvard, Robert from Johns Hopkins Medical School and my dad Francis from MIT. And most likely the business of prohibition whiskey provided the leverage for grandfather's early demise. But his persona lived on in the many acquaintances I have met over the years and from whom I learned a great deal.

My uncle John excelled at Harvard, meeting Walter Gropius and facilitating the design and construction of his mother Josephine's home on the rocky shores of Cohasset. My dad Francis and his wife Mary, my mom, designed and built first rowing shells, then PT boats for WW 2's Pacific Theater, then finally Cohasset Colonials 'make your own furniture'. My Uncle John struggled with his homosexuality at a time when it was rarely acceptable. He was visiting an old friend in Athens, Greece and suffered a massive terminal stroke on the steps of the Parthenon.

I was in my senior year at Harvard when I got the phone call. John had been living with a partner Phil on Boston's Beacon Hill and for several years had pulled away from my parents. John and my parents had a falling out and he was asked to not visit again. My dad called me at Harvard and asked if I could be with him when John's body arrived by plane at Logan.

After the funeral and Catholic Mass there was a reception at Phil and John's apartment and all the members of our family were invited. I had never met John's partner but found him most affable and friendly. He

invited me into their library where a scrap book was lying open by the window. And attached to the pages were stories and photos on my athletic career both at Milton Academy and Harvard. These were followed by more upsetting pictures taken from the ocean in front of our home, followed by profiles of the Gropius house and my brother John and I swimming and playing on our small beach.

“John hired a private motor launch from Boston to take him down to Sandy Beach. He would then sit and with a pair of binoculars would cry his heart out. He knew he had brought pain to your family but he had no skills to ask for forgiveness.”

For the most part I was not old enough to be a party to the Hagerty family's discord. My grandma's death happened suddenly during a summer night when I was seven and her passing precipitated a fight over who would inherit her home by the sea and its architecturally progressive contents. I was the one to find her dead in her bed as I had been the one, at her request, to wake her before sunrise every morning. That was the first day that I saw my father, her son, cry helplessly like a child.

My uncle John threw a few valuable Breuer chairs in his car and headed south to live with his brother Robert who was practicing medicine in Charleston, South Carolina. He returned to Boston's Beacon Hill but wintered with brother Bob. My dad internalized much of this emotional trauma. Josephine had been a quiet force that had kept her family together. But she ultimately died in her Bauhaus home surrounded by discord. She had asked me to wake her so I would be the first person every day she would see. I lost a strong and loving friend when she died.

Jamaica Biggs

It was a sweltering hot day in August. I would turn 14 in a few weeks and I had just finished breakfast. I was home alone in our big white house overlooking Sandy Beach when I heard a knock on the front screen door. There standing in the shade of the porch was a tall black man sweating profusely. He wore tan pants held up by a bright green rope and a big brass buckle, bright red shirt and sneakers.

“Hello,” he said in a sing-song accent. “could you tell me the way to the harba.”

“I am sorry,” I replied. “Where are you going?”

“To the harba, where the boats are,” he smiled.

“Oh, I am sorry, the harbor, yes. Your just go back out the driveway, turn left, go by the beach parking lot, over the bridge at the Run, stay left at the flower fountain and in a mile or so you will see the harbor.”

“Oh, much obliged sir,” he said and turned to leave. I then realized that he was on foot.

“Excuse me,” I said. “Would you like a glass of water before you leave?”

He stopped and thought a moment. “Oh, that would be most lovely, most generous,” he said.

“Even better, my mom made some lemonade. Why don’t you come and sit in the cool of the kitchen?”

A flash of anxiety crossed his face for just a moment, then his smile returned. “Well, I think that it would be better if I just sat down here on

the stoop. But I would love some lemonade. Thank you very much. That is very kind of you.

I returned shortly with two glasses and we sat together listening to the laughter of the bathers float up from the beach.

“My name is Biggs,” he offered “and I come from the island of Jamaica.” His voice had a formality as if he were talking to someone very important. “I have come to pick apples in Beachwood but until they are ready I have taken a job working on the replacement of the lantern on Minot’s Light.”

“I have sailed by Minot’s many times,” I replied. “My dad said that the light would be shut off for several weeks. What will your job be?”

“Back home in Kingston I am a cook. So I will be cooking for the Coast Guard repair crew.”

“Well, maybe I can come out in my boat and see you.”

“Yes, that would be very nice,” he replied. “So people call me Jamaica Biggs.”

“My name is Peter Hagerty, Mr. Biggs. I look forward to seeing you again soon.”

So we shook hands and Mr. Biggs headed down the road never to be seen again. I went off on my bicycle with my dog Lady and quickly forgot about our visit. That is until several weeks later when Dad announced over supper,

“A sad thing has happened out on the light. I was working in the office when I saw a police boat pull into the harbor. I went down to see what

was up and one of the boys said that a man went missing on Minot's. Apparently they had a colored man doing the cooking and this morning he was gone. No boats came or went during the night so they are expecting foul play from one of the Coast Guard repair crew."

Now for the first time I told them about my meeting with Jamaica Biggs. My mother was very upset. "You mean you let a complete stranger into our house," she shrieked. I remembered back to Mr. Biggs expression when I asked him to come into the kitchen where it was cool.

"We sat on the front steps," I reminded her. "He was a very kind man."

"Well maybe he is a very kind man who has gotten himself into a bit of trouble," she replied. I couldn't really blame my mom. She had no contact with black people. I remember years later when I brought my college roommate home for the first time and she asked him over lunch, "Well Conway, how long have you been black?"

The fall after Mr. Biggs went missing I started my first year at Milton Academy. I was a day student and commuted 50 minutes each way to school. The first three weeks were pretty rough but on a Friday late in September we were free to go home after lunch. I arrived to my empty house and a strong offshore breeze. Down in the cove in front of our house sat my dad's latest sailing design, a hydrofoil type craft called the Plataplane. Painted dark blue, its vast sail lay coiled on its deck. No harm could come from a quick sail and I would be back well before dark.

Before you could say 'Jack Robinson' I had stripped off my school clothes, pulled on some shorts and dragged the boat down to the

water's edge. I stepped the mast, unfurled the sail, dropped in the centerboard, grabbed the tiller and pushed out to sea.

At first I was in the lee of the house where there was scarcely any breeze but once I cleared the point the wind filled the sails and I was off like a rocket. There were straps under which I placed my ankles that allowed me to hike far out to windward to keep the boat from tipping over. Dad had designed it so that, when running before the wind, the bow would ever so slightly lift up off the water and plane. So as I headed with the direction of the offshore wind the bow began to lift and we began to fly. Before I knew, it I was far offshore. As I pulled in the sail and began to turn around, an enormous crack sounded and the mast broke in two pieces. The boat quickly rocked back to the way I was leaning, throwing me down into the water and dragging me along by my ankles. I climbed back on board and found myself shivering from the cold water. I immediately began to assess by situation.

I had many times been this far off shore but never so late in the day. Normally lobster boats would be prowling these ledges, pulling traps and providing a safety net for sailors in trouble. But as I quickly scanned the horizon, there were no boats in sight. It was too late in the season for skippers to take an evening sail. It was also hurricane season and most leisure boats had been hauled and tucked in for the winter. I was alone out here. I wrapped the sail around me for warmth and tried not to panic.

Back on shore I could see the sun dip over the western horizon and the first lights of the night come on. I imagined what my folks were doing. Mom would have come home to start supper, see my school clothes strewn on the upstairs floor and know that I was around. Dad would

see that the boat was missing and call the Coast Guard. It would be just a matter of time before someone would be out here. But how would they see me. There were already white caps on the waves and I blended in with the dark sea. Soon I would be past Minot's Light and on my way to Portugal and I didn't even speak Portuguese. "Come on Pete," I said out loud, "you can do this!"

I reached over the side, grabbed a passing lobster buoy and tied its rope to a cleat on the boat's deck. A long rope went down to the bottom of the sea where it attached to a lobster pot about the size of a large suitcase. It was now high tide and as I held the rope I could feel the pot at the other end skip and roll along the ocean floor. Hopefully it would catch on a rock and hold me like an anchor. As I looked over my shoulder, I could just make out the tall, dark tower of Minot's Light slowly drift into view. Still under repair, there was no beacon shining and no sign of life. Just in case I yelled out into the night.

For years sailors approaching Boston Harbor would sigh relief as they saw the 1-4-3 signal "I love you" blinking out into the night. In 1863 Irish immigrants danced on the deck of the Brig St. John after a harrowing crossing when they saw a faint light in the distance. But then a howling northeaster caught them before they could reach Boston Channel and drove them onto the rocks. 143 lives were lost that night.

The wind kept up and the night grew darker and I feared that I would miss the light entirely so I lay spread eagle on the bow and with both arms began paddling frantically toward the base of the lighthouse. I could see the waves breaking against its granite sides and the sharp, white barnacles glistened in the spray. As I grew closer I could see the rusty ladder about six feet above sea level, too high for me to

reach. But then I caught sight of a rope hanging down from the bottom rung and with a final paddle, I jumped up and with one hand on the broken stub of mast, I grabbed the rope with the other. The side of the Plattaplane ground against the side of the lighthouse but for the moment I had stopped my journey. Quickly I tied the rope to the bow of my boat and turned to hear a motor approaching. Sure enough, there was a light searching the waves. Its beacon fell on me and I waved.

Manuel Figuerto came from the Canary Islands off of Portugal when he was my age. Not speaking a word of English, he first settled in New Bedford, and then moved with his new wife to Cohasset where he took up fishing. Now in his fifties, he was someone “you did not screw with” as my friends would say. Deeply respected by my father, he was a man of few words who did not treat fools lightly. His boat was sleek and fast and now came into view.

“Push off and drift away from the light,” he yelled in his heavy accent. Soon I had tossed him the short rope I had found tied to the ladder and with strong arms he lifted me aboard the ‘Mrs. Fig’. I was shaking from the cold and the excitement and he tossed me a set of oilskins and told me to put them on. Then he tied the Plattaplane to his stern and headed toward Cohasset Harbor.

“Your Fran Hagerty’s boy,” he asked loudly over the motor.

“Yes sir,” I replied, bracing for his indictment. But instead he cut his engines and drifted quietly below the light. A moon had started to rise and we could pick out its features, the doorway half way up, the lantern and its large glass dome.

“You really have to see it at night. It’s my favorite time,” he said.

And we both stood there on the rolling deck, silently looking up at the tower rising 125 feet above the sea and the rock ledges. Then his hand dropped to the throttle and we surged off towards home.

It was a warm fall and the Plataplane went back to dad’s shop for repairs. But a few days before Christmas he asked me for help in putting it away ‘till next season. After we had stuffed the sails and stored the gear Dad said, “Here is the rope that you found on Minot’s ladder.”

He handed me a green piece of rope with a brass buckle on it. The last time I had seen it in the light of day it was holding up Jamaica Biggs’ pants. Four years later I received a post card in the mail from Kingston, Jamaica. On it were written in bold letters “Sorry I missed the sail. See you someday. Your friend Jamaica Biggs”.

Below is a story of me and the horses that helped me face my fears. From the rocky shores and sailboats of my childhood to the privileged education that followed, from the war in Vietnam to the mountains of Siberia, the deserts of the Middle East and the hills of Western Maine, four horses joined to help me face his guilt and embrace his forgiveness. This is also a story about my father.

Many years ago on a bright Fall day the farm phone rang at 1:00 pm. My dad was dead. Found in his back yard after searchers had combed the neighborhood, his best friend the neighborhood doctor was not able to revive him. Our family and the surrounding community were stunned. Today my brother called on this anniversary and we had a good conversation.

I have recently suspended alcohol for several reasons, one because I know drinking is getting in the way my wife Marty and I feel for each other. Consuming alcohol also may not be the best treatment for my leg's healing from an accident in the woods.

I am watching my mind slowly drift along at a slower speed, unable to assist me as I search for my gloves, hat, keys to the truck or even how to select the right auto line spacing for this document. Over the past few years I have taken on the role of teacher as I have attempted to get my neighbors and friends fired up about climate change and what they can do to mitigate its effect on the world. But I am losing the focus on the detail and the commitment to light a fire under others. I can still be

the nice guy, charming, compassionate, a good listener and a good neighbor but when it comes to facts and intense discord, I have lost whatever I had.

My dad was a boat builder. One day he saw with his spyglass a four masted schooner sail by our house. It was flying a foreign flag we had not seen before. The encyclopedia told us it was from the USSR.

Before you could say “borscht” we met the ship and crew as it docked in Boston and invited them all to our seaside home. The only member of the group that spoke English was the ship’s doctor. Dad engineered with lightning speed a gathering at our home and as the sun set over the ocean, the Soviet midshipmen were learning the latest dance steps from the girls of our Catholic Youth Organization.

I learned a great deal about the value of spontaneity that night. Many years later I would board an airplane and fly to Moscow, the head of the evil empire, to build a joint venture with a group of disparate folks. This was followed by a similar venture in the Middle East, then finally by native Navajo and Sioux shepherds in the American west. And always there was my dad right behind me.

Early one spring I had been visiting his wood-turning factory on Cohasset Harbor and was examining the quality of pine he was milling for his chairs. On the bottom of the seats was Cyrillic writing.

“Dad”, I exclaimed. “This is Russian writing.”

“Yes, he replied “but it is from a Russian owned factory in Latvia.”

No matter where I was off to he was there to wish me well. Boarding school exchange in London, heading off to Vietnam, wishing me well in Central Asia, as long as he was alive he was there with a hug and a prayer.

Afganski



At 9:00 A.M. I watched as a school bus, just like the American one that took me to school in the first grade, pull up in front of the Star hotel. Except this bus had the middle missing, same front door that the bus driver swung open, same rear escape hatch. But there were seats for only a couple of dozen passengers.

Zauria opened the door and beckoned me to enter. There sitting behind her were a group of young men, all in their 20's and 30's, smiling, waving to me as if we were old friends. Each wanted me to be in their row so I made my way towards the back as the bus

jerkily started across the square and down the main boulevard of Alma Aty, Kazakhstan.

I sat down next to a smiling young man named Bolot who shook my hand excitedly and began talking rapidly in Russian but with such a strong local dialect that I could not understand a word. Someone next to him named Timur tried to assist but his accent was unintelligible as well. I looked to Zauria for help but she was busy giving the driver instructions. Finally the photos came out of the wallets. First the pretty girl, then mother and father, then the helicopter, then the desert with mountains in the distance, then some horses, then some dead bodies lying on the ground. Other men began taking out similar pictures, different wives or girls, different parents, but the same stark mountains and many bodies.

“This is what we did,” said a clear voice in Russian over my shoulder. “We are Afganskis, we are your Vietnam. Tell us about your Vietnam.”

All at once it became very hot, almost stifling in the bus. My mind was racing. Yes, I was in Vietnam but I never shot anyone. I spent most of my time there looking for office space, arranging for phones to be installed. Yes, I listened to testimony of what crimes

our clients allegedly committed but I was no combat veteran. How did they know I had been in Vietnam in the first place?

“What was it like?” the same clear voice asked. “Will you tell us?”

“Maybe,” I replied. “But later, not now”.

Our first logging job

Tim and Ann were friends from Cambridge who had a beautiful farm in Madison just down the road from the Tracy cabin. When we walked together through their woodlot they proposed that we bring our two horses over for the summer and do a thinning of pine logs. This would be my first job and my logging partner and neighbor Bob agreed to join me. The horses would stay overnight in the Barclay's barn and Tim and Ann would feed them over the weekends.

It was early summer and we needed a market for the timber we cut. The year before, Marty and I had settled in Maine just across the border with Bob as a neighbor. Neither of us knew much about marketing, much less logging.

Dwight Mills was the respected logger and timber buyer in our town. He agreed to cross over into New Hampshire to truck and market the Barclay logs. He said to call him when we had a load ready but he knew how "wet behind the ears" we were. So he was pleased when we called several weeks later to say we had a load ready. He said he would be by on the upcoming weekend.

Bob and I arrived before sunup on that Saturday to make sure the log yard was in order, no slash, plenty of room for Dwight to turn around. The logs were neatly stacked and were just a short distance from the paved road. I dusted off my pants as his stake body truck rounded the corner and made it way up the hill. He gave a short nod as he turned the rig into the log yard, put on the brakes and swung out of the cab, landing on both feet. Not bad for a man in his forties.

“Jesus Christ” he muttered. “What do we have here?” My heart skipped a beat. He took out a scale rule and measured the closest log. “Did you boys cut all these logs eight foot?”

“Yes sir,” I stuttered. “I thought you might get more of them on your truck if they were shorter.” Dwight walked around the load to get the full impact of the situation. He then ran his fingers through his thinning hair, scratched his chin and began to laugh. He laughed until tears came to his eyes.

“I did the same thing twenty four years ago when I brought a load of eight foot hardwood logs into the Black Star Mill. I was the laughing stock of Porter.” And with no further ado, he climbed up on his loader, took every stick and was down the road in a jiffy, still with a smile on his face as if he could not forget that old memory.

Still shaken by the whole affair, we headed up to Barclay farmhouse and saw Tim running towards us from the barn.

“Pete, Barney has fallen through the barn floor.” We ran inside to see the right front leg of our horse protruding down through a hole that was a manure hatch. Farmers of old would easily lift the floor hatch cover and shovel the nighttime manure into an awaiting spreader below. Apparently Barney had dislodged the wooden cover and as hard as he tried, could not get enough traction to pull up his right front leg. Blood was starting to weep where his thigh rubbed on the edge of the hatch.

“We’ve got to get a block and tackle. Bob, can you run to my barn and bring mine back along with some short length of chain?” Bob took off like a shot just as Anne, Tim’s wife, joined us to announce that Congress

had just voted that Richard Nixon resign as President of the United States. Happy as that sounded I needed to find a vet and fast. It was a Saturday and, with everyone glued to the television, by late morning I was having no luck.

Then, just as Bob returned, Dr. Gene Hussey, one of the oldest and most respected vets in Maine, pulled into the driveway. He smiled as he exited his truck and said “Got your phone message. I’d rather help you guys than watch that sorry mess in Washington”.

Fortunately there was a strong rafter running over Barney’s stall to which Bob hitched the block and tackle. Barney had been struggling to free himself for over an hour and was now exhausted and covered with sweat. Dr. Hussey had brought a wide leather strap with metal rings at both ends.

To this day I do not remember how that strap and iron ring made it under this sweating horse but the minute it was through Bob clipped the tackle onto the rafter. Hussey had chosen not to use a sedative so that he might get Barney to move if the strap needed adjustment.

“Where is the manure hole cover he kicked off?” shouted Hussey.

“I have it” replied Tim.

“OK Tim, when his leg comes up and out of the hole you put that cover in place and when you have a sec, nail it down. And look, everybody, there is a strong chance that Barney now has a severely damaged leg. He has been at this hole for a while. If he cannot put weight on that leg, he will have to be put down. I have the stuff to do that already in a syringe in my bag.”

“OK, everybody, on three. One, two, three.” As Tim and Bob and Ann heaved on the pulley, Barney’s right leg slowly rose through the hole and when it was through, I pushed the manure cover in place and nailed it down. Slowly the crew lowered Barney’s body and I was the first to see that he put weight on it and then stomped his right foot on the cover as if he was tired of all this attention. Ann threw him a book of hay and when he got down to business, all those present offered a collective sigh of relief.

“If only we could get a president out of office that easily,” announced Dr. Hussey and we all agreed with laughter.

We gave the horses a two day break and on the following week returned to work with Barney pulling his share. It all seemed like both a bad dream and a miracle. I went by Dwight’s to pick up our check for the logs and was pleased that he had found a mill that would take a load of short pine logs.

I told him about Barney and he shared with me several occasions when Hussey saved the day for him.

“Look, Peter, I think we have a good market for the remaining pine but you will get a better price if you haul those logs out on a scoot rather than dragging them on the ground.

“Back about twenty years ago I was logging not far from the Barclays on the Holiday Road. When we were done I left that scoot there in the yard, always thinking I would come back for it later. But I went from horses to tractors, then to skidders.

“I am sure it is still there, all the metal parts, the chains, the bunk irons, sled runners, even a pole and set of eveners. The wood will be rotted

but I can saw you up a set of sled runners out of hemlock and your logs will be cleaner and make the buyer pay a bit more.”

Before cutting more trees I took a trip to the Holiday Road. It ran right past the Tracy family cabin. Back then there were just a few camps on the road.

“Go in for just under a mile,” were Dwight’s instructions. “There the road will turn to the right but you head straight onto more of a path. Down there about fifty yards on the left you will see an oak, probably about thirty years old. Right there is where we left the scoot.”

And sure enough four rusty stake pockets were hiding under the fallen oak leaves along with an assortment of chains and steel items that soon found a place on our new scoot. Dwight sawed out the two scoot runners, twelve feet long, one foot high and four inches thick, complete with points like snow skis. Bob and I used that on many jobs and sold as often as we could to Dwight.

Dwight is gone now, sent off by a tent full of friends and family at the local fair grounds. In later years I had visited him as often as I could at his daughter’s home. He would often arrive at our farm unannounced in his white truck and wait in the driveway till someone saw him sitting there. All my plans for the day went out the window those days as I climbed into the front seat and brought him up to date. His son in law and extended family ran a saw mill where we had all the lumber we needed sawed. And a grandson was here yesterday helping me cut firewood. So the tradition goes on.

The Barclays are gone but their family lives on. My neighbor Bob was last seen diving for sea urchins, Nicker and Barney are buried out in our

field, visited daily by Cornish Plowman's Nick and Hogback Willie Dew, their present stand ins. Marty and I are still here, always putting out a little more hay for these spirits that bring a tear to my eyes.

When I was young and living by the ocean, I would welcome this kind of weather, the fall wind off the land, the September sun yielding to the cooling air and the realization that school was right around the corner. But not quite yet.

My summer job and tennis lessons were over, the sailboats were headed for the last race and my home by the sea suddenly became quiet. Tears now unexpectedly came to my eyes on days like these. I would then retreat to a giant cleft in the granite in front of my home where I was unseen by the world, everyone, that is, except my boxer Lady.



Here the incoming ocean could not reach us. But on moon tides like today our toes would be kissed by the occasional high reaching salty wave. This was hurricane season and one was on its way, triggering flocks of ducks to head southward. Every once and a while the ocean would surge up our cleft, dragging all manner of flotsam and jetsam with it. Lady would scramble higher up to safety, barking at me to quickly follow.

Today, sixty- five years later, this fall air, cool and powerful, is once again dragging giant cumulus clouds over our farm. Lady's spirit is alive and well in our two farm dogs, Weyland and Modi. Our oldest and longest-lived sheep Katy died over the winter and our draft horses, brothers Hog Back Willie Dew and Cornish Plowman Nick have tried to take her place in the food chain. As they whinny and stomp their feet, eager for first cut hay, cats Mateo and Masha take a quick jog around the barn on the lookout for mice or rats.

On these Fall days when the sun comes late and leaves early, I can always justify crawling back under the covers for a few more minutes of "well deserved" sleep. But today my plans will take me up to the woodlot to buck up some fallen trees and I groan a bit as I lower myself to the floor and begin my workouts.

Three years ago, I was walking across the horse field on a late winter morning when Nick snuck up from behind and gave me a playful push with his nose. I apparently was half asleep and went flying forward at the same time. Spinning around to scold him, I tripped on a piece of frozen manure and landed flat on my back. Hours later in the Portland ER, Dr. Jack Cullen was guiding me into an MRI to X-ray my spine. I

chose “country” as my music choice and five hours later he was pointing out the hot spots on the film.

Three years ago, I was a farmer on a mission. Today I am on a mission to behave myself, listen to my back and right knee, and be able to walk upright, do my stretching and help Marty keep our dreams alive.