TWO WEEKS NOTICE...ALOHA

JOHN L. BOVE, M.A.
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Aloha
Acknowledgments

To the many people who have helped through this grieving process, Lester, Norwood, The Sisters of Presentation of Mary at Marie Joseph, especially Sister Aline who shed light on forgiveness. Geoffrey, and Jon for being there for me. Father Greenleaf, and Father Lupo; Mary, my new and special friend who has encouraged me for months to continue. I would be remiss if I didn’t thank Dee, who rescued me from a fatal computer error.

Special thanks to Lynn Morgan who graciously edited the text all the way from Hawaii. (Parenthetically, any grammatical and spelling errors which remain are due to the extensive number of changes which were made following her editing).

And, Jenni (burdened with her own grief over her mother’s passing she kept the home fires burning) who helped in more ways than she knows, and without whom the pictures in the “Journal” would never have happened.
FOR FRAN WITH ENDURING LOVE
Forward

My friend, my love, my companion, my best and most fair critic, my conscience, my life with whom I shared all for 57 years departed ‘forever’ on May 24, 2010. I am left with rage and grief, lost in the here and now.

The sun is not so bright…the sliver of a new moon is not so promising for its growth into the luminous full moon…the rain on a roof is not so musical…the wonder of the ocean no longer grips me with its beauty and vast expanse…the fall leaves will not be so colorful.

These were my thoughts for many months.

“Have pity on me, O Lord, for I am languishing; heal me, O Lord, for my body is in terror: my soul too, is utterly terrified…” (Psalm 6:2,3)

There is no one to fully share. There is no quiet laugh at an ‘inside’ joke. The quick hug which says, ‘I’m sorry,’ or ‘I love you’ has gone. There is a vacuum which I struggle not to enter. I can’t reach over for her hand while driving and have her place her hand in mine and give it a squeeze, which means ‘I love you honey,’ and then holding on for a few silent minutes. I am constantly under attack from the unseen demons of grief.

“I am wearied with sighing; every night I flood my bed with weeping…” (Psalm 6:7)

The above was written before I completed my journal. The next few paragraphs after I finished it. My rage has subsided (it is contained). I understand more deeply the meaning of true forgiveness. It has been difficult. Given time I think I will be
able to forgive myself. I will never stop grieving, but my grief has taken a healthier direction.

“...but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment…” (Matthew 5:22)

I “visited” Fran on Christmas, 2010, sat down and had a nice conversation for about 45 minutes, smoked a good cigar and had some peace. I made a large swag from the numerous firs in our yard, tied a big red ribbon on it and lashed it to the small tree which is by our stone.

It was the first time since her interment the cemetery—flat, and by the ocean—was totally calm. No wind, even the tree tops were still. The only noise breaking the quiet were the jets taking off and landing at Portland Airport. I was in the eye of the first big storm of the winter.

My personal storm has subsided, not ended, but subsided. The emptiness remains, but I understand it better.

Aloha
Preface

This was originally a journal through which I sought to regain some equilibrium and understanding. The loss of Fran turned my world “topsy turvy.” I was so angry and grief stricken it threatened my health. Stress of any kind, left unchecked, attacks the immune system which inevitably leads to illness.

Writing gives you a focal point for your anger and grief. Introspective writing, I have discovered, is a lot like meditation. It allows you to view your thoughts much like an outside observer would do.

In my case it helped me evaluate the anger, and give thoughtful consideration to my personal environment. It allowed the grief and anger to be brought into focus, and the unforgiveness to be understood. It is a great self-counseling tool.

When Joy Lewis passed away C.S. Lewis began a journal which turned into a book: A Grief Observed. Lewis wrote his journal because he feared he was losing his Faith. He is, of course, considered one of the great philosophers and authors of the Twentieth Century.

Lewis married Joy late in life. Joy was a widow, and Lewis a confirmed bachelor. Joy expanded Lewis’ universe as Fran did mine. Joy died not long after they were married. Lewis, as I have been, was adrift with grief and anger. His journal was cathartic for him.

We were both asking why, and looking for answers. Lewis was questioning his Faith. His anger and resentment and questions were directed, as I understand it, at his Faith. My anger, frustration and unforgiveness were directed toward people. I turned to my
Faith to buoy me; to carry me through once again as it had after the deaths of our three children—but then Fran was at my side.

Lewis’ journal gave him the answers and helped him keep his Faith, mine has softened my anger and resentment and has once again reinforced my Faith. I think both of us used our journals as a memorial to our departed loved ones.

The two poems within this text credited to JLB are words over which I had no control. Both flowed from the top of my head, and I believe my pen was guided in some way by Fran. I don’t even remember writing them. I have never written poetry before this other than the “roses are red and violets are blue” kind of stuff.
About the Journal

The “Journal” is a tribute to Fran. Her priorities were family/church/community. She immersed herself in her family. Fran relished her role as a mother. The inclusion of information about her family and my family seemed necessary as part of defining who Fran is/was.

For fifty seven years I tried to be there for her and our children, and I tried my best not to interfere with her methods. I didn’t always agree, and I didn’t always “keep out of it,” but in the end, her instincts seemed to be the correct ones.

One of my treasured notes from Fran said: “You’re right—I am SO PROUD OF MY SONS I could burst. And I’m right—you gave me the opportunity to raise them in my own way. It doesn’t matter to me how attentive or whatever they are, just that they ARE as they are—thank you honey for my life that you have saved.”

We had been discussing how our boys were developing into independent, responsible and caring human beings, but I had made the comment they didn’t seem so devoted to us as my brothers’ children did to their parents. I had complained they didn’t always show us the respect I thought they should. I can’t remember what she meant by “…my life that you saved.”

I sincerely hope there are parts of the “Journal” which might help others in similar circumstances. I have grown through reviewing our life together. I have not yet found the elusive exit to the circle of grief; perhaps there no exit, but just a simple fading of the lines as time passes.

Unfortunately a review of a long life together reminds one of many negatives. Luckily the positives outweigh the negatives.
I know Fran was the greatest intellectual, social, and religious influence in my life. Her Faith rescued me, and helped both of us through many tragedies. In retrospect, although I wish I had done many things differently, I realize I tried my best.

What have I learned from this review of our life, and my testimony to how much Fran meant to me?

I have learned the depth of understanding she had was more than I knew during our journey…
I have learned there is no turning back the clock…
I have learned grief, anger, guilt and unforgiveness need to be understood and viewed as objectively as possible or they will destroy you…
I have learned one needs to learn from sorrow…
I have learned to continue loving…
I have learned to continue having patience and faith…
I have learned that life does, and must go on…
I have learned there is much more to learn.
“This existence of ours is as transient as autumn clouds
To watch the birth..(or)..death of beings is like looking at the
Movements of a dance
A lifetime is like a flash of lightning in the sky.
Rushing by, like a torrent down a steep mountain” (1)

What follows was rooted in rage, frustration, unforgiveness, and a search for closure.

“One cannot justify unjust anger: anger plunges a man to his downfall.”
(Ecclesiasticus 1:19)

FRANCES M. BOVE
JULY 26, 1930—MAY 24, 2010

JOHN L. BOVE
DEC. 14, 1929—

Inscriptions on tombstones don’t really say much about the person or persons buried there.

I need to celebrate Fran’s life, and acknowledge her passing. I need to quiet my rage, forgive and come to closure.

“One of the chief reasons we have so much anguish and difficulty facing death is that we ignore the truth of impermanence. We so desperately want everything to continue as it is that we have to believe things will always stay the same.
But this is make-believe.” (2)
Most of us really don’t appreciate what we have until it is taken away from us. I appreciated Fran’s intelligence and her incisive understanding of issues, but it is only in retrospect that I have been totally overwhelmed. Fran was truly a “Renaissance Woman.” She was strong of mind, body, will and soul.

Fran was born on July 26, 1930 in Portland, Maine at what is now Maine Medical Center.

Her parents lived on Park Street across from the Oaks, but shortly after her birth, moved to Woodford Street just off Brighton Avenue a few streets from Falmouth Street, where the Portland Law School was later erected.

Fran went to Nathan Clifford elementary school on Falmouth Street. It is a three story gray building with nice lines. It is imposing, yet not threatening. She loved Nathan Clifford. She was disappointed when Portland decided to close the school prior to her death. It will be closed as an elementary school, but there are plans to turn it into a science center. I am sure she is delighted about that development.

Her delight in her school didn’t last long because Frank (Fran’s father) decided taxes in Portland were too high and he searched for a lower tax base community. He found Goose Rocks Beach in Kennebunkport had very low taxes with little prospect for increases.

He and Helen hired a contractor and an architect, and plans were drawn for a lovely house. They found a nice lot about a hundred yards from the beach and built their cottage. Without checking the exact date I believe it was about 1937 or 1938.
During the big boom in housing in the 80’s, the house could have sold for nearly a million dollars, judging by sales in the same area. We were not fortunate enough to predict the boom and we sold Fran’s house a couple of years early.

The McRae’s (Frank’s spelling) moved in and Fran was enrolled in a one room, several grades elementary school. She was a beautiful youngster with a curly head of hair, reminding me of Shirley Temple. She was always wiry, and could outrun all the boys. When we were married she could still outrun me.

The switch of schools could only be described as major culture shock for a child of that age who had been accustomed to a nice school with separate grades and indoor plumbing.

Fran, unfortunately, was very much ahead of what they were studying and she wasn’t too happy in school, but she adapted.

The one positive element during these years was Goose Rocks Beach. It was idyllic with its beautiful sandy and safe beach, the stately pines and white birches, and the quiet. Fran had a favorite White Birch under which she would read and write poetry. She spent most of her time in the woods with her friend Dickie—who also lived at the beach full time. They were described as a couple of kids who were “pretty wild.” So, she had an outlet, and she survived the school.

Where appropriate, excerpts from Fran’s writing are included. Additional writings are in the appendix, including a large number of “briefs” from the Coast Star, the weekly newspaper of the “Kennebunks.” I don’t know how long she wrote for the Star, but I never really appreciated the quality of her writing until I re-read the articles. Jenni had me go to the Kennebunk Library and I copied most of them.

She wrote this about her “Woods” in 1945:

“My favorite locale is a field, which lies about a mile back in the woods in back of our house. It is quite solitary, and apart from all
civilization, and is surrounded on three sides by woods, the fourth being a series of “salt ponds”, which are pools of salt water that is not affected by the tide, and which in winter are frozen over by a peculiar sort of ice—we used to call it “cat-ice”. There are several paths leading into this field, and all are very beautiful. One comes down over a little hill, and gives a view of the whole meadow at a glance. One is in a little glade, and comes up into the field. One is an old road, which in some time long ago was used for a farmer’s wagon. And one is a path which is lined with maples, and has a well, old and long deserted, at its beginning. At one end of the field is a birch—a very beautiful birch, which my family has gotten used to my talking about steadily. It is like a poem in motion, a ballet dancer, a lovely piece of music, or a master painting of wind. In autumn, its yellowed leaves and clear white branches make a golden glory against the darkness of the coniferous trees behind the birch. On all sides the other trees are arrayed in gorgeous color; but they give way to the birch in this one quarter, letting it hold all the state and honor of being the outstanding one of the backdrop of darker woods. The air is clear and winey, the sky blue, and the sun bright, and the apple in my hand crisp and red and shining with the wonder that is fall.

In Winter, the birch is still the main player in this frozen tableau of the wonders of nature. The field is covered evenly with snow, although every now and then one can see a stalk of grass above the surface. Besides that, the surface is unbroken except for the single track made by my feet, and the blurred track of my small dog trying his best to keep up with me through the deep snow. The birch is still the brightest and the whitest of all the trees, and the dark backdrop is still there, but now the color has given way to a more dignified sort of beauty—that of clear black and white, the frosty perfection of the priceless cameo. The birch seems like a snow statue, frozen to permanence for all who wish to behold it. It raises its arms to God in a silent plea for release from its wintry bonds. The sharp air bites into my cheeks and fingers, and my dog barks in delight at the powdery snow.

Now it is summer. The air is warm, the breeze lazy, the bugs busy, and humming as they go about their buggy labors…. the field is
full of red tiger lilies, and yellow black-eyed Susans…. I come from the end of the field from where you look up to the corner where the birch is silhouetted, and wait very carefully until I get within fifty yards or so of it, then I look. It was worth the wait, for in the afternoon sun the birch is dazzling in its whiteness.

The sun seems to pick out the birch for its special notice, for none of the other trees have such a glow….I feel myself wondering whether or not it is some messenger from God come down to give some of the glory of the heavens to us poor mortals. I always feel privileged when I look at it…..I only wonder about the comparative merits of this natural wonderland and all the desired happiness and amusements of the city.”

Helen finally decided enough was enough and she enrolled Fran in the Kennebunk School system. Kennebunk was a great improvement with the exception of the school bus. The bus was one of those Ford station wagons which had a wood body and was varnished. She said it was crowded, loud and full of wet kids.

Unfortunately these massive pines along with her beloved white birches were destroyed in the great Maine fire of 1946 which ravaged the countryside from Bar Harbor to Kittery. Frank was on a business trip north of Bar Harbor when the fire broke out. He drove to Goose Rocks at speeds in excess of 70 miles per hour—there was no Rt. 95 then—with flames all around him in many stretches. It was a hair- raising trip.

When he arrived the fires had reached the area around Goose Rocks and he, Helen and Fran’s dog, along with neighbors, spent the night in the river with wet blankets over their heads to protect them from flying embers. There is a story of one elderly woman who refused to leave her house. The fire made a perfect square around the house and she survived. I believe the story is a true one, but I never followed up on it.
Fran wrote again about her birch:

_Aftermath_

“My birch, my pure white birch I loved so well.  
Now nothing but a tragic, burned-out ghost!  
Surrounded by the land that made her grace  
The more accentuated in that field  
Blackened and flattened to the ground  
Along with all the woods along the coast.

But why my birch? Oh yes, my house was spared,  
And I thank God for that, for I am sure  
That there was some almighty guiding hand  
At work to make the fire pass us by,  
Although it came not many feet away  
From us, while sweeping on its deadly tour.

But my real home, the woods, the trees, the hills,  
The fields behind my house, and then my birch  
Are gone completely and forever, now.  
There may be regrowth, but the loveliness  
That I so treasured will not reappear.  
Now never more will stand that swaying birch

In actuality as in my heart,  
A graceful ballerina on the stage  
That suits her best: the one of darker trees  
Behind her, and on all sides verdant green.  
This memory is the one that through my life  
Will stay with me—a priceless heritage.”

World War II came along and Fran’s father, now in his fifties, tried to enlist in the U.S. Air Force; in spite of his experience as a pilot in WW I, his application was rejected.
With ship building booming in the area, he decided to buy a bus and transport men to and from the Portland Ship Yard. He did this and made some good money as long as the war lasted.

One of the perks for Fran was the comic books the men would leave on the bus. If she had saved these she would have been a very wealthy person—but wouldn’t we all. The first editions of such valuable comics as Superman, Captain Marvel, The Flash, The Green Hornet, and many others were left on the bus.

After Fran completed the eighth grade, Helen enrolled her in Gould Academy in Bethel, Maine in 1944—the class of 1948. She really blossomed at Gould. It was a positive four years, a delightful experience for her.

Fran had once again found a friendly educational environment. Gould was just what the “doctor ordered.” Fran spent a fruitful four years as a resident student participating in many activities. She was a member of the staff on the yearbook, wrote for the school newspaper and sang in the choir; she skied, and was into gymnastics. Fran excelled on the rings and described stunts which made my hair stand on end.

When she talked about Gould she would invariably describe the fantastic food served. She spoke of early morning hours, full of the aromas from the kitchen, the best of which were the great doughnuts they made. She was really into eating good food, and lots of it. In spite of this she was never heavier than a very trim 120 pounds. She had amazing metabolism. Of course she was going all the time which probably added to her being able to eat such massive amounts of food without gaining weight.

Until the last few years of our marriage she never varied much between 110 and 115. Even when she was pregnant she never gained much weight.

Many years later I signed a contract as Guidance Director at Tel Star Regional High School which was in the process of
being built. Tel Star is in Bethel, and it draws students from five surrounding communities.

I was offered a position to teach at the college level shortly after I signed the contract at Tel Star. I secured my release from the contract so I could teach at St. Anselm College in Manchester NH. It was another in a long line of bad decisions. This one was another unwise, selfish move on my part.

Fran would have been delighted to move to Bethel. We had agreed I should return to high school counseling were I had been the most settled and pleased with my work life. I was good at it. She never said a word at the time, or after. She should have hit me with a baseball bat.

After graduation from Gould the McRae’s couldn’t decide on the next step. Fran had decided she wanted to go to Middlebury College in Vermont. Her decision came after the cut-off date for admission. The only room left on campus was in the French House, and Fran was not a French Major.

The Headmaster at Gould called the admissions office. He assured the Dean of Admissions Middlebury Fran would fit in at the French House, and be able to follow the rules of the House.

Middlebury was (is) famous for teaching foreign languages. If you live at the Italian House you spoke Italian. If you lived at the French House you spoke French. So long as you were in one of the language houses you spoke it or you were dismissed. Fran had two years of French. She was, however, a quick study, and she was able to make her way through the first few weeks with what she had learned, and during that time she became more comfortable with the language. I honestly don’t know whether she lived there for more than one year, but she remained at Middlebury for three great years.

She loved the academic challenges at Middlebury. Her favorite teacher was Sam Guarnache, who taught Italian. One of her favorite ways to while away the hours, other than skiing and other
social activities, was spending time at the nearby Morgan Horse Farm. She spoke about the farm on many occasions talking about the rolling fields, and the beauty of the surroundings as well as the magnificent horses.

The highlight of her three years was the summer she spent at Bread Loaf. Bread Loaf school of English is based at the college’s Bread Loaf Mountain Campus in Ripton, Vermont, just a short distance from Middlebury.

The poet Robert Frost is credited as a major influence on the school. Middlebury’s internet site describes the location: “…in sight of the main ridge of the Green Mountains…Frost first came to the school at the invitation of Dean Wilfred Davison in 1921. Friend and neighbor to Bread Loaf, (he) returned to the school every summer, with but three exceptions, for forty two years…Every summer since 1920, Bread Loaf has offered students intensive courses in literature, creative writing, the teaching of writing and theater…” Students come from all over the world as well as the United States. It was a literary “Garden of Eden” for her.

She read, wrote and attended sessions with brilliant instructors. Along with reading constantly for all the days of her life she kept a journal for many years. I haven’t seen all of the journals, but I’m betting they would make one heck of a book. She never allowed us to read them. Jenni has what we have found of them.

We have never really settled here in Saco. We sort of sat down and have lived here for twelve years and we still have unopened boxes in the cellar. I’m not even tempted to open the boxes.

A sample of her poetry follows. I think the first one was written in Falmouth, Maine. I believe it was after Christopher died and I “cuddled” her until she quieted and slept.

“In the dark of pre-dawn I softly cried
For that which might have been
And you heard and pitied me,

“
And your arm came out to me in love,
Though I quieted myself for your sake;
And through soft fog fingers of consciousness
Of an arm under my head, a tenderness caring,
I slept, white light came to the morning,
As a woman loved. Pity almost like goodby
Seemed to be my craving, soothing enough;
And I stole bliss.”

She spent the nights at Bread Loaf studying and socializing. I don’t think they ever went to bed. She played her beloved Gibson and there were nightly songfests. Fran had perfect pitch and could tune a guitar or any stringed instrument with no help from a tuning fork or another instrument.

I think the following was written during the Bread Loaf period:

“Yes, there are two worlds
The world of the sun
The world of the moon
The world of consciousness
The world of feeling
One for the masculine
One for female
And yes we must live in the light of day, and do not question that necessity,

but it was in the world
of the moon
that we found our magic
and in woman
that we found our delight

and male and female
created be them.....
and the moon was under her feet’
She could remember the words of music she had heard many years ago. If we were listening to an old Broadway musical she always knew the words, and would sing along with the music. If we were watching a play on MPB like “Romeo and Juliet,” or “Twelfth Night,” she would frequently repeat the words along with the actors. If Oklahoma, or any other musical was on, she’d join in, on key, and with the right words.

We all have that hard drive in our brain, but it is rare that many of us can recall what is on that drive virtually at will. Fran could quote poetry she wrote before she went to school. She seemed to remember everything she read and could pull it up whenever she wanted to do so. Her reading could be described as voracious. She read mystery thrillers, science fiction, biography, history (especially women’s history), science, politics, and the Bible. She simply wanted to know. This made her a super conversationalist. The only genre she avoided like the plague was romance novels.

She loved all kinds of music, jazz, rap, rock, pops, Broadway Musicals, and opera. I think it was a dead heat between opera and jazz. Her repertoire included Bechet, Jelly Roll Morton, Earl Hines, Fats Waller, Thelonious Monk Leadbelly, and others. She played piano at a piano bar in Burlington before I met her.

At one time I thought she was shy. This was not the case. She simply couldn’t suffer fools, and when in their presence would be polite and clam up. She was really an extrovert, and with her guitar, singing and wide ranging knowledge, she was a very interesting person when she chose to be.

When I was taking courses at Boston College, toward what I hoped would be an EdD, one of the classes was Adolescent Psychology. The course was taught by a Jesuit who was recognized throughout the discipline as one of the top men in the field. He was famous for his difficult exams. I was tempted to sneak Fran into the classroom to take my final for me.
I did the next best thing. I asked her to read the text (she had done this many times for me) and go over it with me. Prior to the final examination I suggested she sit with the text and create ten essay questions which she thought might be asked on the examination.

The day of the exam I went to the library several hours prior to the exam to review the outside readings, just in case. I carried with me the ten questions (or areas) Fran had written. She also made notes about how she would discuss them. I spent the last few minutes before the exam reading and rereading her notes.

When I entered the classroom for the two hour exam I was pretty tired, but I thought I was ready. I didn’t know how ready until the exam booklets were handed out. Fran had hit nine of the ten questions almost word for word.

I breezed through the exam answering the nine questions, and made only slight comments on the tenth, handed it in and left within an hour. The Jesuit raised his eyebrows, grunted something like are you certain Mr. Bove? I scored a 90 on the exam and a B+ for the course.

Due to circumstances beyond her control Fran took a year off after her junior year at Middlebury, and moved to Burlington, Vermont. In the summer of nineteen fifty two she matriculated at UVM to complete her senior year. In the summer of ninety fifty three she signed up for two courses to complete her degree requirements. I entered the picture and this was delayed. I needed to look up at the wall where our degrees are hung in my office to realize it was delayed until June 10, 1956. This would have been after she completed part of a Master’s Degree in Library Science at State University, Albany, New York.

Probably nothing describes her as a person better than a letter I received from a Priest whom Fran had helped fund through his time in the Seminary, and continued to donate to him and his causes until her death.
The letter was dated January 6, 2011, Epiphany, one of Fran’s favorite days of the Church Year:

Father Clif said: “I learned about the foster parent program just a few days after arriving (in seminary) in Winchester, Virginia….we received names of people who had become our foster parents. I wrote her (letters) that month and “told” about myself. Mrs. Bove was one of the very few who ever wrote back personally. For the next six years of my education and formation as a missionary priest she sent her monthly donation and she wrote to me. None of us ever knew what the donation was. We wrote to each person….she was very, very faithful. When I went to my first mission in September 1969….a very violent and economically “lousy” neighborhood in Cleveland…she continued to write me. Each Christmas she sent me a donation….I “had” well over 300 names by the time of my ordination and Mrs. Bove was one of the very few who faithfully wrote…Your wife’s letters to me were good. She did not say a great deal about herself, but I came to understand I was hearing from a good woman and I was grateful…You two were ten years married when I first met you through the…program.

In my 41 years of priesthood I have struggled so much with immature and selfish people who treated and still do treat marriage like it was a trip to McDonalds: Easily gotten, easily used, easily thrown away. You and Mrs. Bove are teachers to young couples. Thank you Mr. Bove, for the gift you and she have given and maybe never even knew you were doing so.”

She had several favorite causes to which she donated. We didn’t have very much money when she began this. When she started with Father Clif I was making $5,000 a year as a school principal, and additional money with part time jobs. She managed because she thought it was the right thing to do. I remember the picture of the little boy in Guatemala who “wrote” to her to express his thanks.

There were many others over the years. She would mention them when she decided and discussed them with me. When they
sent a note of thanks she would share the note with me. Once in awhile I would grumble, but she always controlled the purse strings with my hearty approval and thanks. I hated to get into the bill paying “circle of frustration.” I tried keeping the check book once, and it was a disaster.

Part of Jesus’ long Sermon on the Mount illustrates Fran’s approach to sharing and giving:

“Take care not to perform righteous Deeds in order that people may see them; Otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. When you give alms do not blow a trumpet before you…. to win the praise of others…. when you give alms do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, so that your alms giving may be secret. And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.” (Matthew 6:1, 16-18)

I am just beginning to realize how many causes she had because I get “thank you” letters several times a week, addressed to her, which mention specific dates or events to which she had regularly donated. It has been necessary to eliminate many of these. I will try to send something to her favorites in her memory.

Fran enjoyed cooking for the family. She cooked a variety of foods which were increasingly organic. Organic ingredients were very difficult to find until the last ten years or so. Many of our vegetables came from our garden which she always had, except for the years we lived full time at the beach. Prepared organic foods were even more difficult to find. For most of our married life you could see her in grocery stores reading the labels, and checking the contents of the various foods she needed. The labels, of course, were not totally truthful until the last fifteen or twenty years. Organic finally has a large following. The big problem now is many people seem to think natural is a synonym for organic. For many years Fran would buy raw milk when she could find it. Today there are three farms in Maine alone providing raw milk for a few stores. Lois’ Natural Foods in Scarborough has the best variety that we have been able to find.
For several years margarine was touted as a food which would lower cholesterol. You could probably eat nothing worse for your cholesterol or your health in general. You never found it in our house. While skim milk and all the lo-fat products probably have a place in a pharmaceutical world I doubt they do much for your health. In the case of margarine I always said anything you can use to lubricate your car is probably not very good for you.

Fran became an herbalist. She would always correct me and say she wasn’t, but she really was. She studied them and we still have a shelf full of liquid herbs. When she had the opportunity she studied mail order courses from the “Ayurvedic Institute of Natural Medicine” in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Ayurveda is defined as “the ancient Hindu science of life.” The best known practitioner of Ayurveda is Deepak Chopra, whose writings have brought the science into world-wide attention. Fran was a student of Ayurveda before Deepak was very well known.

Among her other talents she also cut hair. I used a barber only twice in the fifteen seven years we were married. Once when she was having a baby at an inconsiderate time when I needed a haircut. I was anchoring the news at WCAX Television in Burlington, Vermont, and one did not let his hair grow at a conservative station. The other time was when I was complaining rather vociferously in our backyard one very warm summer night in Merrimac, Massachusetts. My hair was quite long. She cut one side, front to back and, handed me the scissors and said: “Honey, perhaps you’d be happier if you cut the rest of it.” I went to church the next day with a strange look.

It is almost a year since she died, and I have had my hair cut twice by my great niece, Sarah, in Burlington, Vermont when I visited; again while visiting my son in Haverhill, Massachusetts. A friend of his wife’s happened to be there on two occasions and she likes to cut hair. I trimmed it twice and it didn’t look too bad, so I will continue. Eventually I think I will scare the world and shave it.
I was given a leave from Tinker Air Force Base in New City, Oklahoma before reporting to Travis Air Force Base in California.

The bus from Oklahoma City was a hot box. When we arrived in St. Louis, Missouri the temperature was somewhere in the high 90’s, the humidity was darn close to that, and the air conditioning went south on the bus.

Technicians were unable to get it repaired because of the schedule. I guess they don’t have spare buses in St. Louis. We were in that oven all the way home. We arrived in Burlington, Vermont in the early morning of July 6.

I checked in with my parents, said hello to my sister-in-law who lived in the house in front of ours, made a date for that night, and went dancing.

That took care of the first night home, and I thought it would generally be my routine for my two week leave.

Kismet stepped in at this point.

On July 7, I decided to go into town and visit my brother Louis who was a Captain on the Burlington Police Force. Waterman Building, the primary administrative building of UVM, was on our route to the business center of Burlington. Waterman housed the main administration, classrooms, a bookstore, the cafeteria and a coffee shop. I changed my itinerary and decided to stop for a coffee and see if there were any people around I knew.
Had I been graded for attendance at the coffee shop, I would have graduated Summa Cum Laude and delivered the graduation speech. Unfortunately, however, the dean of the college of arts and sciences informed me I had the largest number of cut classes (at the time) of any student who ever graduated from the University of Vermont. I graduated by the skin of my teeth.

I wore this like a badge of honor for a number of years, until I realized what a waste and what jerk I had been.

Burlington is nestled in a valley at the widest point of Lake Champlain with the Adirondacks of New York to the West, and the Green Mountains of Vermont to the East. It can get intolerably hot in July, but this day was warm and comfortable, perfect for tanning on the green and disappearing to North Beach, and that was where most students were.

There were about a half dozen people studying. A girl I had met and dated a few times before I went into the Air Force was sitting alone reading a book. She was getting an early start on a graduate degree. We chatted for awhile and I was thinking of asking her for a date for that night. Before I did this, we ran out of coffee and I bought a couple of fresh cups.

When I returned Fran and another girl had joined us. I was immediately “smitten.” There were a number of things about Fran which appealed to me. She was intelligent, really good looking when she took those terrible glasses off, very attractive with a slim body that would not stop, and when she got up to get us fresh coffee, she had legs which were better than Marlene Dietrich’s. I didn’t say much. That was probably a plus. She later said they moved to our table because of my broad shoulders. I guess she wasn’t that disappointed about my front either.

We sat for at least a half hour, and when we broke up I walked her to her car, and asked if she would like to go into town, look around, and have a sandwich or something. She said she’d like that. I told her we’d need to use her car because I didn’t have one.
For the next twelve hours we wandered all over Burlington. I showed her where I was born, and my grammar school—good old Lawrence Barnes on North Street—which was now a modern building. We went to Battery Park where we sat on the one remaining cannon from the War of 1812. The rest of them had gone into the need for Iron and steel in WW II. We had lunch at Bernardini’s, now closed, and I think later in the afternoon we had spaghetti at Bove’s, both on Pearl ST.

In the early evening we went to Melanson’s, a popular college bar in Winooski. The owners, Phil and Julie were cool-- Julie was cooler. She was one of the attractions, slim and deeply tanned. She had a white Cadillac convertible and was fond of driving around town every day. She was very noticeable and a good advertisement for Melanson’s. More often than not she had several students with her and they ended up at Melanson’s.

They allowed us to write messages on paper plates and tack them to the low ceilings which could be reached by standing on a bench. I wrote something about Fran and John, and tacked it up. It was a great place to spend as much time as you liked without being hassled. Phil and Julie were great to us and Phil made the best and biggest burgers in town.

It was close to dinner time. I didn’t want to split so I suggested we go dancing at Sleepy Hollow a few miles out of town just north of Winooski. It was named after its location which was at the bottom of two hills in either Colchester, or Essex—the town lines get fuzzy around there. She wanted to change first. I said OK, and suggested she wear a bathing suit under whatever she decided to put on because it was getting pretty humid and still quite warm. I thought we could take a swim afterward.

We went to her apartment so she could change. I was all set with my Air Force Issue Boxer Shorts.

When we got to Sleepy Hollow we ordered drinks, had a few sips, chatted and she suggested we dance. I said I liked to dance
(I couldn’t wait to get my arms around her), but wasn’t great. She said to relax and do whatever I wanted to do, and she would follow.

I just did whatever my feet thought best. She followed whatever I did without hesitation. I’ll never understand how a good dancer can do that. She was one heck of a dancer, and probably would have made a super Ballerina had she had the opportunity. She did take ballet lessons when she was in her 40’s and I was right, she was great, but didn’t continue with it because she thought she was too old. She had absolutely the most perfect feet I have ever seen, great legs, and a perfect body for a ballerina.

We were both near-sighted; without our glasses we couldn’t really see much. One diopter more and we would have been close to being legally blind. The glasses kept hitting each other when we danced so we took them off and put them on our table.

We never finished our drinks, nor did we order food. We decided to leave and go for a swim.

We went to North Beach and lay on the sand and talked and talked and talked and took an occasional dip. With eyesight as bad as ours we had to be very careful—if we went the wrong way we would have ended up in Plattsburgh, New York—a mere twelve miles across the lake at that point.

I did put a move on her—and was rejected, soundly, I might add. I couldn’t understand it. Years later she told me she didn’t want to ruin a nice day. I asked her if it had been a bad day would she have capitulated? Her special stare, which I learned over the years, told me where to go.

I abruptly told her we were getting married before I returned to duty. She tugged on my imaginary reins so hard I felt it. She got up and put her skirt and sweater on and said we should go.

Her apartment was on the third floor of the largest department store in Burlington—Abernathy’s. I picked her up and ran the
three flights of stairs, a la Clark Gable in “Gone With the Wind.” She was impressed, but not enough to say yes.

The next morning about 10 AM I met her after her class and told her once again we were getting married. We discussed it at length. We talked with other people, I to a couple of friends, she to my sisters-in-law, and to the dean of the college of A& S. She thought it best to discuss taking exams early so she could get her credits, because she intended to return.

The dean told her she needed to attend until near the end of July before she would be allowed to take her exams. That was good timing, in case she decided to come to Travis with me.

When she told the dean who she was marrying, he withheld his congratulations. He thought she was making an error because of the way I skimmed through college. He liked her better than he did me. He said she was welcome to return for the two courses she needed whenever she was ready.

She was able to take her exams and she passed them and got credit for the summer session program.

After she left the dean’s office we again spent the day together. I got her home early this time—about two in the morning.

She invited me in for a coffee, and some music. We sat around for about an hour with her record player, which was, at the time, advanced technology and a great piece of equipment. She played a couple of songs on her guitar and sang along. She discovered, although I had a good voice, I couldn’t sing and that was a disappointment which lasted throughout our life.

I think I just wore her down. The next day we went to Preston’s Jewelry store on Church Street and bought three rings in our price range, had our blood tests, and went to Msgr. Fitzpatrick at the Cathedral. He said no. He said the banns of marriage needed to be published and Fran needed six months of instruction. I said
Reverend Miller at the Unitarian church will marry us today if I ask him. He quickly relented.

She needed instruction in the faith. For three days she talked with a Jesuit about religion and the Bible. Father Sutfin told the Msg. Fran passed muster with flying colors. She knew her Bible.

I managed to get an extension on my leave, so having been assured I would not go straight to hell if I married a non-Catholic we felt safe to bus to Kennebunkport, Maine and break the “good” news to her mother and father. I was awed by the Ocean but wondered why there were so many small trees and bushes. Although I knew there had been a big fire in Maine in nineteen forty six I was unaware of the destruction it had caused. When you’re sixteen years old you have more to think about than a fire in Maine—if you live in Vermont. Much of Goose Rocks Beach had been decimated by the wild fire that burned a large amount of Coastal Maine from Bar Harbor to Southern York County. It also jumped inland in many places.

I had never seen such a beautiful beach. It is totally protected from storms. As you look out to sea on the right there are a series of rock formations; one group is called Goose Rocks. On the left there are a large “out crop “ of rocks. “Fire Island” extended the mainland at low tide. It becomes an island at high tide extending out for several hundred yards. It is covered with evergreens.

The prevailing winds, combined with the many clusters of rocks and relatively narrow inlet into Goose Rocks, cause storms to by-pass the beach. These storms simply continue northward and raise havoc on the shores of Ferry Beach and elsewhere on the coast, leaving behind very minimal damage to Goose Rocks.

As the tide comes in at Goose Rocks it deposits the sand, and as it goes out sand is carried out. With no undertow it is re-deposited when the tide returns. This friendly arrangement continued until some ill-informed people decided to plant beach grass, and allow it to flourish. In nineteen fifty three it was
necessary to walk down about four or five steps from the road to get to the beach. The beach grass was sparse and it did not infringe on the beach itself. Today it is a one way street, the tide deposits the beautiful soft beach sand, but it doesn’t return. It gets caught in the beach grass.

The beach is about a quarter the size it was fifty years ago. The beach is now about the same level as the road at the path, and several feet higher than the road elsewhere, with massive rocks and beach grass holding the ocean back.

We could walk onto the beach during the winter down the path. Now, because the beach has risen to the level of the road at the path, it is blocked with big boulders so if it is icy or full of snow the rocks are very difficult to climb in order to get to the beach on nice days, when one might want to take a walk.

What happened is simple. Over the past fifty years the beach grass has been left unchecked, and now dominates the beach. The decision to plant and nurture beach grass interrupted the natural cycle, and the beach has been altered forever.

They “do-gooders” even erected signs saying: “Don’t step on the beach grass please.” You can’t kill the stuff. Fran and I would pull up dozens of clumps every time we went to the beach. It spreads like wildfire.

When Fran was a youngster Frank did a lot of fatherly stuff with her and her friends. Every year he would buy hundreds of dollars worth of fireworks. On the Fourth everyone on the beach would contribute wood for a huge bonfire. Frank would set off a magnificent display to the delight of the entire beach.

Among his other talents, he was an accomplished magician and would put on shows for his company. He also did charity performances at the old Opera House in Kennebunkport and elsewhere. Fran too was a pretty good magician and as a child she gave her own shows, all decked out in a cape and magic wand.
My trip to receive parental blessings wasn’t that great because I really didn’t pass muster. The suddenness of the whole thing was just too much for them.

I thought my “goose” was cooked when her father asked me what my “prospects” were. I assured them, I worked hard and I would treasure their daughter. They realized they had little choice, so they reluctantly gave us their blessings.

We returned to Burlington and met no further obstacles. My brothers, their wives and friends took over. They gave us a really great wedding and reception.

The whirlwind finally caught up to me and I was in a daze. I don’t remember much about what happened after that. I do remember looking up the aisle of the Cathedral and seeing Fran all smiles as her father escorted her to the altar. I remember saying “I do.” I was happy, mystified and befuddled as our life together began.

Our parents met for the first time. They were from two different worlds, but what was common to both was invaluable. They were loyal, hard working, and loved their family.

Both my parents were born in Italy; my father in Anzio, my mother in a little village outside Naples. My mother gave birth to seven children. A brother and sister died in infancy during the great flu epidemic in World War I.

My father was an accomplished stone mason. When he emigrated to the U.S. he worked in the quarries in the Waterbury and Barre, Vermont area. My mother was a committed housewife, except for the few years when she and my brothers ran a restaurant called the “Wonder Bar,” an Italian restaurant next door to our house. My father wanted out of the quarries and he got a job on the Central Vermont RR, and worked as a foreman in charge of maintenance of tracks from the Massachusetts border to the Canadian border. He didn’t retire until he was seventy five years old.
Frank McRae (his spelling, Fran spelled her name Macrae) was an entrepreneur all his life. He showed his business sense early. As a teen-ager he would rent a barn on weekends and run a dance. He hired a band, charged the guys twenty five cents for admission, and let the girls in free. He also gave salted nuts away (all they could eat), and charged 10 cents for soda. He made a bundle.

Fran got her athleticism from her father. Frank was a great skater, and like most young men in Canada he played hockey. He would tell us about skating on the St. John River for miles in the winter. He was an excellent swimmer and a Maine Guide.

He played a very good game of baseball, but that played second fiddle to hockey in Canada. I still have his baseball glove. It gave no more protection than a regular pair of gloves, small and stiff.

He and I would bowl candle pins on occasion. He would usually win. One day at age eighty eight he bowled 138—and that was with an arthritic hand.

Frank made money sawing wood, farming and hunting and at about anything he could get his hands on. At sixteen he went into the lumber woods on Seven Islands Maine. He was a “swamper” who cut roads through the weeds.

He stayed at this job for four years. During this period he made side money as the camp barber, and ran the company store. He charged twenty five cents for a shave and a haircut. He stocked shaving supplies, candy, and all sorts of tobacco and other sundries.

When WW I started Frank trained in the reserve in Fredrickson, New Brunswick, and entered active service on May 15, 1915. He shipped out in the artillery, and became the pay sergeant for his unit. He was sent to France. Here the story is a bit muddled. Frank told me he was in the trenches one day and looked up and decided he wanted to be up there flying. He returned to London for pilot training. I like that story.
The life span of pilots and gunners was very short in WW I. The squadron had a hurry-up call for volunteers. Frank volunteered and soon found himself back in France as a flying officer in #2 squadron. There were eighteen officers in his squadron. Three weeks later he was senior officer because the other seventeen were killed, wounded or missing in action. He received two injuries, one was when a bullet went through his helmet, and creased his skull, and the other was when his plane crashed on take-off and he suffered a sprained ankle. He was awarded several medals, among them the equivalent of our Distinguished Flying Cross.

He recorded nearly one hundred air hours. This was close to a record because the crashes were frequent. A member of the Canadian contingent of the RAF was credited with shooting down the Red Baron. Frank, himself, fought the Red Baron, and lived to tell about it. His air diary is fascinating, a play by play of his part in WWI.

Frank returned to London where he became an instructor at Brighton-by-the-Bay. He was reactivated to return to France to bomb Berlin, but before he transferred the Armistice was signed. Before leaving Europe he and Helen were married in London.

When they returned to Canada he helped form the RCAF, was on the Air Board, and was active in recruiting for the RCAF.

He was always on the humble side, with a great deal of pride in himself. With all his accomplishments he never “blew his own horn.”

His story, with all our records, would make a very interesting book. I enter it here to shed some light on his daughter.

Fran exhibited the same characteristics. She was versatile, was multi talented, had a good business sense and was able to maintain a humble attitude throughout her life.

After being discharged from the RCAF, Frank returned to his job as a salesman for Red Rose Tea. He was a super salesman.
His next position was with Standard Oil of New Jersey at a substantial salary and commission. He worked for eighteen years as a wholesale merchandiser. He was a top salesman for Standard Oil, but when they asked him to move into the executive office he balked. This would have entailed working in an office every day. His adventurous soul could not face that kind of tedium. He turned down the promotion.

He and Helen decided they should go into business for themselves. They operated a very successful wholesale gift business until Helen’s death in 1967. Frank brought me into the business in the 1970’s, but he remained active right up to the day he entered the hospital in 1983.

Fran’s mother, Helen, worked as a secretary and bookkeeper. This was valuable experience for her when they started their own business. She “kept the books” and did the planning and scheduling for Frank. I could not believe her typing speed, and she made a rare error.

Although Helen never had a piano lesson, she could play anything once she heard it. She could also read music.

Helen could easily have qualified as a Biblical Scholar. We have one of her Bibles. She cross referenced phrases on every page in very neat notes in the margins. She was an avid student of the Lost Planet of Atlantis, and there are cross references to this research in her Bible.

Fran was a delightful mixture of both her parents.

Recently Jenni got involved in tracing Frank’s family tree and she discovered an early ancestor came to the Americas in the mid sixteen hundreds, not long after the Mayflower, and eventually settled in Haverhill, Massachusetts (where our son Jon now lives), before dispersing, years later, into The Atlantic Provinces of Canada.

The McRae’s and the Boves had their love of family, their hardworking ethic, a belief in God, a responsibility to community
and longevity in common. That was good enough for us because we did try to live up to these standards, and I think we succeeded in many ways.

Our wedding day was set for July 20, 1953; less than two weeks after we met. We were bonded for life for better or for worse until “death do us part.”

Death has parted us only on earth. I am on hold, hopeful for an afterlife which will allow a joyful reunion.

We had time for only a short trip before I reported to Travis Air Force Base in Vallejo, California. Since we hadn’t had time to make any plans, we got into the old reliable 1936 Buick, and drove North.

North it was, but where? About five or ten miles north of Winooski, not far from Sleepy Hollow, we spotted a sign which read “Birchcliff.” The road went toward what I was certain would be a wide part of the Winooski River, a few thousand feet from Lake Champlain. The Buick took the bumpy dirt road with no problems and after a half mile or so we saw a “Great House,” surrounded by many small cabins, on the edge of the river. It looked great to us.

There was one “cottage” left. We took it. The “cottage” was about four times the size of the ice-fishing shack my brother Ernie had when we ice-fished on the lake. One room with a bed, and a dresser, one very small open closet with room to hang clothes, and a very small bathroom—about the size of an outdoor portable “john.” The room was our castle. We changed and went to dinner.

Meals were cafeteria style. The charge was all inclusive. The food was home cooking at its best. As we looked for a place to sit we realized we were the only young couple.

The rest of the guests were definitely a lot older—probably no one was under fifty, or sixty. Everyone was all smiles and
several asked us to join their table. We sat near a couple who were about the age of our parents. They asked the usual questions and we answered everything they asked. When we answered the question: “How long have you known each other?” they looked at each other, roared and playfully wished us a lot of luck. One man at our table got up and asked for attention by banging on his glass with his spoon. He told the entire room how long we had known each other, and we were given a loud round of applause.

The next day the wind picked up and it began to rain a bit. We took a canoe out on the river and had intended to go right to the lake, but it got too rough, and we returned to shore.

The older group had become really worried about that “young couple” who had to be a little crazy to go canoeing in this weather. We had been gone for a couple of hours, and when we got back they had lined the edge of the river waiting. They fussed about us, and we were led into the dining area. They jabbered about how foolish it was to go on the water with the wind picking up as it had, and worrying them half to death. It was nice.

Three days later it was time for us to leave. We told the “parental” group at dinner how great it was to be among them, said our good-bys, packed the Buick, and drove back to Burlington.

I said good-by to everyone in the family, and we took a Northeast Airline plane to Laguardia in New York, with a stop in Boston. It was one of those old DC-9’s. Two props, flew low, and it got you to Boston faster than the current jets.

We discussed our future and decided Fran should finish school. I would finish my tour while she completed her BA and study for her law degree. This had been her goal for several years. We knew it would not be easy. We were impetuous with everything we did for a long time.

We landed at Laguardia, and my flight for San Francisco was already in its landing pattern. We had hoped for more time.
The Constellation was at the gate. We said our tearful good-bys. Fran waited for my plane to leave and caught her flights back to Boston and Portland.

Fran would live with my brother Chris and sister-in-law Paulita until the end of summer session, and then join me, if I were still stateside, until law school began. She would have made a terrific lawyer with her brain power, and organizational abilities. It was not to be.

Two weeks at Travis and I was wild to have Fran with me. I phoned her and she felt the same way. She could always finish her degree, and then go to law school after I was discharged. In 1983 I asked her to consider matriculating at Portland Law School. She said she didn’t want to return to school. I continued bugging her about it for several months and then gave up.

We decided she and Jon should join me at Travis Air Force Base as soon as possible.
A few days after our discussion I met her and Jon in San Francisco. There hadn’t been much time to look for an apartment. I was given some time off so we could look around together. Everyone told me we should rent one of the on-base NCO apartments because the pickings were slim and expensive in Vallejo. They were right. The only thing we were able to find which was in our price range was a converted chicken coop: you could still see the feathers here and there and I kid you not), the stench was unbelievable. Even though the NCO apartments were a bit expensive we rented one. They were luxurious.

The quarters were two story condo units in a quadrangle. Behind the apartments was a common grassy area larger than a football field with swings and other stuff for all the kids. Our apartment was a five minute walk to the office, and we were delighted to be there.

The area was generally peaceful and quiet, except when the B-36 bombers were taking off. This was the largest B-36 base in the world, and when those six gigantic engines were warming up you couldn’t “hear yourself think.”

Vallejo is about forty five miles from San Francisco, and we were able to enjoy the area the few times we could afford to take the trip. I had never driven on anything larger than parts of the Maine Turnpike. Driving on California thru ways was harrowing. On one trip I went down a one way street—the wrong way—and was on my way into San Francisco Bay because the brakes were “iffy” and the clutch slipped. I managed to get around a corner,
but not before we were “flipped” by a large number of Frisco’s population.

With the exception of a few years, we always seemed to be short on cash. This made it necessary for me to take part time jobs. Fran also participated in this “after hours” activity whenever she could, and whenever I didn’t say: “You really should be home with the kids.”

We saw an ad in the Vallejo paper looking for an accompanist to a Spanish Dance Teacher. Fran auditioned and got the job.

The dance teacher was the first cousin to Rita Hayworth, who was the GI “Goddess” in World War II.

She and her husband had been top notch performers in night clubs, including Vegas, but she had a hip replacement, and after recovery she wasn’t up to the routine so they turned to teaching. Their heels were a blur as they danced. They were nothing short of fantastic, and so was their accompanist.

My job classification became expendable after the Korean War ended. I was considered non-critical personnel, and the Air Force was happy to accept my application for discharge. It was December, Christmas was weeks away, and I was honorably discharged. I had considered making the service my career, but Officer Candidate School was out of the question because of my history of Polio.

The history of Polio did not interfere with baseball. Had I not separated there is no question in my mind I would have made the base baseball team. I probably would have been transferred to special services, and during the off season, would have been able to use some of my education by working with some sort of public relations until the next season started. It would have been good training and the assignment would have been perfect.

I, however, in my “wisdom,” decided the service was too limiting and I opted for discharge. This was another of my
“famous” stupid career decisions. This was a trait that followed us throughout our marriage, and it was unfortunate, because it caused me to screw up dozens of fine opportunities. Fran never complained, she always lived up to the “for better or for worse” part of our marriage vows.

The west coast was always thought of as the land of opportunity. We both wanted to see more of the West, so we decided Seattle, Washington would be our destination. We thought it might be our only chance to see the area. If I couldn’t find a job we could always return to Maine or Vermont.

The West Coast has a different beauty from Maine’s comparatively wild rocky coast line. You can see forever from the shores along Route One North. There is a vastness about it that I have never felt on the East Coast. No rocky cliffs, but an open vista for miles and miles.

Every day at sunset we’d stop and watch as the sun set ever so slowly spreading a red path towards us as it slowly sank out of sight. With nothing to break the sun’s path on the water it is a remarkable sight. It’s a lot like being aboard a ship at sea.

The Redwoods were magnificent. We did the usual “touristy” thing. We parked the car in the tunnel made famous under the Redwood Tree, and took a picture.

Driving on coastal route one can be hazardous, especially when you have a truck carrying one or two monster logs going the same way. The driver can look out his window and see the back of his truck as he negotiates a particularly wide sweeping curve.

I thought old Route one was probably displaced by a super highway by now, but our son Jon tells me it hasn’t changed much. Jon’s job takes him to the west coast several times a year.
Fran was now pregnant with Matthew, so we were soon to be four--little did we know what was in store for us. We arrived in Seattle and found it was in the midst of a down-turn in business. It was my first opportunity to find a job since graduation from college, and the area was in a deep economic recession.

I finally found an insurance company looking for fresh faces. In my case, more like leading a lamb to the slaughter. I didn’t think I’d be much of an insurance salesman, but it was all there was and for the six month training period they offered a fixed salary. I was given a test and a personality profile.

I waited while the test and profile were read. They completed the process and said the profile pretty well matched what they were looking for, and they would be in touch. I swallowed heavily, returned to the car, and we drove home to our rental which was now in Tacoma.

We had bought a very few Christmas presents, paid the rent for the month, had a house full of food and were down to our last ten cents--talk about faith!

By Saturday we had not heard from them. I went to a pay phone—it was a dime then—and called.

The company was comprised of several offices all over northern Washington. Each of these offices was an independent entity and made its own decisions, all subject to approval by the home office. Each office had its own “president” and “vice president.”

I told them I had had several offers but I would like to work for them.
I was really naïve—both of them knew there were very few jobs in the Seattle area. They did better than I dreamed. They said they would come to our house and discuss the position further. They did come that afternoon, we talked and they hired me. I took a deep breath, thanked them and asked if they could possibly give me an advance. They smiled at each other, and the “President” wrote me a $90 check. I almost kissed them.

There was a month-long training period in the office, studying insurance regulations and procedures followed by the test for the State of Washington. I got through this with flying colors. Next came two weeks of OJT (On the Job Training) in the field with different agents. Everyone was terrific with me; they tried very hard to make me successful. I think everyone in the company was from Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, the Dakotas, or Indiana. Although I can’t go so far as Will Rogers did in his description of people he had met, I have never met a midwesterner I didn’t like. They are generally honest, hard working and friendly. Whenever I told someone I was from “back East,” he/she would say Michigan, or Minnesota, etc..

Before I knew it I was on my own making cold calls for appointments. When I did have an appointment I rang the bell with sweaty palms and a ton of misgivings. The general pitch was: “Hello I’m…from Federal Old Line, we talked—day—(or, my secretary called)—and you agreed to discuss your life insurance needs. May I come in?”

Since the appointment had been pre-arranged I was always allowed in. The next thing in our “line” (when we knew they had a new addition to the family) was to present them with a very fine “Baby Book,” so they could keep a record of their child’s birth, baptism, birthdays, and other important events or dates. From there we would discuss their current portfolio—we usually secured this information prior to making the appointment—our secretaries were excellent at getting this information for us. Everyone probably did something different at this point.
My approach was to ask them what they hoped to gain from increasing their life insurance. We would then talk about this, and the importance of life insurance, and I would suggest appropriate plans, always looking for a cue to tell me what they were thinking.

I was a total bust in the field, and several weeks later I told my superiors there was no way I could continue like this because I was just not cut out for the work. They asked me to try for a couple of more weeks. I did that and it just got worse. In good conscience I couldn’t take their money any longer, and I simply quit.

We decided it was time to go home.

Fran, Jon, John and our new boxer puppy slid into our 1950 Studebaker and we were off to Maine. This was one of the models which had a bullet front and a wrap-around rear windshield. It was beautiful. I have no idea why we ever got rid of it. I wish we still had it. One sold for over $40,000 recently.

We started out around 10 PM and drove the precipitous mountain roads all night long. There was a lot of snow, and the driving was not easy.

It was an amazing ride on Rt. 66, made famous by the long running television program of the same name. We drove all the way to Maine, non-stop, except for resting, getting a bite to eat and gassing up. The West is amazing…we saw thousands of animals, and very few people. Frequently we would see signs pointing to a town—and where the arrow pointed there was no sign of any possibility of human habitation. There was a lot of room to breathe in the West and Mid-West. Perhaps this is why their character is shaped as it is. In a country like that one needs to get to know and depend on your neighbor. I’m certain it has changed a little; but from the people I know who have settled in that area they are about the same, in spite of the growth.
I recently put $40 worth of gasoline in my car (at this writing it was March 3, 2011) when the price of regular went up to $3.24 per gallon. I mentioned to someone suffering the same problem (rising gas prices) that in 1954 we went from Seattle to Portland, Maine for about the same amount of money.
Home Again

We went to Goose Rocks Beach, and I took Frank up on his offer to work with his business and eventually take the business over. It simply did not work out. A young family living in a three bedroom house with one and a quarter baths is pretty impossible, when the elders still believe their daughter made a mistake. The constant criticism about how the couple should be raising their child finally led to a decision to move as soon as possible.

We decided to return to Burlington. We stayed with my parents until we found an apartment. I returned to the University of Vermont and enrolled in a program described as a “teacher conversion course.” It purported to make liberal arts graduates into beginning teachers. I got a job painting with the University of Vermont paint crew—which I had done part time for several summers before graduation. Fran found a job in the hospital billing department. She was good at it. She quickly caught on to the computers of the day with their giant frames and punch cards.

The summer ended, and I looked for a job. I found one in Bennington, Vermont which paid the handsome sum of $2650 per year (Fran was making more than that in the billing department, and I was making more painting).

The two years at Bennington were difficult. We couldn’t live on $2650, so I took a job coaching sports for the Catholic schools. I also “jerked” sodas three nights a week at the local malt shop, and worked Sundays at WBTN—all 500 watts of a radio station. In between I commuted to Albany, New York three times a week to work on my MA in counseling.
Fran was getting bigger by the minute it seemed. We found an old house with two apartments. We got the downstairs. The location wasn’t that bad. We had a yard, and the train tracks were about 200 feet away from the end of the yard. The trains were infrequent, and after the noise from the B-36 planes at Travis, they were practically silent as the whizzed by our house.

The house cost fifty five dollars per month with heat and electricity. This was about 25% of my take home salary, and anyone knows that is impossible, unless you want to stop eating.

We had a big kitchen, and two bedrooms and a small bathroom. It faced on busy route seven which is the major north-south highway in Vermont. There was more noise from the traffic than there was from the trains.

The heating system was hot air with a large register in the kitchen. You could look down into the fire through the floor. It was old, but it did the job.

One night Jon woke us up because there was a “bunny” in his room. The “bunny” turned out to be a rather large rat. After dispatching him, I went down cellar, and encountered a number of them. They scared the heck out of me. We did get rid of them, but for the life of me over fifty years later, I can’t remember how. Our address was “Hicks Corners”, Bennington, Vermont.

Matthew was born shortly after our arrival in Bennington. He suffered massive and irreversible brain damage; there was nothing right with him. Even today’s technology would not be able to help him. In this day and age the doctors would probably have suggested an abortion early in the pregnancy.

He was a vegetable from birth and there was nothing anyone could do. The load fell on Fran. We were devastated, but he was our son, we brought him into the world, and we would do whatever we could to find help. There was none. Fran went about her tasks with no complaint.
A few weeks after we moved in, a nice couple with one child moved into the second floor apartment. The Stablies were super. He was not much bigger than Fran. I think he might have gone a hundred forty pounds soaking wet. His job was intriguing, given his size. He was an artificial inseminator working with cows.

His wife was delightfully optimistic and she and Fran struck up a really close relationship.

I was gone so often, I might as well have been a traveling salesman. When I was home, I was making lesson plans or correcting papers.

I was the Sunday DJ (disc jockey, if you don’t remember) at WBTN, Catamount Broadcasting. We broadcast to the Massachusetts and New York borders, perhaps twenty five miles in diameter. Elvis had not quite made it big yet. I played one of his records one Sunday—I think it was “Hound Dog” or “Ape Man” or something I didn’t like, and when the old 45 was done I picked it up and tossed it across the room, like a Frisbie, with an on-air comment: “Well, this guy is definitely not going to make it, he is terrible.” That record would probably be worth a fortune today.

I had one phone call. Fran said: “Honey you should really steer clear of making judgments like that. I’ve heard Elvis several times, and he is going to be the biggest thing in popular music history. Please, you don’t know enough about the genre nor about music to be making those comments. I know you can’t stand the sound, but shut your mouth.”

Fran had great perception when it came to music. She always seemed to have a handle on trends. She knew “stuff,” but never let on. She could spot a winner immediately. (I wonder what happened with her judgment when she said “yes” to me?—she must have been temporarily comatose.)

During the first summer in Bennington the YMCA hired me to take charge of their large outdoor swimming pool—more
like a large man made pond—and as a swimming and life saving instructor.

I enrolled in a two week Red Cross swimming program to brush up on my skills. The lessons were somewhere in New Hampshire. Since this was early in June, the lake where we trained had barely lost its ice. It was frigid.

The food was good. I was the oldest person there. The program lasted for two weeks and it was strenuous covering every detail of swimming, life saving, first aid, and recovering bodies. We got up at six in the morning and we were in the water by seven. It was a long day, ending just before dinner at six. In spite of being exhausted we spent an hour or so studying first aid. The night air was enticingly “sweet” so I usually took a short stroll before turning in.

At the end of the two weeks we received our certificates to teach swimming, advanced life saving and diving. I returned to Bennington, just in time for the opening of the pool.

The Y had dug a large hole in the ground, put beach sand all around, and created a “pond.” I believe the water came from Mt. Snow. It was frigid. The river was partially diverted into the “pond,” and it went out of the “pond” at the other end re-joining the river. The summer at that frigid lake in New Hampshire was actually perfect because it prepared me for the waters of the pool.

Fran took one look at the female population of mostly high school seniors and Bennington College Students, and she decided it was time for her to get her advanced life saving certificate. I ribbed her about this most of the summer.

She took the class and, since she swam like a fish, was a top student. We were able to get a sitter for something like fifty cents per hour, so she spent quite a few hours at the pool that summer.

The pool was just across the RR tracks so she could see it from the house. Fran and I competed in several games during
the course of the summer. She beat me at horseshoes about 75% of the time. She out-broad jumped me 100% of the time. She couldn’t out-swim me, but we didn’t have any contests with that. It was a great summer. Fran had some relief from the drudgery of caring for Matthew because we usually had a sitter who would come to the pool and attend to wheeling him around in his carriage, or if it got too hot she could wheel him home until Fran returned.

After the second year at Bennington Rural the school board got generous and gave me a one hundred fifty dollar raise. $2800 per year—wow! It was time to move on. I was able to secure a position in Stillwater, New York for $4000 per year teaching History and Social Studies in the junior and senior high school.

We moved to an apartment in Mechanicsville, New York, about two miles from Stillwater. At the first meeting Principal Robert Seaman—a very astute guy—announced a vacancy for a school librarian, and asked if any of us knew of anyone who would be available. My arm shot up. I said I had one sitting at home. Of course Fran was not a librarian; however, she spent so much time around books and was an English major, I thought it would be a piece of cake for her. Mr. Seaman said to bring her in. He also looked at me with more than a quizzical eye.

Fran interviewed for the job, and she impressed the heck out of him. He agreed to hire her at a similar salary to mine, with one provision: she would need to do work on a Library Science Degree at SUNY in Albany.

One of the reasons why I took the Stillwater job was its proximity to, Albany where I was finishing my MA. The Library Science courses were available at the same times mine were held. She agreed, signed the contract, and we now had sufficient funds to find a place which would give Matthew 24/7 attention.

That place was in Groveland, Massachusetts. It was aptly named TLC—for Tender Loving Care. Matthew was better off
there. He didn’t know us anyhow. We placed him, and farmed Jon out to a woman who ran a place for pre-schoolers. The most unpleasant part of the year was in getting to school and back. The locks in the New York Barge Canal were on one side of the road, and a paper mill was on the other side.

To describe the scents emitted from the huge piles of sulphur, and whatever they did to treat and produce the paper is impossible. You have to “smell it to believe it.” We closed the windows and hoped for the best every morning. The scents were only one half of the morning drive difficulties. The other half was Joe, a fellow teacher who rode with us. Joe whistled “off key” all the way, every day until I told him it was either lose your pucker or walk. Joe got the message, and we stopped having migaines.

In the spring of the year at Stillwater, Matthew succumbed to his multiple ailments and died at Troy hospital. We had him buried in Bennington, Vermont because he was born there, and we didn’t know where we would go next.

We took a week of bereavement leave, which was a couple of days longer than we should have, but Mr. Seaman approved it. We went to Goose Rocks Beach and spent most of the time blaming ourselves for what we could do nothing about. The beach was in a heavy fog most of the week, and I got to appreciate walking through the fog banks. I didn’t know there were small pockets free of fog, much the eye of a storm--eerie!

We returned to Stillwater and finished the year.

We were both offered contracts for the next school year. Fran’s called for her to become head librarian. She even had the opportunity to help design part of the new library, primarily the area which was to be her office, and the surrounding stacks. She was absolutely thrilled. I was told I would get serious consideration for a counseling position as soon as one opened.
I, however, was offered a position as Director of Counseling in a different school district. It was what I had been studying for, and the counseling job at Stillwater might not have opened for a couple of years. I opted to take that job. Fran was disappointed but, as always she didn’t complain. We moved to Berne Knox, New York, high in the Helderberg Mountains, about twenty miles from Schenectady, New York.

When we arrived at Berne Knox High School, there was an English Teaching position open in the senior high school. Fran applied for it, got a terrific recommendation from Mr. Seaman, and got the job. She once again was in her element and she cruised through the year smoothly. I marveled at the way she handled the kids. She never raised her voice. The classes were always under control. Her discipline was firm and fair, and any incident was always forgotten once it was over. The kids knew exactly what Fran expected. Fran respected all the kids, and in turn they respected her. She was one of the best teachers I have known—and far out of my class.

Fran was offered a contract for the next school year, but I had already resigned to seek my fortune elsewhere—more disappointment for Fran. I took a sales job with a text book company.

Fran was now pregnant with Gregory, so her disappointment was blunted with that expectation.

Fran won a scholarship to Art Instruction Inc. before we left Berne. She could paint in oils, charcoal and watercolors. Everyone remembers the matchbook cover on which was a black profile of a head—it reminded me of Dick Tracy. It said: “Draw me and win a free art course.”

Fran drew the picture and submitted it. I stold her they would probably tell her she had talent, and they could help her polish that talent if she would take one of their various at-home art courses.
A month after she submitted her art she received a letter telling her she had won a course of her choice. The papers had several forms describing the courses, and Art Incorporated’s responsibilities to the student. She filled out all the forms had them notarized, and sent them in with her choice of the course. She chose watercolors (wash) and fashion designing.

A few weeks later several boxes arrived. They contained the complete course, with paper, pens, watercolors, and books. The entire course at that time sold for something like $560.00—that probably translates to over $2,000 in today’s dollars (that was in 1958).

The lessons were returned promptly, with the comments of the various instructors. The comments of the instructors were incisive, encouraging and easy to understand.

Watercolor (wash) is a very difficult medium in which to work. She was terrific, but it took a lot of time, and I guess that was the reason she quit. Fran gave all the materials to our friend Emil Horl who lived across the street.

Emil was a retired New York City Jeweler who tired of the big city and moved to Berne, bought a farm, and became a very successful dairy farmer. Emil was also on the school board.

The Horls became our good friends. We played the then popular card game called Canasta at least once a week. The two women had a fantastic edge in winning over us.

Fran liked to go into the barn and observe the milking and pat the cows. She liked animals and we marveled at how clean Emil kept the barn and his cows.

One morning, about 3 AM, Mrs. Horl came to the door and asked if we would come to the barn to help them deliver a calf. One of his favorite cows was in labor and having a really rough time of it. We hurriedly dressed and went into the barn where the three of them were able to turn the calf around and help “mama”
deliver. The calf was a female. Emil had names for every cow in his herd, he named this calf Frances. Fran was delighted and for the few months we remained in Berne she made a daily visit to her namesake.

Gregory was born in August 1958. Greg was perfect for us. He was healthy, vigorous and strong; and a very bright baby. He came along at a wonderful time. Matthew’s tragic and short life left us with many mental and emotional scars.

For the next few years we moved several times as I was trying to find a niche in the sales world. I found being away from home for long stretches was not what I wanted to do. Although I was considered an excellent sales person (none of these were insurance jobs), I was uncomfortable with the pushing one needed to do to get the sale. The companies never seemed to be satisfied with a good job. They wanted more now, and little patience with the ground work I carefully laid with each account. In addition they never seemed satisfied with a small increase each quarter, they wanted more, more and still more.

Fran and I discussed the kinds of problems I was having with this attitude. She kept urging me to return to education. She always thought I should stay with what I did best.

She told me I would probably not be satisfied until I returned to education, in some capacity, because I was happiest doing that; always me first it seemed. She said we could resolve the money issue because we always managed.

We decided to return to Burlington, Vermont. We were in luck. The fifth grade teacher at Shelburne Elementary was on medical leave for the second half of the year, and I was hired.

Ferrisburgh Central School (about fifteen miles south of Burlington) had an opening as principal beginning in September. I also signed a contract for that position. The timing was perfect.
We were lucky enough to find a house. It was an adequate three bedroom ranch in the Orchard development in South Burlington.

We closed on the property shortly after we arrived and moved right in.

This was (and is) on Baldwin Avenue. Fran couldn’t do any digging because it was January, but she started planning for Spring immediately, and when it came she planted flowers, and a nice tree. She also built an attractive rail fence without my help. By May we had a nice front yard, small but attractive. The back yard was (is) small—perhaps about 60 by 100 feet, but very private. The yard abuts a large wooded area which belongs to the town, and it, in turn, abuts the elementary school. Jon was able to walk to school every day since it was less than ten minutes away.

The Orchard has no outlet. The only traffic is composed of residents, delivery vehicles, and people who are lost. The streets are named after apples because when I was a “kid” it was a huge apple orchard.

I have returned to the area several times in the last three years. My nephew John died in June 2009, and I took the opportunity to make a nostalgic tour of “The Orchard.”

There are more houses, but the environment remains the same. The trees are all larger, which is a plus and the streets are well cared for, as are the houses. Our house, which we bought for $12,500, in 1960, is now in the $200,000 plus range—location is everything in real estate. Other than these minor changes everything is about the same after nearly fifty years.

In the Summer of 2010, My nephew Steve had a memorial get together in honor of the several members of the family who had passed away. In addition to John these included my brother, Louis and his wife, Mildred; and Steve’s sister Joyce and my wife Fran, and several members of both sides of the family, including my mother and father. This was a celebration of life in which we all participated. Many of my nieces and nephews were present
with their children, and each of us lit a candle for our loved ones, and said a prayer. It was a very gripping afternoon. We were one with our grief and memories. It was cathartic for all of us. I took a tour, once again, around Baldwin Avenue.

In June of 2011 another niece, Natalie, died, and her mother, Paulita, followed within three weeks. I took the train to Haverhill, Massachusetts on both occasions, where Jon met me and we drove to Burlington.

Jon and I took another nostalgic tour, made more meaningful because Jon was with me. We drove all over the area, and to his elementary school.

I’ll now pick up the story of our move to Burlington. We settled in on Baldwin Avenue and everything was in place for us to settle down for a long while. It was my home town, I had a good start in public schools as a very young principal, Jon had a decent school, and Fran was happy.

I found a part time job with WCAX TV as the weekend weather man, and as a substitute for all the on air personalities during the week when they were off or on vacation. I frequently substituted for the news, weather and sports anchors. This included subbing for “Patricia and the Weather.” As a side note, my income from TV, mostly part time, except in the Summer, exceeded my income as a school principal.

When I substituted for “Patricia and the Weather” (the eleven o’clock weather person), the blurb at the beginning of the show was not changed. As it introduced Pat it said: “…and now Patricia and the weather, with John Bove.” Everyone, of course, was disappointed because Pat was a dish and a former Miss Vermont. The weather ended with: “Patricia’s wardrobe by the Fashion Shop.” You know what a ribbing I took when I stepped to the line in the school bowling league..

Fran got a job at the Burlington Free Press as the Assistant City Editor. For part of a summer she was City Editor when the
boss was on vacation. Anyone who knows newspapers, or has seen TV movies, which include scenes in a City Room of a paper, will attest to the fact the City Editor’s job is not for the faint of heart. She was great, she absolutely loved it.

Whenever things were going great for Fran, I was there to disrupt in some way. She left the City Editor’s desk because she was now expecting Geoffrey. Geoffrey was a Seventh Anniversary gift. He was born on July 20, 1960. We hit the jackpot again. He, like Greg, was perfect in our eyes.

Greg and Geoff were two different personalities. They were different as babies, and different as they matured into young men. Gregory was reserved, like Fran, Geoffrey was outgoing and has the “life of the party personality.” Gregory was patient, and was not demanding of attention. Geoffrey was (and is), impatient, and needed more attention.

Both were independent, both had their own unique personalities. Both were good athletes, but neither was “gung ho,” so to speak; and unlike many former jocks I did not push them.

All Gregory wanted to do was to marry the girl he dated his senior year in high school. He was on the track team and really good. He spent one year in college, got married and went to work as an apprentice meat cutter.

Geoffrey sailed through high school, was on the tennis team and played football. Following graduation he completed his undergraduate degree at Hampshire College in Massachusetts, and his Doctor of Chiropractic in Toronto, Canada, followed by completion of a PhD in Anatomy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He practiced as a Chiropractor for two years and turned to research.

He was on the medical staff at Harvard and did research at Beth Israel Hospital before moving to Maine about ten years ago, where he has continued his research in pain management.
Jenni graduated from Smith College in Massachusetts, and studied ballet for many years. She pursued this interest with study at the Royal Academy in London for a few months. Eventually she completed an MA, and taught Latin in high schools. She opened a dance school, and continued dancing for many years. She currently works from home and tutors students preparing for the College Board Tests, while homeschooling her own child—Gregory.

Jon is very much like his mother. He is relatively quiet, humble about his intelligence and a voracious reader. He is also a very social person—fitting in wherever he is. In his junior year at Littleton High School he was selected to spend the summer at St. Paul’s School in Concord, New Hampshire. St. Paul’s selects outstanding juniors from around the state to attend a summer session and compete with other similar students in advanced studies. He studied Russian and for the first time found himself challenged.

He joined the Merchant Marine following graduation from high school. Following his first year at sea, he matriculated at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and completed his BA while going to sea during vacations. He spent a year in Japan with a Japanese family, and now works in a sales executive position.

The brief coverage of the kids is important because they were, and are, all more like their mother than me in their personalities, and in their intellect. She nourished them, encouraged them, and allowed them to become what they were. I am always reminded of the quote from Spinoza which says: “To be what we are and to become what we are capable of becoming is the end of all life.” I think Fran applied this philosophy to our kids.

Life was good. We were making enough money to live comfortably and the future looked great for us.

In my second year in Ferrisburgh I was offered a position teaching sixth grade in Burlington at a large increase in my salary,
Two Weeks Notice... Aloha

and promised a shot at the first guidance position which opened in the school system.

Meanwhile Jennifer came along in 1962. We hit the jackpot twice this time. Fran was delighted because she finally had a daughter. I went to Abraham’s Drug Store on Church Street and bought a carton of “It’s a Girl” cigars a couple of days before Jenni was born. Mr. Abraham and others congratulated me on the birth of a daughter. I said “She hasn’t been born yet, but I’m sure it’s a girl.”

There was no definitive way to tell the sex of an unborn child in those days because ultra sound had not yet been invented. There were various methods to “determine” the sex of an unborn child. One method involved hanging a pin over the mother’s belly with a thin strand of thread. I’ve forgotten how it works, but I think if the needle goes around in a circle it is a girl, if it goes back and forth it is a boy. My mother did her magic and pronounced it would be a girl. My mother never took no for an answer. Fran wanted a girl, and I thought she should have one, and it came to pass. I doubt the cigars had much to do with it, but it was a vote of confidence.

Jenni popped out after an intensive and long labor, and was practically talking at birth. I looked through the delivery room window; the doctor held her up and she was screaming her head off and red all over.

The Burlington area held a great many opportunities for all of us. Fran loved to sing harmony, and in pursuit of that love she joined the “Sweet Adeline’s” Barbershoppers (or should that be Girl-a-shoppers).

Fran was an alto, and had more than a passable voice, and perfect pitch, so she was a great addition to the group. The real highlight of that era was the appearance of the Buffalo Bills in concert with the Sweet Adelines.
The performance was held at the Memorial Auditorium which seats 2,500 people. There were hundreds standing. It was home for me because it was where we played all our high school basketball games and also where we “Walked for the Cake” during Winter Weekend at the University.

The “Bills” were a smash hit. The walls reverberated with applause following every number. The Adelines also got their share of applause. They were a very big group, and they were very good. Fran was cute as heck with her white blouse, red tie and black vest. She looked half her age—which she did for many years.

The University of Vermont fraternities held the annual “Walk for the Cake” in the Auditorium as the highlight of Winter Weekend. It was a celebration of the Black Minstrel Tradition. Two men from each fraternity, garbed in colorful uniforms, faces painted black with big white mouths and huge stove-pipe hats would prance all over the auditorium floor, “Walking for the Cake.” The highlight was when they would dance to the far corners of the floor, and proceed to the middle of the auditorium, stop at the center circle for basketball, lock legs and dance around on one leg each.

The song “Cake Walk” was an original composition of the director of music at the University of Vermont, Dr. Lechner. The whole campus attended this competition. It was more popular than any athletic event. The winners were the kings of winter weekend. Unfortunately, the NAACP and other misinformed organizations saw it as a downgrading of the black population.

It was an awe-inspiring and respectful look at a great tradition. The internet has the version of which I speak. You can find it under: University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont, Cake Walk. There are two versions, the guys in the purple are the best representation. Nineteen Sixty Six was the final year of the Cake Walk we all loved.
“Cake Walk” eventually deteriorated into a circus of people dressed in different garb and various colored “mask-like” faces. UVM still has Winter Carnival, but it does not have Cake Walk as I remember it.

I had the distinction of being a member of a team which tried out for “walking” from my fraternity. We didn’t win, but it was a thrill just to be considered.

We stayed in Burlington until 1964 when I was offered a position in Littleton, New Hampshire as Director of Guidance at a substantial raise in pay. This is what I had been preparing for, and I was impatient to wait for the opportunity in Burlington, so we moved from a secure and pleasant life with a load of promise to another unknown. Fran, as usual, just rolled along with the tide.

Littleton is about a hundred miles from Burlington, and when route 89 was completed was less than two hours away. We found an old farm house a five minute walk from the high school and moved in. I was able to commute to Burlington to continue my weekend work on TV, and did so for the next two years.

We took to Littleton like ducks to water. We liked everything about it—although the winters are unreal with temperatures several degrees below zero for several weeks of the winter.

The years at Littleton were among the happiest we enjoyed. My position was secure, we had a decent house, the kids were in good schools, our Church, St. Rose, was just up the street.

Fran, of course, settled in, and started digging as soon as we got there planting bulbs and flowers.

Spring came and she started once again, and managed to clear a large area for a nice garden. We even had a mountain stream passing by our property.

While digging around the house and planting flowers in the spring of our first year in Littleton, Fran bumped into a solid
object which she thought was a big rock. When she got down far enough she found it was a small tombstone of an infant buried there. After we all saw the stone it was buried again.

Later we wondered about that tombstone. For a period of time Fran and the kids would be startled when they noticed things had moved around in the house, and no one could remember touching them.

This happened many times upstairs and down. We even considered moving. The situation was resolved amicably, and since I don’t want readers to think I have lost my balance I’ll drop it here, and leave it with a “Lady and the Tiger” ending for you.

We wanted to become members of the Littleton Community in a very meaningful way, and I think we did that. Fran joined the Third Order Franciscans in Littleton, and I finally got active in the Church and joined the Knights of Columbus. Fran also became a daughter of Isabella.

Fran took her vows as a Third Order Franciscan, and tried throughout her life to live by them. The prayer tells us what is expected of a member:

“Peace Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi”

Lord, make an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
Seek to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
Amen.”

There are number of versions of the “Peace Prayer.” They all carry the same meaning with slight changes in wording.

Fran taught CCD and was very active with the “Daughters.” I was very much into the activities of the Knights. We should have stayed put because everything was going along just as smoothly as Burlington.

After three years in Littleton, I got itchy. St. Francis College in Biddeford, Maine offered me a position as Assistant Dean of Men and I took it—at a reduction in salary. Although I made three good friends there, and loved “the idea” of St. Francis, it was the most difficult year in our fifty seven year marriage. My “boss” that year was a man I grew to admire, and respect as much as any man I have ever met. He was a “king” among men. He taught me much. Bill, unfortunately, died at a relatively young age, and I miss him, as do hundreds of other “lives” he touched. His favorite goodbye to everyone was: “Have a nice day, and remember God loves you. He too was a Lay Franciscan and he lived up to every word of the Prayer.

We found we could not find a satisfactory house on my new income. We decided Fran and the kids should stay in Littleton, and I would find a room near campus until I saved enough from my TV job at Channel 6 in Portland.

After agreeing to go to St. Francis, I had prepared for the possibility we would need more money to move to the area so I secured a substitute announcer’s position at Channel 6 in Portland for the summer prior to starting at St. Francis. Gas was cheap so I commuted to Portland. I planned to continue the weekend work and do some substitute anchoring during the first year at St. Francis. My earnings at Channel 6 would have equaled those at
St. Francis, and I could have brought the family to the Biddeford area immediately.

As it turned out that never happened, and we spent a most difficult year. Fran was in Littleton, and I was “stranded” at St. Francis.

I never in my wildest dreams thought my job would be five nights a week, and all day Saturday and Sunday.

St. Francis was deeply mired in the long out-dated philosophy of “In Locis Parentis”—probably because it was so close to its prep school beginnings. The title, “Assistant Dean of Men,” in translation, meant “head dorm counselor.”

During the day did some administrative duties and studied. I managed to borrow a car from the Franciscans and get to BU often enough to begin work on an EdD.

A crisis seemed to happen every night for the entire year. I was also the designated supervisor for weekend dances and other events held at night. On good nights I was able to sleep for two or three hours.

I managed to borrow a car a few times to get home. Fran and the kids had a stable year, and managed very well without me.

In March I was asked to help with admissions. The Director of Admissions was also the Registrar. His duties as Registrar piled up in the spring of every year. This was a very welcome change for me. I would be on the road, and I would be able to get home for short periods of time.

Fran’s mother passed away during the summer and she handled that very well. She was very close to her mother. We added up all the negatives of the year and decided there was no way I could return to St. Francis. At the end of the year I returned to Littleton and began looking for another position.

I found a great opportunity in Canada. Fran drew a line in the sand. She said she would be willing to move to Northern
Vermont, and I could commute the thirty miles to work. For the first and only time in our marriage she put her foot down on a move, so I didn’t sign.

I was offered several jobs. The best was as Director of Counseling at Tel Star Regional High School which was to open in September. Tel Star is the regional high school for the Bethel Maine area, and Fran was ecstatic. It would be like a home coming for her because of her four years at Gould Academy.

That was not to be because St. Anselm College, in Manchester, New Hampshire, picked my name off a list of people from an educational employment agency, and offered me a position as an Instructor in their Department of Education teaching Psychology, Tests and Measurements, and Theories of Learning. The titles of Director of Counseling, and Assistant Director of Student Teaching were added to sweeten the pie.

I have no idea why I wanted to be at the college level, but it was a driving force with me. I thought it was prestigious. It was not. I accepted the position.

While we looked for a house in the Manchester area we stored our furniture and bought camping equipment and camped out for the summer—this was Fran’s idea. She loved the outdoors. We thought we might enjoy travelling around New Hampshire and Vermont and camp at various sites.

After we erected the tents for the first night we decided there was no way we wanted to do this every few days.

Our tent was large, and really kind of luxurious for Fran, Jenni, and me. We had a smaller one for the three boys. A big waterproof awning joined the two tents, under which was our picnic table.

We had many trees, a great fireplace, and the bathrooms and showers were about a two minute walk—all the comforts of home!
Fran and the kids were as happy as larks. She played a mean guitar, and found two soul mates. They played and sang almost every night, often until well after midnight. The whole campsite loved it. Lake Bunganut is really a large pond in Lyman, Maine. The water is cold, and clear, with a small but nice beach. We enjoyed the best summer ever when away from Goose Rocks.

I bought enough lumber to build a floor under both tents so any water would run under the floor and everyone could keep dry. I enjoyed the cool nights and going to sleep with the sound of the women singing and playing their guitars. Fran would occasionally play her recorder to accompany the two guitars and it was really like a mini concert.

The summer ended and we packed or tents and moved to Deerfield, New Hampshire where we had purchased a beautiful large house about fifteen miles from St. Anselm.

The year at St. Anselm went smoothly. I was learning how to teach at the college level and Fran was getting involved in the community. She made several good friends. She continued a letter writing relationship with one of them, Anne, until her death. Fran is a Third Order Franciscan and Anne is (I believe), a Third Order Benedictine. I found part time work at WGIR TV and radio, and wrote commercials and did play-by-play basketball and some news at WWHN in Rochester.

We also enjoyed having several of the priests from St. Anselm at the house for Sunday dinner. One of them was a young priest who played an excellent guitar and loved to sing. We had several “song-fests” at our house during the year.

We would also had students over for an occasional meal. They would reward us by sitting with the kids while we went out for an evening.

St. Anselm renewed my contract, with a brand new counseling office, a waiting room and a secretary. The big disadvantage was the school system in Deerfield.
Our former pastor in Littleton was now the pastor in Rochester and he made an exception and allowed the kids to matriculate at his school. Fran commuted about twenty miles one way each day to take the kids to the Catholic Elementary School in Rochester. This meant Fran needed to drive two round trips daily. This was a long day for her and she was carrying Christopher, but she never complained. She always thrived on activity.

St. Francis asked me to return as Director of Admissions at an attractive salary, and I consented, providing they changed the title to “Dean.” We really wanted to be in Maine. During the first year I worked out of Deerfield, which was less than an hour away.

We found a nice renovated house in Kennebunk with four bedrooms and two baths so we moved the second year. Christopher was born prior to our move.

My position was a combination of road work and office, so I was home much of the time. Fran was close to her father at Goose Rocks Beach. We had always considered Goose Rocks our real and permanent home.

I remained at St. Francis for three years. Following St. Francis I took a position with WGAN radio and TV for a year, followed by three years at Ricker College in Houlton Maine. I travelled a great deal of the time while at Ricker. Our “marketplace” was south of Maine so I was able to work from Kennebunk. The college provided an apartment for me and the Vice President when I was on campus.

Fran, meanwhile took root in Kennebunk. Boy did she!

I don’t know how she juggled so many things and still managed to be wife and mother. We called her super mom.

After Chrissy was born in Rochester, New Hampshire he was rushed to Boston Children’s Hospital within hours of his birth. Fran was not happy with this, but the doctors told me, while she was still in the recovery room and sedated, they could not
guarantee he would live the night if he wasn’t sent to Boston. I made the decision on my own. Fran was beside herself when she woke up and Chrissy was gone. He had jaundice and Fran was convinced, if it had been addressed early on, he would have been OK. That was not to be because, once again we, had a child with serious genetic problems.

Boston Children’s kept him alive in an incubator, and he survived the ordeal. The doctors did hundreds of tests and there was nothing to do because it turned out he had an extra gene.

While Geoffrey was doing research at a Boston Hospital he was able to look at Chris’ records. He told us he had rarely seen more dedicated hours spent on a case than those doctors gave to Christopher. They left no stone unturned in looking for reasons why Chrissy was as he was, and for some solution. In terms of a cure or any hope the doctors came up empty.

Geoffrey’s studies of the records and conversations with doctors led him to the conclusion Chrissy was in a category which was “sort of Down Syndrome”, but not really. Current research says there is not much difference between the “sort of” DS kids and regular “Down Syndrome.”

This kind of Down is called “Mosaic Down Syndrome.” About two thirds of individuals with DS are believed to have Mosaicism. An oversimplified definition is: “…0a situation where an extra copy of a chromosome exists.” Geoffrey was in agreement with this but he went further and his theory was Chrissy had what is called “Inborn Errors of Metabolism”.

“Inborn errors of metabolism comprise a large class of genetic diseases involving disorders of metabolism”

Chrissy came home. With no help available anywhere, Fran started her own “nation-wide” research looking for help.

She searched the nation for a couple of years. She travelled with Chrissy to many parts of New England to see doctors, to no avail.
Fran finally located “The Institutes for the Achievement of Human Potential” in Philadelphia. The Institutes provide teaching programs it claims will improve the health and neurological development of children who had sustained brain injury or, for lack of a better definition, were categorized as “retarded.” The method is called “Patterning.” It involves a great deal of work for the subject, and volunteers. Parents brought their children from all over the world to seek help from the program. We were there for nearly two weeks and it was like being at the United Nations. It was a good experience for us.

Wikipedia has the following information on the system:

“Before initiation of an IAHP program with their ‘brain-injured’ child, parents attend a five day seminar that the IAHP presents called ‘What To Do About Your Brain-Injured Child Course’. The IAHP states that this course gives a good basis of understanding of their programs to parents. The course is presented in Philadelphia, Italy, Japan, Mexico and Singapore.

The program includes:

*Patterning*—manipulation of limbs and head in a rhythmic fashion

*Creeeping*—forward bodily movement with the abdomen in contact with the floor

*Crawling*—forward bodily movement with the abdomen raised from the floor

Receptive stimulation—visual, tactile and auditory stimulation

*Expressive activities*—e.g. picking up objects

*Masking*—breathing into a rebreathing mask to increase the amount of carbon dioxide inhaled which is believed to increase cerebral blood flow

*Brachiation*—swinging from a bar or vertical ladder
Gravity/antigravity activities—rolling, somersaulting and hanging upside down… even though the Institute’s programs have been supported by… individuals such as Linus Pauling (1901-1994), and Raymond Dart (1893-1988) the programs have achieved wide criticism and have not been endorsed by any organization led by members of the AMA. The effectiveness is not supported by evidence-based medicine.”

“Patterning” required some equipment. We had a large TV room (about 30 by 15) and turned it into a large “workout” room, added a door, built a deck and we were ready.

Two people were required to do the “Patterning” for a half hour at a time. It was exhausting, both for the volunteers and for Christopher. Although we had a large number of volunteers Fran, Jenni, Gregory and Geoffrey did most of the work. Jenni recalls a lot of music, laughter, and crawling for “Goldfish.” I recall Chrissy doing a bit of complaining. The patterning hurt.

Even with the enormous time spent with Christopher, Fran gave every one planned time, and the house routine was not disturbed. The kids pitched in with chores. Meals were always held on time in our large dining room.

Jon had joined the Merchant Marine Service after graduation from Manchester West High school, and was at sea where we thought he was “safe” from the havoc in Vietnam. Later we found he spent time on a ship hauling munitions up Cameron Bay. Had we known we would have done a lot of worrying. He didn’t tell us until he got home.

Fran managed to work with “Lifeline” for four and a half years, and received a nice certificate for her efforts. She was instrumental in setting up “Meals on wheels,” and participated in the delivery of food for several years.

Our elderly next door neighbor, Amy, was housebound, and Fran took her under her wing. She made certain Amy had hot
meals and assistance in the house. Jenni and one of the boys would carry hot meals to her and sit while she ate. The kids, and Fran, would visit her frequently. Amy passed away soon after she was moved to a nursing home.

Each Sunday Fran played the organ at St. Martha’s in Kennebunkport, after which she rushed to Kennebunk to play for the Eleven O’clock Mass at St. Monica. She stopped at home on the way to St. Monica’s to be certain everyone was ready.

At St. Monica’s Greg and Geoff were altar boys and I was usually the lector. We also had a small choir. Jenni sang in the choir. We all sat in the front row with Christopher who loved church and the music.
News of the Kennebunks

All this activity didn’t seem to be enough for her. She also wrote a weekly column for the York County Coast Star. The column was called “News of Kennebunks.” I never read them with the interest I have now. They were timely, well written, with humor and kindness, and usually included information she received from around the community. Jenni had me go to the Kennebunk Library and copy most of the articles for a history she is putting together. I have included many of them in the appendix.

Fish was a relay of phone calls to elderly people through which members where called every day to be certain they were “OK,” and to see if they needed assistance of any kind. I don’t know whether it is still in operation with those electronic wrist bands where the elderly are able to send out an SOS in an emergency. The human element has been removed. It seems to me it would be very satisfying to receive a daily phone call from a live person, with whom one could chat for a couple of minutes, in addition to the new electronic bracelets. People would get instant help if they fell, or needed help for some other reason, and they would also hear a human voice each day. The world is getting more and more impersonal as we become more and more addicted to electronics. Occasionally the “advances” we make remind me of one of Fran’s favorite sayings: “Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater.”

Fran mentioned Fish in many columns. This is part of one:

“While I’m throwing orchids around again, I want to say that I’m very impressed with the way the FISH Telephone Relay people—I mean the members—are handling their rather complicated operation.
I have had very little to do with the first relay since last month, so I checked with a couple of people on it to see how they were making out, and they’re carrying on beautifully. It sounds very easy to just get a call and make it every morning, but things happen…

Many of these people are elderly or disabled in some way, that makes things more difficult. It makes you realize more clearly the disservice that is being done to some people who are made dependent on others before there is any need of it—I like the societies that recognize the acuity of their older people and consult them in matters where wisdom, not cleverness or quickness is needed.”

In another column she wrote:

“FISH—The telephone relay is still functioning, with some ups and downs—nothing ever runs exactly as one plans it, still, everybody is getting a call, whether in the established order or not, and the participants still feel it’s a very useful and helpful thing…I’m doing it at the moment, but since I’m not exactly a lady of leisure as yet, I’m not doing as good a job of it as I might…If anyone can fill this spot, and would enjoy a short chat with an old or new friend each morning, it would be a great help. You can call me or John McNiff.”

She wrote about Jon when he came home:

“Home is the sailor--Jon arrived with his Fu Manchu a foot long and the hair longer than I’ve ever seen it before—and bowlegged gait that makes you think he’s still on a ship...he settled in with all his books and records and scuba gear and stuff and enjoyed waking up to trees and birds for a while….

I know he wants to sail, but he makes remarks about taking an oar, or whatever it’s suppose to be, and walking straight inland until somebody asked, “what’s that?”

I got him a copy of Elias Hutchins’ Old Sailor, and he says things are much the same now, in the essentials…Yesterday Greg
and George Richards went deep-sea fishing and Greg brought us home two nice cod and a couple of large mackerel...I’m partial to mackerel, and cod makes such lovely chowder...the kids go out on the Sundance, which is really a good afternoon’s excursion and economical, too, if you like chowder. They supply everything except Dramamine.”

When Jon went to Japan to study while at U Mass:

“Japan: Jonathon says Japan is 200 degrees in the shade, and steamy. He’s getting a hold on the language and says that when a Japanese stares at the ceiling reflectively and says “Atsui,nee.” he’s saying: “You know, I’ve been on this earth about 42 years now, some of them have been good years and some of them were bad. But not even one of them had even a minute of weather as hot and uncomfortable as this “whole day has been.” Thank goodness for Maine.”

Fran loved kids, and understood them better than anyone I have ever known. In one column she wrote:

“There are so many alarming stories in the news about the kids, that unless you know them, you think they’re practically all in black leather jackets menacing themselves and others with drugs and knives and things. But they’re the same old teen-agers, different individuals, but with the familiar mixture of child-adult personalities that always makes that group so appealing. And they do have a “cool” that makes us harried and broken down oldsters feel a little better about everything.

I remarked to Jenny that the trick of being a parent seems to be to somehow hold onto your good nature through the bewildering and exasperating years while your kids grow up, so that you can maintain a little cheer to respond to them when they suddenly turn into reasonable people!”

We had a different outlook about fireworks when Fran was a kid. I mentioned earlier the great Fourth of July’s they had with her father shooting off fireworks at Goose Rocks.
She wrote:

“It’s not that I want any child to get his hand blown up, but really I think children can be taught to use fireworks safely and sanely, as they used to be when we were kids. About the first of June, when I was growing up over at the beach, my father would receive, in the mail, a couple of cartons of fireworks.

Cartons! To us it looked like a king’s ransom, and had a very mysterious air, with all its red, white and blue tissue paper-wrapped excitements. We were not allowed to do more than peek into the boxes until the fourth, and we could hardly live until that day. Early in the morning, we’d be into the boxes, separating the firecrackers from the night-time things. There would be punk, for igniting things safely. There would be all sizes of bangs from ladyfingers, which went off with a lovely rapid “pop-pop-pop-pop”, and which the boys said were sissy, up to the five-inch cannons.”

We were not allowed pinwheels or cherry bombs…My father would usually come out with us sometimes during the morning—he enjoyed all the noise, too….He would magnify the risk for us, and therefore the enjoyment, by making strict rules, which we kept scrupulously even when he wasn’t around, for two reasons: it made the whole thing more fun and gave us a certain amount of authority in our own minds for being so “safe and sane”. One rule, the most important, was that one never held a firecracker in one’s hand to light it. The other was that whenever you lit a fuse you yelled “Heads up”.

One Christmas she wrote about Santa’s visit and other things:

“The Kennebunk 5 cent to a $1.00 was the scene of a big rush on Santa Claus the Friday before Christmas, as children and their parents packed themselves into two lines leading down to Santa’s throne. Not your typical “Ho, Ho, HO” individual. Santa gently asked the children questions concerning their goodness, or badness during the year, and explained that it was pretty much
OK as long as they knew when they were bad, and tried! Even the shyest of the children lost their inhibitions as this gentle Santa talked, and accepted their grins with smiles--grateful parents, many of whom had been waiting in line trying to keep the little ones’ hands off the shelves for over an hour. (One of his secrets was he knew ever child’s name and age.) More than two hundred children received gifts from Santa--Mr. Braga’s annual event seems to be turning into a tradition....

Many of you may remember the red cardinals who arrived in Maine last fall, out of their natural habitat by some vagary of wind and temperament...Jean Hanson, of Ross Street, had one at her bird feeder where it was a very Christmas-y addition to her regular flock...It didn’t seem a bit like Christmas to anyone I know on Christmas Eve, but then we went to Midnight Mass, where we sang the entire liturgy, and it was very beautiful, and after that, It was Christmas... And when we woke up the considerate weatherman had dumped, and was dumping, a load of Christmas Snow for the day’s celebrations.

We had Miss Amy Clark, our neighbor, Frank McRae of Goose Rocks, my father; and our oldest son, Jonathan to help us celebrate. After much discussion over our Christmas fare, and the advisability of having roast beef and Yorkshire pudding again for the men and the desirability of having roast goose, which Jenny and I wanted, for a change; we compromised by having turkey at one end of the table and goose at the other. Everybody seemed happy enough with it—I was delighted with the goose—but I think we’ll have to settle for the roast beef next year, and probably years after that, since it’s traditional enough to suit anyone.”

The “News of the Kennebunks” talked about our kids, others’ kids, general stuff, people coming home from vacations, Christmas, wood heat, gardens, flowers, animals, lots of miscellaneous stuff and our little boat “The Christopher.” It was all done with a little humor, but, in most there was a lot of good
homespun logic and philosophy; lessons on how to live the good life were hidden in the stories.

“The Christopher” was just a little punt. We bought a small electric motor for trolling and put it on the rear. It moved around pretty good in the harbor at Cape Porpoise where it was moored. The fishermen would rib the kids when they took it out saying things like: “Does your mother know you’ve got her egg-beater on the back of the boat?” The harbor was well protected by the breakwater, and the lobstermen sort of adopted the Christopher and the kids.

One day (Geoffrey says they had Fran’s permission), Gregory and Geoffrey took the Christopher for a ride to Goose Rocks Beach to visit their grandfather. On a good day this would not have been much of a risk since you could see the beach from the Cape, and they hugged the shore. It turned out to be a real adventure because, as is common near the ocean, the wind suddenly picked up and the waves buffeted the Christopher all over the place. The area was protected by a series of small rock formations and little islands all the way, but it got really rough and the kids were scared out of their skulls.

They persevered and when they got to GRB they were drenched and cold. Frank asked them how they got to his house. He was surprised, but he was always doing “crazy” adventurous things as a kid. He helped them get dry, gave them a sandwich and called Fran who picked them up. They put the Christopher on top of the station wagon and returned to Kennebunk, none the worse for wear.

The articles awaken vivid pictures of parts of Fran’s life (as well as a whole lot of memories) and give an idea of her versatility as well as being of general interest, as a vehicle describing a short era of the Kennebunks in the seventies.

Life, as usual, proceeded with its ups and downs, but I must admit it was mostly ups. Christopher was coming along nicely,
Jon was at the University of Massachusetts, and doing well. He would take vacations as a merchant seaman and see more of the world. He spent a year in Japan as part of his major in Asian Studies at the University of Massachusetts.

Gregory and Geoffrey finally matriculated at Chevrus in Portland, but Gregory didn’t enjoy it so he returned to Kennebunk High. Geoffrey finished the year and he too returned to Kennebunk High because it was a long daily drive twice a day for Fran (about about 60-65 miles), and she had, as you have seen, a huge amount on her plate.

Jenni, meanwhile transferred to McAuley as a freshman.

By now I was in business with Frank, and we decided to move to Falmouth, Maine. We found a great house set back from the road with eleven + acres and jumped on it. It had a magnificent chestnut tree at the edge of the road. It was the largest I had ever seen. People would come and pick chestnuts off the ground as they fell. One woman (I would estimate her age at about 90) told me she didn’t care what we thought (as the new owners) but she was going to come every year and get her chestnuts just as she always had done. I hadn’t said a thing to her, I just wandered into the front yard and wanted to start a conversation about “her” tree—but she cut me off at the pass, continued with her scrounging and simply walked off.

We found a nice little convertible for Jenni so she could drive herself back and forth to McAuley, and give Fran a breather.

Falmouth was a great place to live. Fran loved to roam the woods with our dog Dikkon—a coddled and overweight Norwegian Elkhound. Dikkon would run like the wind straight at her, and veer off to one side or the other just before colliding. It was a game they played. She, of course, toted Christopher along with her unless Jenni or I happened to be home.

As usual we got involved with the community. Fran Taught CCD, and played the organ at Church. She was also in the choir. I lectored, and Jenni sang in the choir.
After one year at Holy Martyrs, our pastor, Msgr. Tartarzie, a wheeler and dealer if there ever was one, was adept at securing volunteers. He came up to me one day after mass and told me the annual Christmas Fair was in need of a publicity director. He explained how this was a big event in Falmouth, it was big and well attended and it raised substantial money for the parish. After giving it a big build up and stressing the importance of the publicity chairman and how I was the perfect person to handle the job because of my lengthy background in radio and television, he simply said: “And you are the lucky volunteer for this year.” He said thanks and told me to come around and get some names of past publicity chair people. He turned and said over his shoulder: “They will help you with the details.”

Fran got the job as my assistant in much the same way.

The late fall of the year was a busy time for me. By now I had added a number of really nice gift lines to our business, and Christmas orders were a big part of the yearly business. The souvenir part of the business was dead by now because all the summer shops were on hold for orders. Those who were open, however, did a brisk business and needed attention—especially the ones in Kennebunkport.

The Church Fair “volunteering” went on for three years. In the fourth I made myself scarce at every opportunity until the new chairperson was named.

Fran continued her involvement with the Fair, volunteering for various duties. Neither of us wanted any part of a chair unless we were sitting.

Jenni was at McAuley High School in Portland, Gregory and Jon were married, and Geoffrey was at Hampshire College. Fran enrolled Christopher at Woodford School on Forest Avenue in Portland. He took the bus and was absolutely delighted with the whole thing. I can still see him with his awkward gait running up the driveway, waving his lunch pail one hand and his work in the
other, all smiles and talking a mile a minute (I couldn’t understand a word of it). Although he would never have been a CPA, or a test pilot, or a teacher, he would have been able to function, more or less, on his own, and hold very simple jobs.

Things have improved by leaps and bounds over the years for our “disabled” citizens. Christopher was born in what was still the dark ages of help for those who had disabilities—especially so called “brain damaged” children.

It appeared Fran would be able to relax a bit, do some writing and probably find a part time job, if she wished. She could tend her flowers and her vegetable garden and have some leisure time.

Fran began to write again. The Old-Fashioned snowman is all we’ve unearthed (other than a few poems and her journal). I know she wrote a lot more. I think she wanted to illustrate and publish “The Old Fashioned Snowman.” It didn’t happen because fate intervened in all our lives once again.
He needs a scarf and a pipe,” said Joe, surveying the nearly-finished snowman. It had started to snow again, and the snowman’s old felt had collected a white frosting around the brim.

“He doesn’t really need a pipe,” said Andy thoughtfully, patting a spot smooth on the snowman’s shoulder. “But he sure could use a mouth.”

“They used to use pieces of coal for snowmen’s mouths,” said Kathy. “I wish we had some coal, so we could make a real old-fashioned snowman.”

“Pam looked up in surprise, “Coal” Nobody has coal anymore.” She planted the snowman’s carrot nose more firmly in his head. “Why don’t we just use a stick?”

“I think the coal is a good idea if we could find some.” Andy said. “It would show up better.”

“OK”, Joe said, “but we still need a scarf and a pipe. And I have to go home for lunch pretty soon.”

“I can ask my mother,” Kathy suggested. “Maybe she would know about the coal.”

“I know where there’s an old scarf at home,” said Pete. “I’ll bring it after lunch.”
“My father has a lot of old pipes,” Pam said. “I’ll ask him!” And she ran off down the street, her stocking hat flying behind her.

“See you later!” the others called. With snowflakes catching in their eyelashes and tickling their noses, they started for their own houses. Kathy looked at the snowman soberly.

“We’ll find you a proper mouth,” she told him. “Even if I have to walk all over town to find it.” She set off for home, hitting her frozen mittens together to loosen the caked-on snow. When she reached her house she stamped her feet hard before she entered the back hall, and left her snow boots in a special tray her mother had put there to catch the drips. After putting her jacket on a hook, she ran into the kitchen where her mother was just setting the table.

“Mom,” she said excitedly, “Do you know where we could find some coal?”

“Coal?” her mother exclaimed. “Why would you want coal?” And then she stopped. “Oh! I’ll bet you made a snowman.”

Kathy got the milk out of the refrigerator and began to pour it into glasses. Her mother always knew about things, she thought. She smiled up at her gratefully.

“Yes, you know, just like in the book we were just reading,” she said.

“Yes,” said her mother, slowly ladling soup into dishes. “Now, let’s see. I wonder who might know?”

There was stamping on the back porch, and Kathy’s older sister came into the kitchen. “Who might know what?” she asked, putting her coat on a hook.

“Where we could find some coal for Kathy’s snowman,” answered her mother. “I know a lot of people who are starting to use wood and coal again to heat their houses, but I don’t know anyone around here who uses coal.”
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They sat down to the table silently. Kathy ate her soup and sandwich as fast as she dared. Suddenly Kathy’s little brother, Georgie, looked up from his plate. (Georgie knew Mr. McKesson used coal)

“What, why didn’t you say so?” Kathy glared at her brother. “How do you know?”

“Because I heard him telling someone at the Post Office when I mailed Mom’s package this morning,” Georgie said. “He said he uses ‘answersite’.”

“That’s ‘anthracite,’ Georgie,” said their mother. “It’s the name for hard, shiny black coal. The other kind is soft, and burns too fast for most home heating.” She turned to Kathy. “Well, there’s our answer. As soon as you finish, you may call the McKessons.

“I’m all done now,” Kathy announced, sliding her chair back. She went to the phone and dialed the McKesson’s number. Mrs. McKesson answered.

“Of course, you may have some pieces of coal,” she said. “Come over whenever you want to, Kathy.”

Kathy thanked her, and ran to get her jacket. Then she stopped. “Mom, do you want me to help do the dishes?”

Her mother and sister smiled. “No, go ahead,” her sister said, “I’ll help Mom.”

“Thanks, Becky!” Kathy had her things on in a minute, picked dry mittens out of the drawer, and was out the door. She ran the two blocks to the McKesson’s house, and was met at the door by a smiling Mrs. McKesson who had about a dozen large, shiny pieces of anthracite ready for her in a bag.

“Making a snowman?” said Mrs. McKesson. “It will be nice to see a real old-fashioned showman again!”

When Kathy got back to the park, the others had just finished winding the scarf around the snowman’s neck, and Pam was
waiting with an old corncob pipe. “Hurry up, Kathy,” she called. “Did you get the coal?”

Kathy rushed up and opened the bag. “Yes, I did,” she said, breathlessly. “The McKessons use it in their stove, and it’s called anthracite because it’s so shiny and hard!”

The children took turns fitting pieces of coal into the snowman’s face, and then Pam inserted the pipe. “There!” she announced triumphantly.

“There!” said the boys, standing back to admire their creation.

“There!” said Kathy, smiling up at the snowman, who stood with his hat and scarf, his carrot nose and his real-coal eyes and mouth. “I told you I’d find you a proper mouth.”

Whether or not the story would have been published became academic. The lives of our family would never be the same.

One night about midnight Christopher had a convulsion. He had them before and I didn’t immediately wake Fran. Geoffrey and Jenni went to him. Geoffrey finally called Fran. She soothed Chrissy and we changed his bed. He seemed to be OK, responding to Fran, and smiling, uttering his usual throaty words.

We all returned to our beds. I don’t know how much time elapsed, but I could hear him in trouble again. He was convulsing when I got into his room, but this time he seemed to settle down while I stroked his head. I knelt by his bed and prayed something like “cure him or in some way ease his pain.” I knelt there for perhaps fifteen to twenty minutes stroking his forehead, and he quieted.

I stopped stroking him, and just knelt there. I dozed off as I knelt by his bed. I was probably asleep for five or ten minutes with my hand on his head and holding his hand. I woke and Chrissy was absolutely still, and not breathing. He had passed away quietly while I slept beside him.
Chrissy was all love. He loved everybody and everything. He loved colors and especially loved the fall leaves and Halloween. Unless he was ill he was just a happy loveable human being asking for nothing but love in return. He still needed almost 24/7 attention and Fran gave him just that.

His funeral at Holy Martyrs was amazing. It was a beautiful Fall Day, the leaves had turned. Every seat in the church was taken and the large entry hall was nearly full.

Christopher loved motorcycles, and Geoffrey led the ride to the cemetery riding his big Goldwing. Geoff said he felt silly, but he thought Chris would like that.

As we exited Holy Martyrs with Chrissy autumn leaves did fell in a sudden rush. There was a sudden gust of wind, the leaves fell all over the place, and the wind died down as suddenly as it had risen. Who knows?

At the cemetery a jet roared over, seemingly lower than usual. Christopher loved them. Who knows?

Fran and I were afloat with grief. Two children now gone and neither medical science nor we could have helped them. We leaned on each other and with the help of our faith we hung on.

Fran wrote “a letter from Christopher,” as she thought he would have written it. Excerpts follow. She caught his spirit, and probably thinking accurately. The complete letter is in the appendix.
"I knew heaven must be good because mom always had us pray to go there, and I knew I liked God. In Mass they said he was 'light from light', and I especially liked candles and other lights. I never could say those things like I do now. It's really neat.

Mom kept having feelings about me before, but she didn’t understand. Even when I said ‘bye school’ on Tuesday, she didn’t…..I didn’t feel awful until midnight, and then I cried and Geoff came in and talked to me until I felt better and he told mom I needed her and she came in and changed my bed…I didn’t feel good!...I was glad all my friends came to help mom and dad and Jenni and Geoff and Greg. Mom was always telling me I shouldn’t bother people we didn’t know; but they were my friends….All the flowers were so pretty, some looked like the sunflower picture in my bedroom. I got pumpkins all full of flowers. They took my body to bury it, but that’s OK because I’m going to get it back all fixed up when it’s time…Jesus said I could take two fish when I went, and besides, he told me people have the idea deaths go in threes; so the angel fish died on Sunday, and the scissors fish on Monday.

I always knew that I was somebody. I knew Chris Bove was important and had ‘people in my family’ now I know…because I understand …how we all fit together.

Mom used to say I was talented because I saw beauty in little things lying around like a twig or a leaf. When I left church after Mass, a shower of leaves fell over me and people were happy, but they didn’t guess I did that to show them that I was happy.
I really liked the motorcycle in my procession Geoff said he felt funny but he knew I wanted him to.

Jenni put pointe shoes into the casket for me—she always danced ‘light’ for me; they called it ‘reed flutes’.”

Fran always knew what Chris wanted when the rest of were at sea.

As a caring, innocent human being, Christopher was nearly perfect. I went into our woods for days and screamed at the top of my lungs. I was angry and I asked God the same old questions; Why? Where were you for the past nine years; Why?

Fran suffered in silence. Fran gave me A Grief Observed, and it helped. We clung to each other once again, and we survived. We carried the gentleness and wonder of Christopher in our hearts.

Christopher’s innocence was contagious. Strangers reacted to it. We all reacted to it. Other than her mother and me, Jenni was the most affected. The stress of the loss is still there as it is with me nearly thirty five years later.

Jenni wrote:

Goblins wailed
And witches cried
My jack-o-lantern
Brother died

They came at night
Trick or treat
I didn’t tell
They couldn’t see

Swirling leaves
Haunt my sleep
Your legacy
I wake to weep.
Grief is like a circle, you go around and around in dizzying speed looking for an exit. You pause now and then to reflect, then, continue, wondering where the exit is, or if there is one. You go around and around looking for a reason, for closure. Given time, reflection and faith you finally find an exit. You leave the circle, and retain the essence of your loved one. The circle comes back with each loss. You ask the same questions and enter the same circle, and it begins again.

I wrote when Chrissy died:

…a grief so deep it touches every fiber of my being… society called him a special child…but my thoughts are he lives so long as we (live)...he is a lesson…Christopher, Christ bearer, innocent, laughing easily, hurt easily, but quick to recover…All he wanted was to love and be loved…(I wish I could) say to the world…”See, here is Chris, here is what it is really all about… here is truly God’s messenger…As I knelt by his side and heard his body contorted in seizure after seizure….I prayed to Mary… (the experts) say they don’t feel anything during seizures….I don’t believe it…(they are weak and out of it when they recover)...we were so helpless to help him.”

Less than two years later our efforts with Greg wound down and he was hospitalized in late June 1982. He was in the ICU section of the hospital with tubes running in and out of him.

Gregory, typically, went his way no matter what. He spent a year in college and he didn’t like it. He was anxious to get a job, and marry his high school sweetheart as soon as possible.

He did this over Fran’s rational objections and my near violent reaction. In the end we went about it with dignity and grace as happily as we could.

My attitude was grim tolerance, Fran’s was accepting, loving and helping as much as she could. Whenever the kids made decisions over which we had no control this was her normal reaction.
Fran 1930 / 31

Fran 1933
John and Consiglia Bove, 1914

John and Fran, at Birchcliff. 1953
Fran’s Mother, Helen

Fran’s Father, Frank
John, Fran and their dog, Dikkon at Goose Rocks Beach, in the eye of a hurricane.
Our kids, Jonathan, Gregory, Geoffrey, Jennifer
1963/64
Spiritually Gregory was like a grown up version of Chrissy. He had all the gentleness and love that Christopher had. He was kind, and forgiving, and had a quick smile and a great sense of humor. Greg was sensitive and very humble. I often thought Gregory was humoring us.

He had many of his mother’s traits. I didn’t realize it until after his death, but he was very musical, had a good ear and, like his mother, he enjoyed playing the guitar.

He was also Jenni’s “big brother.” He listened to her and he helped her. She still wears his I.D. bracelet, and misses him a great deal. She named her only son Gregory, and he reminds me a great deal of his uncle.

Fran found a facility in Rhode Island which offered a “cure” for Gregory’s type of Hodgkins. These involved water treatments. Gregory described them as gruesome and said he was physically in a lot more pain, and he only got worse.

We brought him home where he continued his radiation and chemo, getting weaker by the hour it seemed. He finally entered the hospital in late June, 1982. By July 1st Fran’s father was also there, and Gregory was in intensive care.

His sense of humor was evident one night when he pulled all his life sustaining tubes. Since he was practically immobile we couldn’t figure out how he managed to do that.

Bells went off, his large male nurse (about 400 pounds) rushed in and restored order. Greg wrote him a note in which he said, and this is a quote: “Please don’t tell my father what I
did, he’ll kill me.” The nurse loved Gregory, and we were so thankful for his understanding and soft manner. When Greg died this behemoth of a man cried. This was the first time I had ever seen (or heard) of a medical professional crying when a patient passed away.

Gregory was of age and the desperate stuff being done was keeping him alive and nothing else. He now had no lungs left. They were gone, eaten by that vile disease.

He was humoring us by staying alive. Finally he said he’d had enough and would we please let him go. We said OK and he asked to be unplugged. He died very slowly and without pain.

Watching him was like watching a stop action film. As he went somewhere else, his hair turned to silk (he had a beautiful head of hair, soft and silky before the chemo and stuff). The tense look on his face slowly disappeared and it became relaxed. He was at peace. The process took several minutes as Fran, Jenni and I watched in wonderment. I never checked on whether or not this was natural. He died on July 7, 1982, two years nine months following Christopher’s death and just under a month before his twenty fourth birthday.

Greg’s death left yet another void in our life. It had been many years since Matthew died, and the grief had mostly subsided—the guilt still rides my back, not so severely, but I always wonder what we did or didn’t do, what we could have done, what we missed.

Gregory should have been in the prime of life at twenty four years old.

It is my understanding doctors have discovered a “treatment” for his type of Hodgkins, which has a 98% recovery rate. We had hoped some sort of a miracle would occur while Greg was being “kept alive”; however the cure was many years in coming.
Jenni wrote this after Gregory died:

"Beneath my tired hands
he trembles into Seconal sleep—
grey and helpless
my protector big brother
tamer of dragons,
his strong precise hands
lying pale and thin and large on his swollen scarred belly.

pain wakes
into drugged consciousness
and his knuckles go bone white-
coughing rips
from his skeletal fine boned face
to useless legs and puffed feet.

I hold him then stroke
until sleep comes again
and wonder as his lungs shake and gurgle
if he dreams of pain and death

Or is he driving convertibles
and bikes on swimming summer days,
or racing down frozen rivers
on Pegasus wings
to hot chocolate kitchens
and jigsaw puzzles

Making love with his long body
or tossing his baby
then wrapping himself around her.

When he finally sleeps
I cry
then drowse and hear
Beatles blasting and model trains
and my St. Francis brother
reading to me of hobbits and dragons
until I slept in feverish security
to pale pink dreams of apples and kittens"
Meanwhile, Fran’s father was admitted on July 1, 1982 a few days after Greg. His life was coming to a close, and he knew it, but he put on a month long fight before he died on the July 28, 1982 a few months short of his ninety second birthday. After Gregory died we asked the hospital to remove the obit pages from Frank’s daily paper. When we visited him, after Gregory’s funeral, he said he was sorry he could not attend. We never found out how he knew. The hospital staff had done what we asked and they said no one had told him about Greg, and he had no other visitors.

Our business, which was now Macrae-Bove, DBA Pine Bay Gallery, slid downhill.

During this period we paid little attention to business. We frequently did not go home. The loss of two children and a parent over a short period of time hardly allows you to live a normal life. It’s like getting hit in the stomach with a straight blow, then getting a right cross to your temple and a devastating uppercut to your jaw. You struggle to get up from the canvas. Fran and I clung to each other every day, we prayed and we grieved.

We received a call from our broker, finally, who told us we were broke, that he had been selling our stocks on margin to cover our losses. I had lost my major lines and we had only our potpourri remaining.

We moved to the beach and the potpourri business expanded. Fran needed help so we bought more equipment (Staplers, and small sealing machines). Fran found people who wanted to work at home. She trained them in bagging the product, and we were off. I thought she paid her employees too much. Most at-home workers who put together toys, or made dolls, or just stuffed dolls and did a multitude of other tasks earned around $4.50 an hour.

We paid by piece work. Someone who had two left hands could make $4.50 an hour. Her employees easily made $10 per hour and we had one young woman who made $15 and more. This was in the 1980’s remember, and that was darn good pay.
Whenever I commented on it she said: “They work hard, do a good job and they deserve to get a good return for their efforts, which keeps us in business, so get off my back.” Those were not her exact words but the “get off my back” phrase is a direct quote.

She eventually added many items to the original simple bag we started out with.

Fran was always intrigued with soap-making, so she found out how to make soap. She designed a lacy bag for the soap for display, and also a cotton bag which could be used in the shower much like a loofah sponge. The bag was a small bait bag made from cotton string. She trained several people to make the bags, and soap was added to the line. It was a very attractive product.

Fran wanted to do more publicity, and charge higher prices because she thought it was worth it, and because it would emphasize the quality and get us out of what was the lower price range, adding some prestige to the product. I, on the other hand, said we should hold back because we were doing very well with income from two clients that year alone at $50,000. I didn’t think a publicity campaign would do much to increase sales at that point because we were already on the upswing. As it turned out we should have gone national with our publicity.

Many companies went to the Philippines, China, Korea, Japan, and points West. They put enormous amounts of colored wood chips into the product. The product was terribly watered down for a few years. You could buy a pack for 99 cents as opposed to $2.99 for a similar size pack made by us and some other companies. Their profit on the 99 cent bag was very high because they probably paid in the area of twenty five cents for a bag.

We couldn’t weather the storm and when we lost our two largest customers (one closed and our large grocery chain went to the less expensive product), we decided to close up shop and sell the company.
Fran’s potpourri emits a pleasant subtle scent (like good perfume) either dry or boiled. She even developed an attractive steamer to use with the potpourri. Many people would dry her product after steaming, and found it could be used over and over. I have a large box of our potpourri in our cellar still. It has been over twenty five years since it was first bagged. It still has a pleasant scent. Every company thinks their product is the best, but there are not many which can lay claim to a fresh odor after twenty five years.

Several of the “original” potpourri companies survived, and are doing good business still. They had been in business long enough and had a number of different products and were able to wait out the downturn and the cheaper imports.

We now faced another problem. Should I push for another sales job, or should we try to do something else at home so we could enjoy our lives a little better? We liked spending time together and working together.

Fran remembered how popular good puzzles, cut on plywood, were back in the thirties. She researched this and found there was a large demand for good puzzles. Some people would pay several hundred dollars to have a puzzle cut from a picture they treasured.

We decided this might be a good way for us to remain independent and make a decent living.
In the early thirties Fran’s mother and father bought a saw and cut puzzles on plywood. They rented these out for ten to twenty five cents depending on the size. Others were also doing this for some extra cash. They were called “depression puzzles.” Similar puzzles sell today for hundreds of dollars. The puzzles are intricate and beautifully cut and challenge even the most talented person.

Fran’s mother cut a puzzle from a large picture of Rheimes Cathedral which has nearly a thousand pieces. You can hold the puzzle up by one corner and it will not come apart. Most of Fran’s puzzles, even the seven hundred piece masterpieces, can also be held by one corner and remain intact.

This is expert puzzle cutting. You don’t find many cutters who have the patience, and or, talent, to do this kind of work. Most puzzles are cut in stacks. Pictures are glued to several pieces of plywood and stacked. The saw cuts a half a dozen puzzles or more at once. This brings costs down and profits up, and, of course, the artistry disappears. They can’t compare to individually cut puzzles by a master puzzle cutter.

She tried having her parent’s saw repaired, but it was simply too old, and the rusted parts, even when replaced, just didn’t work properly.

We bit the bullet and bought a brand new Delta which cost about $1200. We picked it up in Vermont one snowy night, got it home, and it didn’t work properly. It was new and had never been out of the box. The dealer worked out of his house.

We wrote to the company, and were amazed at how quickly they responded. They said they would send us another saw, and a
call tag for the defective one. This didn’t happen overnight, but it took only a week of phone calls to make it happen. The “dealer” wasn’t an authorized dealer, and the company was unhappy about how he managed to get their saws. Someone in the company got careless, and they sent us two saws instead of one. We contacted the company and they thanked us and sent a call tag and UPS picked one up.

Fran took to puzzle cutting immediately. I don’t know whether she inherited the talent or whether she did it with simply dogged determination. She had cut a few when she was a kid but nothing serious.

She named the company “Puzzle People.” Within weeks she was selling her puzzles for moderate sums. She also did souvenir stuff. I got a small saw and joined in by making small coastal puzzles, and pins of items such as whales, and whale magnets.

Fran contacted the owner of the “Wedding Cake House” in Kennebunk, and she agreed to allow Fran to cut puzzles of the her house and other keepsakes featuring the historic building.

The “Wedding Cake House,” of course was the exclusive retailer of these puzzles.

In fifty or so years, given the popularity of the Wedding Cake House, these puzzles will be antiques, and I am betting will bring a pretty penny to an owner.

In less than two years Fran began getting a reputation among puzzle cutters. One day she received a call from a collector of puzzles and antique toys in Emmaus, Pennsylvania. He asked her if she would be willing to come to Emmaus and give a demonstration of her technique, and lecture on the art of puzzle cutting. She was astonished, and said she’d think about it. In the end we did go, bringing one of the small saws I worked with (I can’t to this day handle the big one).

The location was in an old public school. It was the typical square, three story, brick high ceiling building. The ceiling was
made of that tin which was so much in demand for many years. He had preserved it and it was in perfect shape. Every room was filled with antique toys and puzzles. One room was reserved for lectures.

The weekend was titled: “A puzzling weekend.”

Fran was nervous for a few minutes. She recovered, quickly and delivered an initial introductory speech on the history of puzzle making, and about her parents’ early efforts in the 1930’s. She tossed a lot of humor into her delivery.

When she finished she asked those who had brought their own saws to “set-up”, and those who did not to gather around her and watch, and they would get a turn at cutting. She then proceeded to demonstrate her technique and invited everyone to begin cutting their own puzzles. She went around the room with a few suggestions. Every seat was taken—full house. She was originally scheduled to take only part of the morning meeting. Everyone was so interested in continuing her part of the meeting lasted the entire day.

Fran had asthma, and the fine dust created by cutting puzzles began to be a serious problem. We bought a filter, a large loud machine attached to the saw which theoretically cut out all the dust and collected the shavings. It didn’t do the job well enough. What we needed was a far more sophisticated and expensive set up which filtered directly out of the house.

You can’t begin to imagine what a problem this would have been at Goose Rocks Beach in Kennebunkport, Maine! She tried wearing a mask, but she couldn’t work with a mask. Finally, and reluctantly she had to quit cutting as a business.

When we moved from the Beach to our present location she continued to cut beautiful puzzles until about four years ago. She would cut them for birthdays and for Christmas presents, and for other special occasions. Even with more intricate masks she found the dust was too much for her, even on a limited basis.
When you went into the room which we used for cutting, and later our cellar, you could see a fog like haze, even with the collector. For her to sit in this room for hours every day had to be very bad for her lungs. We didn’t give it much thought at the time, other than her being allergic to the dust.

When we moved to Saco Fran continued her voracious reading, tending the house and her gardens.

She liked to shop every day. She also liked to drive. When her car gave out and we were shopping for another, her mechanic suggested he would have a really nice car available for $500.00 plus some parts which would amount to about $1,000. He had bought two old Chrysler four-door Brougham’s. One of the cars was a 1988 and the other a 1989. One had a good body, the other had a good engine. He bought new parts, and put them into the 1989 which had the body.

This was done ten years ago. Fran bought the “car” and it was still running when she died. The body was gone, but it still drove like it just came out of the showroom. Better still she got an average of 22 miles per gallon. The car was really luxurious, and she loved it. It was so big and she was so small and cute driving it.

Fran loved to drive, and to drive fast. She was an exceptionally good driver. When we lived at the beach, when the tourists had gone home, she would take the road from Goose Rocks to Cape Porpoise at well over the posted twenty five and thirty mile speed limits. She handled curves like a professional driver. She never had an accident until a couple of fender benders during the last five years—neither of which were her fault.

She shopped every day and rarely wanted me to go with her. She liked driving alone and shopping alone. She knew where everything was and would zip around the store as though she were being chased by someone.

After her hip replacement, a few months before her death, she slowed down a bit, but she would not give in to a cart. She
would move up and down the aisles with a slight limp which became less noticeable as the weeks passed.

We cleaned out the front yard in Saco, and she made a large oval flower garden about twenty-five feet from the house where she planted several different flowering bushes and roses.

She planted a variety of flowers surrounding the deck, and two large holly bushes which have flourished. She loved the green and red berries in the winter.

She and Jenni planted a large vegetable garden—it was originally 50 feet by 50 feet. We ate fresh and frozen vegetables from the garden for most of the winter. We even had squash and beans through the summer. We planted peach and cherry trees, two apple trees and two pear trees, and lots of roses.

The only survivors are the pear trees and the roses. Fran’s favorite rose bush died in the summer of 2009, and I ran over the beach roses by accident. We re-planted the beach roses and they came up in 2010. I hope Fran saw them.

The pears began yielding a couple of years ago and they are delicious—I paid no attention to them last summer and the yield was small and the pears not so big. I’ve got to get my act in gear soon.

Being of Italian heritage I thought grapes would be my piece of cake. It has been several years. I am finally going to level the grape vines this year, in frustration. I grew great big, healthy leaves, but only a few clusters of grapes, which never matured.

I remember Fran promising after the summer of 2009 that she would pay more attention to the flower garden in the front yard and the flowers around the deck “next year.” It never came.

Jenni has the same “green thumb” as her mother, and she and Gregory are carrying on with the gardening. It is difficult for her because they worked in the garden every day. Fran and Jenni worked many hours in planning and deciding on where to
buy their seeds. Both of them started seeds in the house—so gardening began long before Spring.

The spring of 2010 turned out to be perfect weather, but as it turned out she was unable to get things started. The appendectomy had taken a great deal of zip out of her, and her stomach problems were getting worse. She simply did not enjoy eating anymore, and ate less and less, until her weight began to worry the doctor. She was under eighty nine pounds at the end; yet she was gardening three weeks before she passed away, apologizing for her lack of interest.
We all went the hospital with Fran. Her recurring stomach pain was becoming intolerable. It was May 9, 2010, Mother’s Day.

Fran, Jenni, Gregory and I waited for what seemed like hours in an uncomfortable and cold emergency room.

The Emergency room was small and gave you the feeling the walls were closing in on you. As you wait for a doctor or doctors, your thoughts run the gamut from hope: “They will be able to help me” to no hope: “They will not be able to help me, why am I here?”

The nurses on this day didn’t seem to care for any individuals, their attitude bespoke of a group who were overworked and wished everyone would go home and stop bothering them. When I went out into the hall for a walk, I was very rudely told I couldn’t walk in that area and that I should turn around and get into the hall. There were no signs telling me where I could or could not walk. Their brisk, militaristic attitude was certainly not welcome. We felt as though we were imposing on them.

Three doctors finally came into the room. From the beginning they were a detriment to getting well.

The lead doctor opened with these words: “Who are you and what are you doing here?” We couldn’t believe it. Despair reared its ugly head and it was all downhill from there. Fran’s jaw dropped, I wanted to lash out at them.

I said we had signed in at the desk and had been assigned this room. Our family physician had called and informed the hospital Fran was coming.
I wonder how the doctor thought we got the room? Did he think we just dropped in for a chat?

Where did he do his internship? Didn’t he have psychology training? Didn’t he know a positive bedside manner was the first step in helping his patient? I don’t have words that could describe what I know we all felt.

We told him Fran was there with a recurring stomach ailment.

After a very short discussion during which we again told them she was there for a recurring stomach problem, they said a biopsy should be done.

Without giving it much thought we consented. Fran was taken to the lab for the biopsy.

I still wonder how they arrived at an immediate decision to do a biopsy without first doing a thorough examination regarding her complaint of abdomen difficulties.

Fran finally returned to her room and she was in good spirits. She was grateful her waiting for a doctor to respond was over and she might make some headway.

In what seemed like hours the doctors re-appeared and the lead doctor said: “Mrs. Bove you have cancer.” Then, in the same breath, he suggested we contact Hospice. Everyone on earth and in other galaxies knows you don’t contact Hospice until there is no longer any hope.

Fran said: “I’m not dead yet.” Then she asked Gregory, her grandson: “If I have cancer will you still love me?”

He gave her no hope. He slammed the door on her life.

Did these three doctors have some sort of ESP? Were they more perceptive than the many other doctors Fran had seen? Why did all the other doctors over a three year period not do a biopsy? The three doctors at MMC did not examine Fran. They did not even read her records because they didn’t even know why she was there.
She explained her problem was a stomach ailment and they immediately said biopsy. Why didn’t they address the stomach problem rather than do a biopsy?

After the fact, I thought metastasis had probably occurred and it had spread the cancer throughout her body. I am told this is not possible with a needle biopsy, but I continue to be stubborn about this. For the three years prior to this day no one had suggested a biopsy. My whole being was aghast. I blamed myself for not objecting to the biopsy. In retrospect I should have insisted she was there for a recurring stomach problem and this is what they should address.

Biopsies are great if there is no cancer, but when there is cancer, especially in a major organ such as the liver or the lungs there has always been the chance it will spread the cancer throughout your body are good. I don’t care what the doctors say about this. In the past they believed metastasis could occur. Today they downplay the possibilities. What can you believe when the “experts” pin you against the wall with their theories?

Metastasis is “The spread of a disease from one organ to another non-adjacent organ or part...cancer stem cells are able to undergo uncontrolled abnormal mitosis, which serves to increase the total number of cancer cells at that location...Most tumors and other neoplasms can metastasize.” (Wikipedia)

In the week prior to entering the hospital she went shopping several times as was her practice. She worked in her beloved garden with Jenni, weeding and making decisions on further plantings for the year. She gave no indication of any illness except for her stomach problem which kept her from eating properly.

The track of neglect for Fran began in April 2007. One midnight I rushed Fran to the emergency room of SMMC. She obviously had a ruptured appendix. She was in horrible pain.

She finally was given a room after a long tortuous wait. The surgeon on duty waited until Six AM to operate. He was trying
to decide if it was a blockage in her intestines or a ruptured appendix. She could have died. He kept her there for ten days, noting the difficulty in her intestines, but did absolutely nothing about it.

From that day on, she had stomach pain which did not allow her to eat properly. By May 9, 2010 she weighed eighty nine pounds. The doctors simply left us in limbo

It is only in retrospect, after you have done research you realize medicine is a terrible and dangerous in-exact science. It is unfortunate many doctors seem to be more intent on the “model” rather than the person, and therefore pay little attention to the patient’s real complaint. In the end we are responsible for ourselves. God knows we approached the hospital several times with this recurring problem, yet not one thing was done over a three year period to treat the problem. I carry the guilt of my inaction on my shoulders and have difficulty in shedding the burden.

Fran returned from a visit to the emergency facilities of SMMC on May 6, 2010. She went with the same recurring stomach ailment. (It is important to note this was just eighteen days prior to her death.)

She e-mailed the following to our family physician when she got home:

“Wow. To make a long and gruesome story short, I spent 6-7 hours on an ER “bed” naked, with “blankets” and starving with a saline IV etc., being largely ignored. They screwed up blood tests so I had to have more blood drawn. The room was like ice—John wore his jacket! (the nurse was nice) only to hear at the end of it that I had what I’d told them when I went in—a “small” bowel obstruction (the two liver lesions I knew about—had hepatitis as a child—so I do a function test now and then—last one was pretty recent).

The attending doctor told me worst-case things to frighten me into staying, and got very upset that I wouldn’t, though I had
come prepared to stay. I discharged myself “against medical advice”. I hope I won’t have to go back there!

What I’m hoping is that I can finally see you to address the bowel thing. Of course, as you’ve said, I don’t eat enough to have much in my colon. I can and do “pass gas”. Meanwhile I can look up herbs for liver. Amazing it can regenerate! Never knew that.

This is what the surgeon a few years ago said might happen. One of us will call. I’ll try and see you tomorrow when you’re less busy, OK?

Fran”

She never got to return to our family physician. She called him three days later on Sunday the May 9, and he called MMC to inform them she was coming for admission to emergency.

On Sunday, May 16, a week after the fateful ER experience at 1:35 PM she e-mailed Geoffrey:

“Basically, we all know nothing (except tests, etc—a lot to take in at first) except a lot of alternatives.

I picked some stuff I believe in and people are supportive, which helps psychosomatically. Jenni has added a couple more. I won’t try the chemo until a lot later—give us time to evaluate a little.

There are some positive developments, including pretty good bowels, after a month! (No laxative.)

I’m doing mostly liquids, remembering the hepatitis. Drinking like a fish! (water) and waiting till I feel like one of the frozen trout I’ve got in the freezer.

Very sleepy. Hope that’s good. Capers are supposedly good for me.

Love Mom”
This was only eight days prior to her death. Does it sound like a person who is a few days from becoming a vegetable. No one has given me an explanation of why she went downhill so rapidly, nor has anyone even attempted to do so.

This certainly doesn’t sound like a person with a week to live, as it turned out. She was obviously alert, and she came downstairs, unaided, to work on her computer. The next thing I knew she was almost a vegetable, and her visit to the oncologist that week was a nightmare of negativity.

Backtrack again to May 11. Jon and Geoffrey decided they should have a party. We had had one of these impromptu parties before so it was not that unusual, although Fran knew why they did it.

We had lots of food, and more laughs. Fran even played her guitar. She and Jon sang a couple of songs she had taught him when he was very young. He is a cantor at his church, and also sings for weddings and funerals. They had a really good time. We all did.

When Jenni finally arrived she was visibly hurt, but Fran said: “Ah. Jenni, you’re the older son.” (The reference is to Luke 15: The Prodigal son, the part where the father told the older son: “. . . son, thou art always with me, and all that is mine is thine”). Jenni, of course is neither the oldest nor is she a son, but the meaning was not lost on her and she appreciated her mother for saying it. Jenni is the one who stayed home and was probably closest to her mother.

Later that evening Fran, Jenni and Gregory listened to several of Fran’s old 78’s—there are many of them.

It was a day, which, in retrospect, I realize Fran had decided her time was short—but like me and Jenni she didn’t believe it was only a few days away. Only Geoffrey believed it could happen at any time.
During the week Father Lupo came, and they had a long talk. Later that week Msg. Murphy from Wells came, at Jenni’s invitation, and visited at length. He promised to return, but he had a knee operation, which was bothering him, and creating a problem with his back, and it kicked up so he delayed his coming.

Fran made her peace with God, and was ready for whenever the time came to depart:

“...for you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord is to come as a thief in the night.” (Thessalonians 5:2)

She was always ready. She was ready after her morning prayers, and after her mid-day prayers and after her evening prayers. There was no thief in the night who could catch her off guard. Jenni, Gregory and I were not ready.

On Monday morning, May 17, she suddenly took a terrible turn for the worse, and needed help getting to the bathroom. By Tuesday, we were using a bed pan, and we were all in disarray.

We finally got to the oncologist before the weekend. She simply looked at Fran and talked a little, left the room, and spoke with Geoffrey and Jenni. She did no tests, didn’t even check Fran’s lungs or heart. After simply reading records from the other doctors she came to the same conclusions.

The oncologist simply said Fran could not withstand treatment because of her weakened condition. She told Fran there was little time. Fran was curled up in a large recliner begging us to take her home.

I will carry the picture in my mind forever of that now very tiny body, helpless to help herself, and begging to go home. It adds to the guilt on my shoulders because I should have picked her up before the oncologist got to her talk and walked out of the room with her. We, however, still thought something could
be done. The best the oncologist could say was to Jenni: “Your mother is too weak to withstand treatment. Everyone seemed to ignore me and Fran and talk to one of the children.

Fran had not wanted to see the Oncologist. I think she was afraid of what the conclusion would be. I do wonder if she only had a week or two left to live why the hesitation to use every means possible to help her? Why didn’t they start some treatment immediately at the hospital? If the treatment killed her there was nothing lost since everyone was convinced she was living on borrowed time?

Forgiveness is difficult! I continue to vacillate. There are days when I think I have forgiven, and then the entire three year scenario comes crashing down on me. Could they have treated this impending problem three years ago if they had paid more attention to her complaints about her stomach? If they had, would it have made a difference? After all, she went for three years with that stomach pain, and subsequent inability to eat.

I keep concluding the medical profession let us down.

It’s a daily struggle to maintain some sanity for me, and purge the anger and hatred which rises to the surface nearly every night when I’m alone with my thoughts. I firmly believe something could have been done, and I feel partly responsible for it not getting done.

At least an effort to treat her condition, no matter how serious, and no matter how many doctors thought it would be to no avail, would have given her hope. It is well documented that a positive outlook can work miracles with sickness.

The doctors made their decision. Her cancer was too far advanced, her age and condition mitigated against her, and the treatment was costly, so why waste the money? These are my thoughts. We all die! Should we withhold treatment because of the inevitability of death? If that is the case why give anyone treatment, just let us go.
Have doctors become infallible? Unfortunately, there are too many practicing physicians who believe they are just that.

I firmly believe doctors are very wrong in telling a patient what they told Fran. Doctors need to hold out some hope, and take some positive action. What they did with Fran was, in my mind, inhumane.

Hope plays an important part in overcoming any illness. Fran was given no hope, no chance, nothing.

Even though I know forgiveness is paramount to living a healthy life I still can not forgive the medical profession for the treatment they gave Fran.

“…even as the Lord has forgiven you, so also do you forgive.” (Colossians 3:12)
The Passing

After we saw the oncologist, our nightmare got worse. Fran was almost uncommunicative. She didn’t want to go in the first place. We had convinced her, to my eventual sorrow.

We contacted hospice, and they were very kind. The nurse talked with Fran, and assured her their only purpose was to make her comfortable, and not to supervise her passing. The nurse didn’t put it exactly like that, however that was her meaning, but Fran didn’t buy it. She was resistant; however her condition just went negative at breakneck speed.

Hospice delivered a hospital bed and wheel chair on Monday, May 24. The bed was erected in the front room because we have a large picture window (about 8 feet wide) through which she could look at the front yard. Fran had made a nice peaceful yard with a flower bed, a large array of flowers lining the front deck, a bird feeder, a swing for Gregory, and a large hammock. She and Gregory spent many happy summer hours on the hammock together. She could enjoy watching the birds feed, and just be.

I had spent much of the weekend calling the various churches in our area. I asked them to ask their congregations to say a prayer on Monday, May 24 at exactly noon. I asked for the Hail Mary. I said they should ask for Fran’s recovery.

I also contacted a national and international prayer group asking them to do the same thing. They assured me it would be done.

Two protestant pastors called me later and assured me their congregations had received the message, and both of them
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offered to meet with me and help me through these difficult times.

Hundreds, perhaps thousands of people said the Hail Mary for Fran at noon on May 24, 2010. I had my agenda, God had his.

She spent a restless Monday in the bed, no longer caring, seemingly preparing herself to leave. She became totally silent, not responding to anything, except an occasional grunt. She went to sleep early. She seemed to be resting comfortably so we didn’t disturb her. About 7:20 Jenni said she thought mom wasn’t breathing. I put my face in front of her mouth, called out to her, moved her, but she was gone. She simply decided it was time, I think, and slowly passed away. Whatever pain she had was gone. All I could think of (selfishly) was:

“*My God, My God, Why have you forsaken me?*” (Psalm 21 [22]:2)

Geoffrey is a PhD in Anatomy, and a Chiropractor. He had talked with doctors including the oncologist, and our family physician. His conclusion after hearing everything was that his mother would probably not live for a week. Without telling anyone, he had begun working on a casket. By the time his mother died he had the casket almost complete. He completed it Monday night and brought it to the house on Tuesday. It was a work of art.

We had decided the funeral would be a family affair, because it would be more meaningful to us. Fran was really into independence, and she did not want to be embalmed.

Jenni worked for hours making her mother look really nice. She made a shroud out of one of the new sheets she had bought for the bed. I don’t know how she did it. I don’t remember much. I guess I was in shock.

On Tuesday, Geoff brought the casket and we placed Fran in it. (Anyone wishing to conduct their own home funeral may
find instructions on the internet. There are a growing number of families doing this.)

All the necessary papers had been filled out. Geoffrey and I went to the town hall to register the death certificate which had been duly completed by our family physician. We were told the rest of the world accepts this form, but Maine does not. One can only secure a death certificate in Maine from a coroner, or from a funeral director.

Geoffrey went to the funeral home a couple of blocks up the street across from the town hall. The funeral director showed him the door immediately. Apparently they object to “do-it-yourself” funerals. I guess that is to be expected. If I had a black book that guy would be at the top of the first page just below the three ghoulish doctors at MMC.

He went to a friendlier place in Kennebunk, secured a blank and our family physician completed it again. It was then registered at the Saco Town Hall.

Geoff attended to all the details, the death certificate, the permit for transporting human remains, and the plot in the cemetery. I was in a daze, and probably would have botched the whole thing. I am forever grateful to him for that.

On the day of the funeral, we had another set-back. The cemetery officials told Geoff they had made an error. There is a family plot in the cemetery where her mother, father, brother, our Gregory and Christopher are buried. We had been told there was room for Fran. They did a final check on the day of the funeral. Her infant brother had been buried in an adult vault.

The vault needed to be re-positioned. Further checking showed the vault had broken up over the years and could not be moved--so much for the so-called protection a cement vault gives a body.

Fran and I had a running joke for years. I would say when I died I wanted my urn to be placed on the mantle so I could watch
what was going on. She agreed to this. I had another stipulation which was to be placed in her casket when she passed and that we be buried together. Her response was always: “No way, I’ve had enough of you here, get your own space. It was all in fun.

I get the last word. A hole will be dug over her casket, and my urn will be placed in it. Our bodies will be physically close for eternity.

It is unfortunate Fran had not allowed us to read her journals. Jenni has found an entry which indicated Fran was leaning toward cremation. Had that been done both of us could have been buried in the family plot.
The Funeral

Fran is Scottish. When her father died we had bagpipes playing at his church funeral. The piper marched around the outer aisles of the church and played the pipe as Frank was brought into the church and as he was brought out. The piper then went to the cemetery ahead of the procession and played in the distance during interment.

Fran also loved the pipes. She, Jenni and Gregory always went to the annual Highland Games in Maine. These are usually held in Wiscasset. Gordon Webster is usually the piper. They became close acquaintances.

Gordon and his wife run a school in Concord, New Hampshire devoted to the Scottish Arts. Jenni called him and he agreed to play at the cemetery, but he had no transportation. Another of Jenni’s friends was coming to the funeral. He suggested he drive Gordon to and from the funeral.

Gordon Webster was the personal piper to Queen Elizabeth for five years prior to returning to the United States. Fran not only had her pipes but she had one of the top pipers in the world.

When we arrived at the cemetery, the pipes were playing, and they continued playing softly all through the ceremony and interment. He continued until everyone had left. It is difficult to describe a funeral as beautiful, but this one was. The day was bright and sunny with only a few soft white clouds; a nice breeze to cut the heat; the pipes playing in the background, and a loving family worshipping.
I had the opportunity to talk with Gordon at length. He is a delightful man, with a beautiful Scottish Brogue, and, not surprisingly, has a great store of information about the Royal Family.

“Blessed are they who mourn for they shall be comforted.”
(Matthew 5:4)

It was unfortunate all the priests in Maine were at their annual retreat in Bar Harbor. I can’t understand the logic of this. I wrote the Bishop of Maine and he answered, offering his condolences, and promising to consider having the conference in two sessions in the future.

We were fortunate, however, to have Father Greenleaf as the visiting priest. He is originally from Biddeford, and teaches Theology at American University in Washington, D.C. He is a loving, kind and brilliant man. One would have thought he had known the family for years rather than for a few days.

Shortly after Fran’s funeral, Father Greenleaf’s mother died and he approached me at Mass and simply said, now we have something in common, John.
And so after fifty seven years, “Frass” and I were parted here on earth. I was still in shock. I wandered around in my car every day and ended up at the cemetery daily for several weeks. I brought a chair and would sit and talk, cry and be angry. In the car I would shout at the top of my lungs. One night I ended up in Burlington, Vermont. I slept a couple of hours and returned home—about five hundred miles round trip. I had originally intended to visit my son Jon in Haverhill, Massachusetts, but when I called him from Portsmouth, New Hampshire, there was no answer, so I continued to Burlington. I have no idea why, because it was already after five P.M..

“When I call, answer me, O my just God, you who relieve me when I am in distress have pity on me, and hear my prayer.” (Psalm 4:2)

It grows dark
I fear
The night
Thoughts gush
Forth like
A stampede

I lay awake
I fear the night
I look at
Emptiness near
Me and
Wish
I grab a pillow
And bring
It close
I fear the night
It overwhelms
Me

I weep
I fear the night
Tears Cascade
Like a waterfall
I recover

I sleep restlessly
I fear the night

(JLB)

An angry person has difficulties in forgiving himself and others.

“The only factor that can give you refuge or protection from the destructive effects of anger and hatred is the practice of tolerance and patience.” (3)

Anger will fester and it will consume you. This is where I was. I have difficulties in forgiving myself for my transgressions—real or imagined—even though I have received absolution in the confessional. I have less difficulty forgiving others. This is a heavy weight to carry around. Add the grief I was (and am) experiencing and it creates an unhealthy frame of mind and this leads to stress and physical illness.

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

As part of the Lord’s Prayer, I recite these lines every day of my life. Yet forgiveness remains difficult for me. I have always
made every effort to forgive, but deep down I have carried a great deal of anguish through unforgiveness. Unforgiveness always seems to rear its ugly head at me; especially in regards to myself.

“Bear with one another and forgive one another, if anyone has a grievance against any other; even as the Lord has forgiven you, so also do you forgive.” (Colossians 3:13)

Fran read her bible every day. (I don’t know a lay person who knows the Bible better.) She would frequently say to me: “...just as you need to love yourself before you can truly love others, you need to forgive yourself before you can forgive others.”

I would respond with something like: “How could I love you more?” She would answer with: “Not me, just don’t be so angry with yourself and others. Forgive yourself and then you can go on from there.”

I’ve been making some headway with forgiveness—the anger still festers. Forgiving others is simple. I don’t know how to forgive myself.

The loss of a spouse is listed at the top of every stress list I have seen. The path to poor health goes through unforgiveness and anger, which create huge amounts of stress; and the immune system takes a terrible beating. After six months I began to wake with terrible headaches. My physician could find nothing wrong with me. My blood pressure, in spite of my complaints, was 113/73.

Stress is a time bomb just waiting to explode. It manifests itself in a host of illnesses. It can send you to the hospital, it can cripple you. This is undoubtedly why such a large percentage of males follow their deceased wives within a year.

I finally decided “Frass” would not be happy with my wallowing in self pity, anger and unforgiveness. Daily Mass helped, while I was there. After I left Mass the poison would
slowly seep in, and by night time I was right back where I started. Sleep was almost a thing of the past.

In her book, The Stress Management Handbook, stress expert Lori A. Leydn-Rubenstein says: “Between seventy five and ninety percent of all visits to the doctors’ office are for stress and anxiety-related concerns. Stress is linked to the six leading causes of death—heart disease, cancer, lung disease, accidents, cirrhosis of the liver and suicide.” (4)

Other researchers say one hundred percent of illness is stress related.

I really needed to rid myself of anger and stress.

“O Lord, reprove me not in anger
Nor chastise me in your wrath.
Have pity on me, O Lord, for I am languishing;
Heal me, O Lord, for my body is in terror
My soul, too, is utterly terrified
But you, O Lord, How long…?” (Psalm 6:2)

I didn’t know, for many months, but the vehicle which would propel me closer to forgiveness, and which would help me understand myself and my anger more clearly was about to be presented to me.

My good friend Lester Derigan who is a “searcher for lost souls,” recognized one when he saw me. In November, 2010 he suggested I would benefit from a retreat at the Spiritual Center at Marie Joseph Convent in Biddeford Pool, Maine. The subject was forgiveness. I thought it couldn’t hurt.
The Retreat

On December 9, 2010 a one day retreat on forgiveness was held at Marie Joseph Spiritual Center in Biddeford Pool, Maine. Sister Aline Plante, p.m. was the host. As the retreat progressed, I realized she and Fran were on the same wave length about forgiveness.

The Retreat was described as follows:

“What better way during Advent to prepare for the coming of Christ than to free our hearts and minds from fear, anger, resentment, suffering and pain. Forgiveness is not for the other’s sake, but for your own.”

I hadn’t mentioned fear before now, but it occurred to me “fear” plays a big part in grieving and in forgiveness. It occurred to me one snowy day when I was “visiting” Fran. I was afraid. I couldn’t tell what I was afraid of. I waited and thought about it, and I was afraid I would never see her again. I was afraid that I had not done enough to help her. I couldn’t sit still, I was really restless. I tightened my legs and thighs as though I was being attacked. Then, as I sat in the car I remembered C.S. Lewis had mentioned something about this and I went back to A Grief Observed. On the very first page he wrote:

“No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid.”

This retreat came at a fortuitous time in my life. (I owe Lester and Norwood Grant a great deal of thanks for their quiet
understanding and many acts of kindness during the months following Fran’s death).

Admittedly, I began the day with a negative attitude. In the front of the room there were a number of small candles. Sister Aline said: “As we begin this journey toward forgiveness, I invite you to ponder two important questions;

First: Who has not yet forgiven you for something that you have done to offend them?

Second: In your heart is there still someone that you have not yet forgiven?

It is important that you put a face and a name to each of these questions. By naming who may not have forgiven you, and by naming someone you have not yet forgiven, you are invited to participate in the sacred reality of mercy in which God wishes to embrace us.”

There are relationships we’d like to repair but simply cannot because the other person has died, is not willing or has moved on in his or her life. But sometimes these relationships can continue to be very painful within us…no one knows because our screams, our pains and our agony are silent.

Sister Aline then said “I want to invite each one to come up and light a candle in honor of some person you want to forgive or need to be forgiven by. As each one goes up to light one or two candles, we will listen to the song: JESUS, HEAL ME! And as we do, in the quiet of our heart we will name those people to the Lord.”

I wasn’t ready to forgive anyone, especially the doctors; and I also thought this a bit “hokie”.

I didn’t light a candle although I had plenty of thoughts about events involving Fran for which I needed to forgive myself. I’m certain she had long ago forgiven me, but I still had trouble forgiving myself. Fran was quick to forgive and not carry the
weight of unforgiveness on her shoulders. She took “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us…” seriously. I had a history of being angry at myself and not forgiving myself. I never thought about the consequences of not forgiving yourself as part of a recurring anger. Fran would say: “Forgive yourself before you can forgive others.”

When a loved one dies, many people need to face what is called “unfinished business.” If the death was sudden there was probably no opportunity to say goodbye. Survivors may feel guilty that they didn’t push their loved one to go to a doctor, or to pursue an ailment; survivors frequently feel they somehow neglected to care for him or her, or that some conflict was never dealt with.” (I was being forced to look into a mirror and see myself clearly.)

The only thing I could think of for not forgiving Fran was her dying on me. My grief, anger, and unforgiveness had all crowded together and I was in a quandary.

The retreat group recited a prayer together, part of it follows:

“I have been hurt; the pain lies deep within my soul. I withhold my love and friendship because of the hurt within...Lord, I know there are people in my life that I need to forgive. But there are some people I just can’t forgive on my own. I need you, O Lord, to give me the words, the desire, the ability to dance through the hurt that leads to forgiveness...If I am going to be whole, O Lord, I must heal the hurt within. In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.”

Sister Aline gave each of us a small branch. She said it would be the symbol of the various people/events we should forgive. We were to concentrate on forgiveness while we listened to a musical selection called “Jesus Heal Us.”

Following the musical selection the stick, “loaded” with thoughts of who or what we had forgiven was to be placed on the floor beneath the candles we had lit earlier.
It was all symbolic, of course, but both the candles and the sticks gave us focal points for definition, and understanding of forgiveness.

“Jesus, heal us, Jesus.
Jesus, hear us now Jesus
All who fear the Lord, wait for his mercy.
All who love the Lord, Come, he will fill you.

All who fear the Lord, follow his ways.
All who love the Lord, hope in his goodness.
All who trust the Lord, he will uphold you.
Let us cling to him, let us fall in the arms of the Lord.”
The others in the room all proceeded to prayerfully deposit their sticks beneath the candles. I hope they were able to complete the cycle of forgiveness. I kept my stick. I was still not ready.

I thought:

“O god…thoroughly wash me from my guilt and of my sin…cleanse me.”
(Psalm 50:4)

We were given a list of what forgiveness was and was not. I have edited the format but not the list itself.

“Forgiveness does not mean you need to forget a hurt or injustice;
doesn’t mean we surrender our right to justice;
doesn’t mean one need relate to or befriend the offender;
doesn’t mean one needs to put up with intolerable behavior;
doesn’t mean excusing, condoning, or minimizing the wrong inflicted on us;
does not mean we never have negative feelings toward the wrong;
doesn’t mean we need to like the offender.

(This latter presented a unique problem with me because the offender in many cases was me—and I needed to constantly remind myself what Fran so frequently told me: “You need to love yourself before you can love others.”)
“Forgiveness is a process; forgiveness is a spiritual surgery we self-perform: forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves...we do not remain stuck in the past and in our pain. When we are able to forgive, we move from being the victim of our story to being the hero of it.”

When you reflect on these points you realize the simplicity of it all, and the power they give us to make forgiveness a part of a healthy philosophy.

“Forgiveness is the powerful assertion that things will not ruin our today even though they spoiled our past.”

(Jean Maalouf—from the retreat)

We know forgiveness is occurring when we can pray for the offender, wish her or him well and let go of all desire to get even.

Peter Murphy of the Archdiocese of Washington Office of Family Life quotes Alexandra Asseily from a film on forgiveness:

"I think that if we all just remember that if we forgive ourselves for all the wickedness we think we have inside or all the things we think are wrong with ourselves, we would then be so much more compassionate with others. And I think probably it's our lack of compassion with ourselves that makes us so upset with others.” (From The Retreat)
Denouement

Recovery comes slowly. The truth is you will never be the same because, in a real sense, half of "you" has disappeared. You may recover most of it, integrating into your new environment, but a part of you is gone forever.

The Kubler-Ross Model, known as the five stages of Grief, was originally presented as the Five stages one goes through when informed of impending death. Later it became a popular vehicle for describing the grieving process.

Everyone will have their own process, and their own way of coping. We will all share the commonality of our experience. The manner in which we deal with the experience depends on many variables.

The Kubler-Ross list, in no particular order:

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

I know Fran went through denial, and depression and I think she went through acceptance. It was so quick, and she was close to a comatose state in the last week, I don’t know whether she went through the other two stages.

The list in many ways applies to grief. I don’t think I have reached total acceptance yet. I’m coming close, but there is so much to accept. Everything is sort of muddled up in your head, and each day you try to make a place for acceptance and understanding.
I know her physical being is gone. I go to the cemetery, but there is still a certain amount of denial, like when I walk away and get home, she’ll be sitting in her favorite chair doing her favorite thing—reading. The denial interferes with the acceptance of reality. I am a stubborn person and the acceptance is not going to come quickly.

Fran gave me the following on August 8, 2002. I think it expresses the feelings we strove to live up to throughout our marriage.

I hope I lived up to this. I think I did. I know Fran thought I did. I know Fran did. Through all fifty seven years, I believe we were one from the day we met.

“What greater thing is there for Two human souls Than to feel that they are joined For life To strengthen each other in all Labor To rest on each other in all Sorrow To minister to each other in all Pain To be one with each other In silent unspeakable memories At the moment of the last parting”

George Elliot, Adam Bede
Matthew, Christopher, and Gregory passed away and Fran and I clung to each other knowing with faith we would survive. We leaned on each other.

Fran has joined our children, and she is no longer here to buoy me in troubled times, or in grief. There is no longer one to whom I can turn, to share.

“Now I am alone
with my grief
ever growing
alone

Alone, guilt ridden
no more Fran
to ask “what’s Happening?”
ever more alone

Alone with no one to share the
sun, the moon
ever alone”

JLB

A line in the Eucharistic Prayers of the Catholic Mass says:

“Remember our brothers and sisters who have gone to their rest in the hopes of rising again, bring them and all the departed into the light of your presence”

My list is long. With faith, there are so many people I will join. I long to see them, but most of all, my love.

Our song was “Suddenly.” It is appropriate to our beginning and our ending with each other:
“Suddenly the night was very still,
Suddenly your touch became a thrill,
Suddenly I knew I was part of you,
And yet I told my heart be still,
Be still,
And suddenly your lips were kissing mine,
Suddenly my world became divine,
For when I looked around then I knew
I’d found eternity with you
So suddenly”

I returned my “stick of forgiveness” to Sister Aline on Sunday January 2, 2011

**ALOHA MY LOVE**
Appendix

References:


2. Peter Murphy, Archdiocese of Washington Office of Family Life, from The Retreat, Marie Joseph Spiritual Center, Biddeford, ME Sister Aline, December 9, 2010

3. *The Dalai Lama* with Howard C. Cutler, M.D., Riverhead Books NY, NY


Poems

by Fran Bove

We have not found all of Fran’s writing, but here are three poems we have found:

• • •

“Yes, there are two worlds
the world of the sun
the world of the moon
the world of consciousness
the world of feeling
one for the masculine
one for female
and yes we must live in the light
of day, and do not question
that necessity,

but it was in the world of the moon
that we found our magic
and in woman
that we found our delight

and male and female
created He them….

and the moon was under her feet.”

• • •
“If you truly loved,
perhaps,
the golden
branching
capillaries of joy
have not changed
to poison;
the martyr-scarlet
threads of pain
brighten today’s weaving;
the unbreakable
multi-stranded
tendons
make tensile
new strength;
Because love
creates,
does not
beak down,
does not destroy.”
“I have reached the age
when so much seems withdrawn
in terms of authority
even autonomy
that I marvel
at receiving
the right of way
when my car comes
to a junction
where the law
is laid down
thus;
and I seriously wonder
if they knew who was driving
whether it would still be so;
and I no longer feel
that strange mix of pride
and self-abeyance
when I move aside
for ambulances,
only continuity
in a life where moving aside,
has become
the highest form
of duty
I can muster
in the name
of love.”
"My favorite locale is a field, which lies about a mile back in the woods in back of our house. It is quite solitary, and apart from all civilization, and is surrounded on three sides by woods, the fourth being a series of “salt ponds”, which are pools of salt water that is not affected by the tide, and which in winter are frozen over by a peculiar sort of ice—we used to call it “cat-ice”. There are several paths leading into this field, and all are very beautiful. One comes down over a little hill, and gives a view of the whole meadow at a glance. One is in a little glade, and comes up into the field. One is an old road, which in some time long ago was used for a farmer’s wagon. And one is a path which is lined with maples, and has a well, old and long deserted, at its beginning. At one end of the field is a birch—a very beautiful birch, which my family has gotten used to my talking about steadily. It is like a poem in motion, a ballet dancer, a lovely piece of music, or a master painting of wind. In autumn, its yellowed leaves and clear white branches make a golden glory against the darkness of the coniferous trees behind the birch. On all sides the other trees are arrayed in gorgeous color; but they give way to the birch in this one quarter, letting it hold all the state and honor of being the outstanding one of the backdrop of darker woods. The air is clear and winey, the sky blue, and the sun bright, and the apple in my hand crisp and red and shining with the wonder that is fall.

In Winter, the birch is still the main player in this frozen tableau of the wonders of nature. The field is covered evenly with snow, although every now and then one can see a stalk of grass above the surface. Besides that, the surface is unbroken
except for the single track made by my feet, and the blurred track of my small dog trying his best to keep up with me through the deep snow. The birch is still the brightest and the whitest of all the trees, and the dark backdrop is still there, but now the color has given way to a more dignified sort of beauty—that of clear black and white, the frosty perfection of the priceless cameo. The birch seems like a snow statue, frozen to permanence for all who wish to behold it. It raises its arms to God in a silent plea for release from its wintry bonds. The sharp air bites into my cheeks and fingers, and my dog barks in delight at the powdery snow.

Spring brings still another effect. The trees, for so long bare of foliage, are beginning to show the promise of their summer greenness. The baby green is very lovely—it gives the birch the effect of lace. Its delicate branches seem to have been waiting for this season, for they sway in delighted appreciation of their newly-found freedom. The air is full of the smell of things that are waking up, and new things that are just beginning to grow. The sky has a color that has not been seen since last summer, and the soft, fleecy cumulous clouds are floating lazily above. My little dog is in his own seventh heaven, for he has found an early butterfly. I walk along, a sapling switch in my hand, from which I am picking the new leaves.

Now it is summer. The air is warm, the breeze lazy, the bugs busy, and humming as they go about their buggy labors. I don’t come out here much now, but when I do, I’m alw3as glad I came. The field is full of red tiger lilies, and yellow black-eyed Susans. The generous foliage is a rich green, and the leaves droop over the twigs on which they hang with a warm, easy shiftlessness which tempts the observer to just give up and rest, on the softness of the meadow and under the softness of the sky. I come from the end of the field from where you look up to the corner where the birch is silhouetted, and wait very carefully until I get within fifty yards or so of it; then I look. It was worth the wait, for in the afternoon sun the birch is dazzling in its whiteness. The sun
seems to pick out the birch for its special notice, for none of the other trees have such a glow. The birch is striking to the eye; I feel myself wondering whether or not it is some messenger from God come down to give some of the gory of the heavens to us poor mortals. I always feel privileged when I look at it. My pup is lying at my feet now, chewing up a piece of leaf; he seems to share my appreciation of the tree, because every now and then he glances up at it. I only wonder about the comparative merits of this natural wonderland and all the desired happiness and amusements of the city. “

York County Star

Fran’s column: “news of kennebunk”, excerpts

What follows is a representative sample of excerpts from Fran’s weekly column in the York County Coast Star. They are mostly about family with a sprinkling of local news.

Christmas

“Santa will have to come by boat if this keeps up—or maybe the weather will relent and by the time Christmas comes we’ll have a lovely icing of snow on the ground—not enough for anyone to have to have to shovel much, but just enough to make it pretty. It does seem more Christmas-y when it’s white, although this shouldn’t be true. I guess it’s all in what you’re accustomed to, which is really food for thought, if anyone feels like thinking about it.
Last week I had the most horrible sinus headache, which made me feel sicker and sicker all day: I drank coffee, which is hot and liquid and should decongest some, but it didn’t help except when I swallowed. Then I happened to think of my father’s old nostrum for colds—ginger tea—which I think ought to be made with candied ginger, but which he makes with about a third of a teaspoon of powdered ginger and boiling water. I tried it, and was just thinking that perhaps it wasn’t very good after all—you have to keep stirring it to keep the ginger from settling, and I thought ginger might be drying—when my headache started going away, and before long, it had gone altogether! I don’t know for sure that it was the ginger, or whether the headache was planning on leaving soon anyway (it usually doesn’t decide to leave by itself) but at any rate, it went away.”

“It’s a little hard to feel Christmas-y this year, so far—all the more reason, I suppose, for doing our best to make other people feel cheerful. But as a friend said to me this morning, there are things one does at Christmas besides buying presents, and those are the things we should concentrate on. She’s set up a Christmas Puzzle in the living room, for anyone to work on if they are so minded—…..whatever our Christmas customs are, they can be done, still, and perhaps concentrated on instead of card-sending and gift buying. As far as we’re concerned, we’ve tried to provide family gifts, and I’ve made fruitcake; the cards I would prefer not to send, but there are so many people in other parts of the country that we never see—it seems hard to cut any off the list, and since I’m too chicken to eliminate the cards altogether, they all seem to have to be sent.

I thought I’d wait and see which of my friends have decided not to send this year, and then just follow suit next year—but by the looks of it, my friends are the ones who either wish to continue sending cards, or are like me and are waiting to see what I’m going to do. Jenni hung mistletoe—and there are always carols to be sung. We may discover that, like “the Whos down in Whoville”, we can be joyful without all the Grinch-stolen trimmings!”
Saint Nicholas visited our house December 6, which he has never done before; we each received a gift, and ate Speculatius, which is a spice cookie from the Netherlands, very good: I read about this in a book and thought I’d try it. Also there was Bishopwyn—Bishop’s wine, because, I guess, St. Nicholas was a bishop. It’s claret with whole cloves and cinnamon sticks, simmered a short time and served hot. Excellent. I’ll do it again next year if all goes well.

Jon, who is home from the sea again, accompanied me to the Bookport yesterday, where we each picked out a book for St. Nick’s day and the other paid for it. (I got the Trapp Family Book of Christmas songs). We also persuaded Mr. Ramsay to play his pipes for us; I hadn’t managed to be there before when he was playing, so I was happy about that. I like the selection he composed himself, called “Ramsay’s Lament for Braemarlk. … the first Christmas card has arrived, which makes it a bit harder for those of us who, at this time of year when all depends on our not forgetting anything, begin to draw a total blank. Somehow, however, Christmas always comes anyhow, and if I’ve forgotten anything, it usually turns out to be something which irks me more than it does anyone else, which is nice.”

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She Quit and then Didn’t

“Please pay attention, everybody—I’m still here. I suppose I can do no more in defense of my keeping this column after having decided to stop, than to exercise my woman’s prerogative of changing my mind, outside of sharing with you my sentimental attachment to the thing and my concern when people can’t always get things in the paper when they’d like to, and my regret about losing the “phone pals” I’ve accumulated through the column! So I guess, aside from the fact the Star loves me so much they can’t do without me0=--sic—that’s enough reason for me still being here. So be generous with your time and news—you know,
I won’t use anything unless it’s given to me—and remember, my deadline is still supposed to be FRIDAY P.M.”

★★★★

A Kennebunk High School Presentation of the Hobbit

“Thorin and Company made a cheerful if rather peppery band of dwarves Friday evening and Saturday as they casually converted a very reluctant Hobbit, Chris Gould, into a “burglar” in an attempt to recover a dwarf and elf treasure stolen by the dragon, Smaug. The cast was large—thirty five strong—and with stage hands I think the grand total of high schoolers working on the play was about 45. John Anagnostis deserves a lot of credit for undertaking such a play as director; but so do the actors, who seem to have been largely cooperative. They certainly made the play a success.—real aficionados of Tolkien may have had some disagreement with a few of the interpretations, but as a play, it worked, and that’s really the acid test. I did half the make-up Wednesday night for a rehearsal, Friday night and Saturday, along with Alan Jasper, and the most rewarding part of that was a chance to renew acquaintance with the kids…..when you teach or have some connection with a town’s teenagers, things begin to look better somehow.

★★★★

Wood Heat and Moving Everything into the Front Room

“….we’re installing my father’s old wood-or-coal burning stove in the front room where there is a flue. This is where I had the piano, so I moved the piano, with Jenny’s help, into the dining room after moving around a few things in the dining room, notably the parakeets…….
For some reason with one more fairly large item in the dining room it looks more spacious; also, for one of those reasons which escape me, we are now playing the piano more. My husband, who had a few lessons as a boy, decided the first night of this arrangement that he wanted to play; so we all resigned ourselves and enjoyed that; but when Ezio Pinza emerged, I felt I should get into the act, since I was running out of breath singing alto, waiting for him to get to the next note in the accompaniment. So I played for him. This has one disadvantage, in as much as John sings so enthusiastically that I can’t hear the piano, and can’t tell when I’m making a mistake. I kept thinking of “All in the Family”? The kids endured, but we had a good time. Now I’m polishing up my Bach, which certainly needs a log of polishing up.

“I’m going to have to give up my “parlor”. I always want to keep the television away from the living room, so I always have a “TV room’, but then the living room is rarely used. So, I’m going to transfer all the TV-room comfortable, but horrendous, furniture into the front room because the TV room will not be very warm with the stove all the way in the front room, really at the far end of the house. Then my front room will be the TV room and the TV room is probably going to get a ping pong table. Oh well, so much for elegance….all I have to do now is figure out where the television set can go so that my husband’s perfectly enormous recliner can fit into the room without breaking a window every time he leans back, and so that all the rest of the family can have a view of the set without getting cricks in their necks……we’re not burning wood, we’re burning coal. Hard coal doesn’t pollute any more than wood, if as much: it has a hotter flame, lasts longer, is much safer…..This is all my idea and comes from a childhood involving a tall, coal-burning stove with isinglass windows, through which you could see red coals shining even from the car as you arrived home on a snowy night. Lovely.”
Christ Church

“The following appeared in the bulletin from Christ Church on Dane Street, Kennebunk, and it might be of interest to you. Madeline Murray O’Hady who was instrumental in the Supreme Court Prayer Decision, is said to have obtained 27,000 signed letters protesting the astronauts’ reading from Genesis as they orbited the moon in December 1968. There will be a demand presented to NASA that the astronauts be publicly censured and prohibited from further expression of religious faith. An effort is being made to secure 1,000,000 signed letters in appreciation to the Astronauts for the reading.

The further intent is to support the right of everyone to express his or her faith in God publicly, without fear of censure. (It occurs to me—where are we living? This is the good old US of A isn’t it?) Your letter may be addressed to the national Aeronautics and Space Administration, Manned Spacecraft Center, Astronaut Office, Houston, Texas 77058. (It seems to me that this is well worth a 10 cent stamp!)

The 5th and 6th grade classes of the Christ Church School held an end of year and going away party for Kaysa McAdams, May 20, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick. Mrs. McAdams was presented with a “Fish and Cross” necklace by the classes. Mrs. McAdams presented each member of the classes with a “Fish” pin.

Snowmobiles not so Bad After All

“Recent research has disclosed the fact that not only are snowmobiles ecologically feasible, but are actually beneficial to the environment, according to a report read at the April meeting
of the Lyman Rock Snowmobile Club in West Kennebunk…
(Research was done) by Dr. Gale Gleason, Head of the Natural
Science Division, Lake Superior State College in Michigan…
On snowmobile trails, where the snow is packed down and thinned,
the grass appears early and lush, providing fodder for moose and
deer early in the spring when the animals are at a low period after
the months of snow cover… Snowmobile trails also provide
an escape route for moose and deer when they are attacked by
predators, mainly wolves and coyotes.

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How a Police State Happens

“Yes, Virginia, there is such a thing as a Police State. It
happens when many people forget the meaning of the word,
“freedom”—which really means freedom to do what’s right
according to your conscience, and the laws have to made stricter
and stricter in order to cover everything some “free” people do
which make it impossible for the rest of us to be free.

It happens when people have forgotten about those rules we
received way back—the Ten commandments. When the laws of
the land are the same as these rules, we have a free country, when
they become different, and there is a difference between what’s
“legal” and what’s “right”, then there is a Police State, where
officers are allowed to do things that are “wrong” to people if
they have caught them doing something that’s “illegal”, even
though what the people did may not be really “wrong”.

In a Police State, there is no “right” and “wrong”—there is
just “legal” and “illegal”. And since “legal” means laws and rules
made by men, they can go all peculiar, like they did in Russia
because lawmakers are not God, and they often get all twisted
up in their thoughts—and besides, they want lots of power…
..A Police State can be easily bought by people who disregard
the responsibilities of freedom....Of course, since none of us
is perfect, even those of us who try will occasionally run afoul
of “legality”—and then a Police State has no pity....no society,
Virginia, is immune, as long as it has—1. People with grudges,
and 2. People who misuse freedom, and 3. People who are willing
to enforce “legal” things even though it may not be “right”, or
“moral”, to do so. Like putting people in concentration camps was
“legal”.

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Traffic Hazards

“I read Jean Hansen’s letter to the editor last week about the
traffic hazards for kids walking, or especially, riding bicycles to
school. The few people I talked to seem to feel equally strongly
about it... The worst spot, of course, is the Main Street-Fletcher
Street intersection.... It’s equally bad if they come through
the parking lots behind Western Auto and try to cross on the
crosswalk there; the cars don’t stop for the crosswalks, especially
for kids, I’m informed indignantly! Other towns stop traffic for
kids going and coming from school—why don’t we?”

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Music

“Last night on NHN there was an hour of ragtime, with
the New England Conservatory Ragtime Ensemble, and piano
soloists and dancers; the orchestra sounded just like the ancient
records we occasionally find in attics; the most amazing part of it
was a man named Eubie Blake, who must have been plenty well
along in years, since he described his first number as having been
written.... in 1897, when he was too small to know how to write
music... Also, E. Power Biggs was there with his harpsichord,
away from Bach for the moment, happily bouncing up and down
to the ragtime off beats!”
Ecologists 45 Years Ago—Sort of like Goose Rocks Beach “Ecologists” of Today

“Incredible item of the week—there’s a forest fire in Grand Teton Park in Wyoming that no one will put out. Reason—the ecologists have decided that things in a “wild area” must be allowed to take their natural course. The fire has been burning since July. Thousands of acres of forest have been burned already. And they restrict the cutting of lumber even when thinking would benefit the woods, and we’re recycling our paper bags—so no wonder Bill Clark gets hot under the collar! And I simply don’t believe this!

Apple Picking

“We picked apples again yesterday—Northern Spies this time—up at McDougals in Springvale. Those trees are so beautiful—there is nothing extra on them in the way of twigs, small branches or suckers. If you’re very careful not to bruise bark, you can lie back against a sloping limb and be comfortably part of the tree, while uncannily apple-covered branches droop above your head and all around you. We’ve picked apples in couple of other orchards but I’ve never seen such beautifully kept trees… We’ve also gotten two batches of elderberries. Elderberries mean warm sunny fall days to me. My mother always used to make elderberry cordial, and she wrote out the recipe for me a number of years ago, and I lost it. This year, it suddenly appeared in a cookbook stuck between the pages, and now I have a crock of cordial sitting “in a cool place”, fermenting. The recipe says you should not add anything in the way of yeast, because it ruins the flavor, so it’s just juice and sugar (gasp—could I afford such luxury?”). “It is a mistake”, goes on the recipe, “to hurry the
fermentation process”. (I) hope to come close to matching my mother’s delicious product—which even though a “cordial”, was much too heady for my taste as a child.”

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Back to School

“Here it is, back-to-school day in Kennebunk, and everybody’s happy about it--too bad the kids enthusiasm can’t last a little longer than it does! Frankly, I wouldn’t mind a bit going back to school—except that I remember how things were and then I wonder. You’re puzzled by a lot of things, bored by a lot more, at the mercy of certain of your contemporaries who seem to have as their one goal in life to “get” you; you have to perform intellectually to convince your parents and other people that you’re all they think you are while at the same time having your emotions pulled in six directions at once to take your mind off what you’re doing…three’s a lot of enrichment now….but …a lot of the enrichment is as much donkey-work as it ever was in the old days when enrichment consisted only in having to read your history assignment three times over because you had finished your work too soon and had time on your hands. I used to read my reading book, and write poetry.

The teacher appreciated my ability to do a job on book reports, and praised my writing, but wasn’t too turned on by the fact that I was reading something other than geography or history during class time (there were three grades in that room) or that I stared out the window at snowflakes, before writing the poem about them!.

There’s a need for school; but there is simply too much of it, as things stand now! I’m for the short day, and the four-day week. Then if people could put their kids to work on something useful for
the rest of the time, and even make this employment gainful in more ways than the simple satisfaction of having been a needed person, I think the kids would be a lot better off. As it is they’re bored and they have good reason. And bored kids have a tendency to do things people wish they wouldn’t!”

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Autumn

“I know it’s good for the kids to shed the sheltering influence of home little by little, and not be held back until they’re practically moral cripples as far as independence goes, and this has always been my philosophy—but it’s hard when not only my big boy is off all the time—he now splits his residence between Bar Harbor and Deerfield, Massachusetts—but my younger ones are gone most of the time. Now Geoff’s working, he’s only fourteen, and it does seem a little much to have them all growing up so miserably soon. Between the boys’ jobs and their school in Portland I won’t see much of them this winter, I’m afraid. And Jennifer is in the eight grade. Incredible….but you still worry about them when they’re all grown up and married, and then you’re not even allowed to give guidance!....I still think the older generation has a lot of good advice to give, born of that most expensive school on earth—experience. Cheers—and happy last week of vacation to all the kids.”

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Garden

“I don’t know where the summer has gone. Even the garden seems to be wondering, to judge by the size of things—we surely do need rain. Even my little pathway to a garden is a satisfaction, all the same. I managed to get some rosemary to come up, not very much, but it will go into a pot in the fall and hopefully winter
into nice large plants. Other herbs, basil, oregano, chervil and thyme, came up well, and mint, naturally. Our radishes had a swift hour of glory, and we’re beginning to eat baby carrots. But they’re slow. The lettuce is lovely and the cucumbers make a nice bit now and then, not for a meal, because it’s not that kind of a garden—but for an appreciation! We may have pumpkins—maybe not. Pumpkins are peculiar. And the beets are beginning to look interesting. The tomatoes are quite small yet. I think they need a dose of something—they’re very close together.”

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On Pumpkins and Fish and Thechanging Seasons

“Ann Goodwin of Alewive, Route 35, has such a beautiful pumpkin and squash display that it’s worthwhile driving out there even if you don’t need pumpkins or squash. I never saw such an attrative stand…We got two of the nicest pumpkins we’ve ever had: I look forward to jack “o” lanterns and pie.

Baby Pollock—or whatever they are—don’t grow too fast. Our fish follow you from side to side of the aquarium when they want to be fed, which is all the time. We now have two diminutive crawfish, who are too little to eat the fish; the boys picked them up at school. I asked Greg what he planned to do with them when they got big, and he said, “Take them back and dissect them.” Oh well. Life isn’t all that exciting for an over-grown crawfish in an aquarium anyway

.I think this is probably the most beautiful part of the year. I always think twice when I say that, because how can you beat spring? And what is much more beautiful than the first snowfall? And the beautiful days of summer are uncannily beautiful. But now there is the combination of the remaining green on the trees, the brilliant-turning leaves, the as yet green grass, the flowers still blooming in gardens, and this unbelievable blue sky.
Our street is wonderful in the fall; the trees take turns changing color; we have one of the first trees to turn and the “gully”, across from our house, turns last of all, and often stays golden till it snows. It’s like looking into a golden cave, long after all the other trees have lost their leaves.”

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On the Delight and Dangers of the Ocean and Roses and Daffodils

“The weather shows no self-control at all. Friday was an unbelievable day at Goose Rocks, because there’s no undertow there and the kids can enjoy the waves with no more than normal attention from us and the lifeguard. Everyone feels the tragedy of bathing accidents, especially when they involve children. Fear can be a very salutary thing, and a healthy fear of the ocean is part of the make-up of everyone who knows the ocean well. Fear does not prevent the fishermen from going out; but the fear is there and makes them cautious and improves their chances of survival an enormous amount.

I hope the Horns and everyone who has lost a child can feel to some degree the love and sympathy directed their way by everyone who knows of it, even if we don’t know them personally.

I think it’s awfully nice that the daffodils are out, and the tulips coming along nicely, except in those privileged areas where they live right or something and the tulips continue in uninterrupted bloom for weeks before and after everybody else’s have flourished—but I certainly do wish it would warm up. I put a few selected shade plants out in my yard, and planted two peace roses. The book Port gave me a single Pease rose—a huge affair, and very beautiful—for my birthday last year. He didn’t know it was my birthday—Jenny pulled and tugged and agitated until I went out to look at a rose she had found in the corner of the
veranda—she wanted to know what it was. I couldn’t remember, and so I asked Tom. We were complete strangers at the time, so I was amazed and warmly grateful when he proceeded to cut the rose and present it to me. I was touched, and became enamored of Peace roses.

My Peace roses came out, two of them. One was only yellow-cream, though, but the other has the blushing edges it ought to. If I had a hundred roses, I might enjoy them less than I do these few I watch, love and cherish. Jenny and I make the rounds nearly every morning to see how the buds are coming along. She wants to take a picture of her Siamese with the Peace roses before they fade and it might make a nice picture, if we can get the cat to cooperate.”

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Memorial Day and Costumes

“Memorial Day, or apple blossom time——it’s the old rule of thumb for planting corn and other tender things in these parts…..this year I don’t see why seeds haven’t rotted in the ground….the weather doesn’t say “May” to me. I’ve known us to get beet red in the sun on May 1; if tomorrow is like that I’ll be very surprised. It was 45 degrees this morning when the kids set out for school…We’re all busy getting kids outfitted for dance, twirling, band and so on…suddenly (summer will be on our hands) and we’ll be standing there with nothing to do but wonder when we’ll take them to the beach or camping or boating. Usually by August I’ve gotten used to the idea that it’s summer, and we do something or other about it…..I’ve been making costumes for Jenny’s dancing teacher in Biddeford—I just got through making what Geoff called “threes-threes”—instead of tutus…..I’m glad they’re done, because net has a nasty habit of sticking to itself and refusing to go where you want it to…..I hate the phrase, “adjust gathers evenly”….The
band people had a few thrills on the subject of uniforms, for the band’s trip this weekend to “Acton and Boxboro. The girls needed skirts. The uniforms are navy blue, so Mr. E. called Terry Spencer and gave her a swatch of material…instructed her to get 50 yards of something. ….North Berwick didn’t have enough…(they went to) Boston, Sanford Wells, Portland—on opening and examining the uniforms …the pants were all black, not navy. It was…Monday…fifty skirts had to be ready by Friday.

Millie Pillsbury bought black material, Myra Sparkowich arranged for the use of the Home Ec Room Tuesday evening….they only found seven who could help….by eleven only 10 skirts had been completed….they worked all night….everything got done on time….Jody Bibber showed the ladies how to use the machines and during the evening Susan York, described as “a good elf”, brought the workers coffee and cookies….all those who went (to the competition) got “honorable mention”—Scott Spencer, who didn’t win a prize either, told Geoff he’d tell his mother that, to make her feel good—but I guess we showed up very well with five out of the eight prizes in our category.”

Not Quite Spring

“The reason it snowed last Thursday is that I put my boots away and took out the hikers—sorry. The tree outside my front door is perfectly amazing—bursting with sap. I’ve never seen so much sap out of one little old maple. We’ve gotten quite a bit of syrup from it already, and it’s only been tapped about a week, if that. Boiling sap is easy, but catching it at exactly the right time is not. When it gets just so low in the pot, you have to stand there and keep testing it, or it will get all foamy and then burn to a nice
carbon and ruin the pot, as it did in my childhood, much to my mother’s chagrin. I forgot it the other night, let it go about five minutes too long and it was dark orange foam, beginning to burn in one spot….I grabbed it off the stove, turned the pan sideways to see if there was anything liquid in it….with one hand I held the pot sideways, so it wouldn’t let the syrup back onto the burning part, and with the other I greased a plate and then poured the syrup, which looked like dark butterscotch, onto it…turning up the edges, I was reminded of toffee and wondering if it would pull like toffee. I began to work with it—it worked….I used a lot of butter, because it was very sticky, but it finally turned golden—amazing—and I cut it into lengths and left it for my family to judge…by the next day it was gone. The kids want me to do it again, but I wouldn’t know how to get it to exactly that stage, and anyway, I wouldn’t dare… but if anyone boils syrup too long, that’s a way to save it!

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**Spring at Least**

“Spring certainly seems to be springing….it started for me last night, when I got home from taking Jennifer and Kathy Best to their ballet and changed the baby and went rushing to Junior High Night. …Dean Best had National Honor Society meeting, and (the bests) arrived, a little out of breath, at the concert about half way through. Bonnie Gibson said, “Well, it’s starting!’ And it all came to me—Spring is here..The band and chorus were good, as usual, and the ”Junior Top Twenty” performed nicely with two numbers, the new “Middle School Stage Band” did a terrific job, especially on their last number, “Getting Straight,” in which the trumpets used mutes and Billy Simpson performed a very creditable solo. It’s still startling to me to see what kids of that age can do, if given the opportunity.”
New Residents

“I’ve been meaning to introduce the Champ Websters, enthusiastic residents of Kennebunk since last August, but only recently have I had enough information to do it properly. Retired since last June, Mr. Webster is former Headmaster of Malden High School, where he served in that capacity for eleven years, with fourteen years as Assistant Headmaster before that. He began his career there as a Latin teacher, and shortly was appointed head of the Classics Department. Mr. Webster chose to retire at a relatively early age because he felt a younger man should take over; he was able to choose his successor and is well content on that score, except, as he says, he misses the many friends he made there and in his activities at First Church.

A World War II Veteran, Mr. Webster served as a Captain in the Air Corps and was head of the Navigation Department at Spencer field. He is also well-traveled, having visited every State in the Union except Alaska….(he has also traveled in most countries in Europe).

Mrs. Bertha Webster received her Master’s degree in Education from Boston University, and was a teacher….she has also been active in her church, and now is a member of the choir of Christ Church. She is the daughter of the late General Henry C. Bacon of Malden.

The Webster’s only child, Daniel is a graduate of Malden High School, Leland Posers School of Drama,, Radio and Television, New England College and the American Institute of Banking. ….Presently he is employed at Porteous Mitchell in Portland….

The Websters have been busy since they came here putting finishing touches on their new ranch at 11 Countryfield Circle…. They’ve found that it’s a small world—or as Mr. Webster put it, “orbis terratum parvus est.” They’ve met several people
from Massachusetts and one or two from their immediate neighborhood. They are active and interested in the community and its events and I feel sure they’ll find a warm welcome in the town they’ve adopted.”

(aside, the Websters became good friends of mine—John, I had frequent happy hours with them, I also sold them their house while I was in real estate—small world)

Soy Beans an the Cost of Food

“I saw in the Star last week the article on growing soy beans, and it seems like a good idea. My mind is not continually on food—but I just got home from grocery shopping, and one has to do something! The average paycheck seems to cover food and gas and that’s it. But I remember my mother buying soy beans in a can, much as we buy green beans or corn, and they were really delicious as a table vegetable. Someone told me that they’re still available in cans, but I haven’t seen them. But if you cook the dried ones, they’re good as a vegetable, especially in salads. And they’ve got so much protein, they’re practically as good as meat for you. The trouble is, as the article pointed out, “soybeans have ‘gone up’ quite a bit recently, so you can’t even save money any more on things that you buy to save money! So, if I can manage to find a spot with some garden space, I’ll grow a couple of rows. Maybe I can grow a couple of oil wells.”

The Unending Search

“I refer to the continual efforts we make to beat the ever-increasing cost of eating—and by the way, if you think the timing is off in your car, or you need a tune-up, or a valve job or something,
forget it. I think it’s the gas. Today at dinner, my father, my husband and I confessed to having hitches in our git-a-longs—the typical “stall” feelings at about 45-50, on the straightaway. My father had already tried a tank of super-hi-test, and it made no difference; and since we all suddenly had the same symptoms, it made me think maybe we’re getting adulterated gas—But back to food. I bought myself a Zen Macrobiotic cookbook, not because I’m thinking of Buddhism, or even vegetarianism, but simply because it has lots of recipes using relatively low-cost things, and a theory which seems fairly sensible about how to eat them. After all, Buddhists seem to be very healthy people.

The main appeal of the thing to me is that you really can survive on brown rice. I don’t intend to do it; but brown rice does contain all the essential vitamins and minerals, as well as available protein if combined properly with something else—why not milk?—and to base one’s week’s menu on a few pounds of brown rice, rather on the same or more—definitely more—of meat, makes a huge difference in one’s budget.

What I did this week was to get my rice, confident that the kids would eat it, since they like rice and that it would nourish them; and then I bought meat and cheese and things in sandwich quantities. I can afford more in the way of satisfying the ever-present, “There’s nothing in this house to EAT!” also.

‘My book talks about Yang and yin, which is pretty heavy until you find out that in reference to food it just means acid and base, or potassium and sodium. Yang foods are alkaline (base), or sodium, and Yin foods are acid, or potassium.

This impresses me somewhat, because I also read Adel Davis’ book, Let’s Get Well, and she got me all upset over the balance between sodium and potassium—it seems it’s a vital one. So if I can ever figure out which is Yang and which is Yin, and which more and which less, and whether I can stand going without ”highly Yin” foods like potato salad—maybe we’ll be both healthier and richer.
I case anybody’s interested, the book is far from being a fanatic one—it simply states the way this particular writer prefers to eat and gives recipes—and the name of it is: *Zen Macrobiotic Cooking—Oriental and Traditional Recipes*, and I got it at Port Earth in the Port.

If you get it, I hope we will all become rejuvenated as well as throwing off our meat market shackles!”

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**Navy Rescue Ships and Depressurizing**

“Did you know that gaseous gangrene (pardon) and other ills remotely connected with oxygen can be cured with the use of a hyperbaric chamber, used aboard Navy rescue ships for the depressurizing of deep-sea divers? Yesterday we went on the USS Tringa, ASR-16, for a tour; the ship was in Portland holding open house. Captained by LCDR John E. Pendleton of Saco, the ship’s primary function is the rescuing of distressed submarines. The diver who explained the use of the various air mixtures in the chamber breathed a helium-oxygen mixture for us and demonstrated what it does to the voice; the squeaky, nasal sound wore off gradually as he continued his explanation. Hopeless cases of gangrene have been brought to them, the medic in charge said, after the amputation of everything that could be amputated, and have been cured by a session in the chamber. The treatment consists of the breathing of pure oxygen which forces out all other gasses, including the poisonous ones. Unfortunately, there is also an oxygen-toxicity, which can cause a grand mal seizure, all prospective divers have to be screened for this vulnerability before their training. As I looked at it, I was hoping I wouldn’t have any of these conditions, because I have claustrophobia, and the chamber looked like a space capsule without any instruments—not oppressively small, but good grief, *Sealed*, and though the medic goes in with you to monitor your
reactions, if you are in any state to know where you are, or care, I recommend taking a deck of cards or something to take your mind off the fact that you’re in there! The diver told us that most people didn’t care; and that if they had brought the gangrenous amputees to the chamber before, the amputations wouldn’t have been necessary.”

We also tried hard to follow the explanations of how the ship maneuvers into position and anchors directly above the distressed sub:....the ship employs many deep sea divers and there is a “bell” which can attain a depth of over 800 feet.....

One of the diving helmets was hanging by itself—it weighs somewhere around a hundred pounds. The other display consisted of a complete diving outfit. Together, the articles of equipment weigh over 280 pounds. Another qualification for a prospective diver is that he must be able to be outfitted and then walk across the deck! I got in the solitary helmet by ducking under it and coming up inside, and I wouldn’t want to have to support that, let alone the rest of the suit.....there have been very few changes in the diving equipment since the thirties, we were told....

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**Kennebunk Baptist Church Calls Minister**

“Robert E. Stuart as accepted a call to become Pastor of the Kennebunk Baptist church. He has been interim Pastor here since November.

Mr. Stuart graduated from Kennebunk High School and Gordon College. He also attended Gordon divinity School. Since 1955 Mr. Stuart has been engaged in interim and supply ministry, while operating a farm. He is married to the former Charlotte Steward, and the couple have five children.

Mr. Stuart is the third generation in his family to serve the Kennebunk church as Pastor; his grandfather, Rev. Oscar W.
Stuart, and his father, Rev. Chauncey Stuart, were also Pastors at the church.

The Installation of Mr. Stuart as Pastor will be held in May.”

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Kennebunk Lutherans are Honored by Mother Church

“To live in a house by the side of the road and be a friend to Man—“ this isn’t how he expressed it, but this is the general impression I got in talking to the Rev. Kenneth Hauge about the new Holy Cross Lutheran Church on Storer Street. Selected by the American Lutheran Church as “Church of the Month” for April, the new community is comparatively small in numbers, but large in terms of good will and energy.

Still working hard at renovation, Holy Cross members are striving for a worship center in which the key word will be flexibility.

“…the church will use folding chairs…..and carpets will be employed throughout the building to reduce noise and increase comfort. The area of the altar is to be separated from the rest of the main floor by moveable dividers, so that a large part of the space may be used for a multi-purpose room.

“…In line with his concern for the youth of Kennebunk, Rev.Hauge plans to run for a two year term on the School Board. He would like to provide a kind of youth center, if possible, and assist school programs on a non-denominational level.

“His current work with young people includes a Tuesday afternoon session for Junior and Senior High School students, which stresses the social aspects of church community, and a Wednesday night bible study group which is more structured and restricts itself pretty much to learning and discussion.
“Rev. Hauge also plans to open his doors to “leisure age” activity. This will involve luncheons once a week, speakers, arts and crafts and other areas of interest to Senior Citizens.

“Contributing to Holy Cross’ selection as Church of the month is the fact of the rapid progress being made by the group… (and)... that it is in fact, what you might call a “mission” church.

“Important as the physical changes are, the heart of any community is its leader, and the philosophy of Rev. Hauge is totally community-oriented and distinctly Christian….The congregation is working on a constitution which will be presented at the Eastern District. At that time, Rev. Hauge says he hopes the church will be received as an official member of the American Lutheran church.”
In 1956, C. S. Lewis’ wife died after a brief marriage of four years. Lewis, a confirmed bachelor, was alone again and inconsolable. He was angry, and his anger and grief threatened his faith.

Lewis’ rage, grief, and unforgiveness seemed to have no solution. In this dark time, he wrote *A Grief Observed*, a long obituary to his wife, the aftereffects of her death, and his recovery from grief.

For the same purpose was *Two Weeks* written by an average Christian guy. He decided a similar journal could help him, not to regain his faith—for he was in no danger of losing it—but to persevere, with his faith as his guide.

Two Weeks was how long Fran had from the day she was informed of her cancer. Aloha is because of the many meanings Aloha has to the Hawaiians. Aloha defines the Hawaiian philosophy of living. Each of the letters stands for a phrase. The last A stands for “Patience to be expressed with Perseverance, Be Faithful.”

Aloha.

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John L. Bove was born in Burlington, Vermont. He received his BA from the University of Vermont, his MA from State University of NY, and did graduate work at Boston University and Boston College and is certified as an Advanced Clinical Hypnotherapist.

He taught at and administrated schools from elementary through college level. He spent many years as an anchor of news weather and sports at several television stations. He is involved with counseling (the area of work in which he feels most comfortable), and is writing another book. He lives with his daughter and grandson in Saco, Maine.