

THE WORLD OF WORK

1931-1971

"What do you want to be when you grow up?"

The Schoolboy Patrol. They weren't all the way grown up but were twice as tall as us first-graders. Close enough. We were protected by them on the streets between Daniel Bagley Elementary School and home.

That was in Seattle. When we moved to Lowell I saw kids not much bigger than us third-graders of Sycamore Street Primary School clinging to walls of what once was the largest cotton ^{mill} factory in the world. Washing windows. We returned West before I was big enough for that.

I became Captain of the Schoolboy Patrol at Ronald Grade School. In the eighth grade they had us fill out a questionnaire about our ambitions. My first choice was the Navy. Dad had been in the Navy and went through the Panama Canal in a battleship, to Australia and finally Seattle. Second choice was the Army. Uncle Bill had shown the officers in France how to get a caisson unstuck from the mud and had been promoted to corporal. What I really wanted was to shoot down Fokkers, like I did in doodles on my homework, but the war was over before I was born.

Lincoln High School made me get serious. College. I was on the Debate Team and a member of the Lynx Club and my grade point was in the Top Ten of our graduating class, some 700 kids. Dad had been skipped through the grades and graduated from high school at fifteen, but back East it didn't matter how bright a boy was, if his folks weren't rich he went to work. They put him in a cage to start his progress to becoming, in thirty years or so, a banker. He earned enough to buy an Indian, got in trouble, and rode off to Boston Navy Yard to enlist. He was too young and had to ride back to Lowell to face the music. His father and the Lowell police agreed he should be allowed to join the Navy and see the world.

corrections

In 1880 Mother's father graduated from high school, not a common achievement for a Pennaylvani& farmboy of the time. His course of study (described in his diploma, which I have on my office wall) would earn a baccalaureate nowadays. He taught school in Pennsylvania, then North Dakota, where he had gone in obedience to Horace Greeley. He married a frontier schoolmarm, who had to be a pretty spunky girl to leave her home on the Hudson River. Twenty years on the prairie, the hail, the locusts, the drought, the prairie fire, "and then Jim Hill" caused them to undertake an Act Two of Greeley's prescription for young America. Mother was an infant when eight Hawthorns rode Jim Hill's Great Northern to the end of the line in Seattle.

The oldest son did what no ploughboy of Pennsylvania or North Dakota could expect. He went to college. Worked his way through. Wagon roads were being paved to become all-year automobile highways. ~~and~~ he did his share of ~~ending~~^{closing} the frontier of the horse and the mosquito fleet, and then became a professor of civil engineering. Uncle George, first of the Hawthorn-Manning families to get a higher education, blazed the way for me.

Of the four foreign languages offered at Lincoln High, one required for the college-prep track, I chose Spanish. The generation of Uncle George had pretty well taken care of America's needs for highways, bridges, and dams. The frontier for his successors was Latin America. Another reason for becoming a civil engineer was the Depression. We would emerge from the University of Washington (if and when) into the army of the unemployed. The good news was the New Deal, which was sponsoring a nation-wide spate of engineering. The bad news was that most of it was pick-and-shovel, wheelbarrow, strong-back-and-dirty-hands work. The good news was that college boys wore ^{white} shirts and ties and as timekeepers had no calluses. Moreover, if they followed Uncle George, they were surveyors, who never sweated.

The University catalog was a smorgasbord to glut a Viking mind, a lifetime's worth of feasts from astronomy to zoology, banquets and picnics and revels and bacchanals, hors doovers and snacks. Ah, the pity! So many delicious dishes and only one stomach. But worse, my diet was to be four years of gruel. Yet there might be hope, an alternative, a compromise. Boy-Scouting naked ridges of the Olympics had given me a taste for the innards of Earth, the bones. My folks were dismayed. Uncle George, though, told them geology was as solid as engineering.

So then, the money. The University shared the dedication of Western land-grant colleges to helping the ploughboy and mechanic rise to higher station, as had Uncle George and as had not Dad because Eastern colleges were strictly for children of those already in higher station. Even so, a University year was \$100 in tuition and fees, textbooks on top of that. I started raking leaves and selling eggs and picking blackberries at the age of ten, mowing lawns and delivering papers at eleven, but my college-fund bank account had a leak in it, and on graduation day in June of 1942 was a country mile from the price of admission. The folks wouldn't be able to help much aside from the accustomed room and board. The Recovery had put Relief several years in our past, but Dad's monthly paycheck as a truckdriver was enough above \$100 to pay for a roof and groceries but had no space for fun and games of the higher education sort.

The day after graduation I sortied out in a very large and substantially cruel world wondering where there might be a boss who would pay grown-up wages to a sixteen-year-old. Lo, I lucked out. There was a war on. The very first door I knocked ^{at} opened to reveal a grown-up's handtruck that would earn me 71¢ an hour, more than Boeing paid beginner mechanics. I ended the summer at 89¢ -- for overtime, a stunning \$1.34. I took a girl to Playland ^{and} to her horror blew five bucks on the ferris wheel and rollercoaster, and then there were the hamburgers and milk shakes.

Geology was more fun than Playland. Glaciers flowing from Canada to ice up the Puget Trough. Their meltwater gushing to the ocean in a river many times mightier than the Columbia. Volcanoes pop-pop-popping all the way to California. Earthquakes shake-shake-shaking San Francisco toward Seattle. Excellent. Sadly, the bodaciously gallivanting world would in the confines of my degree program squeeze down to what could be seen with eye to the microscope. Thin sections of granite wherein would be estimated the proportions of silica, feldspar, mica. Microfossils older than God.

Fly, fly away from dungeons of Lower Campus to free air of Upper. Journalism. A foreign correspondent chumming with heroes of the Revolution. Gorgeous Eurasian ladies who would teach me free love. But the department advisor wore a bow tie.

General Studies didn't mess with me, I could do as I pleased. Yet when I got a job reading bluebooks in English the polite thing to do was transfer my records to that office. A job reading bluebooks in Philosophy, ditto. Degree time upon me, flip a coin, English it is. x

Graduate School for the union card. A sweater, a goatee, a pipe, a lifetime tenure that could only be revoked ^{for} raping a coed at high noon on the steps of Suzzalo Library. Teaching -- what? Well, nothing really. I was no more a scholar than an engineer. A nibble of this, a sip of that, and please, no potatoes. Hi diddle-ee-dee, a dilettante's life for me.

The world was full of such a number of things, we should all be just as happy as kings. Micawber surely had it right, something would turn up. As a college boy I had read bluebooks, tutored law students so they could squeak by the logic test, tended an art gallery, waited table and washed dishes in sorority houses, clerked in a department store, pushed a handtruck, loaded box cars, run a freight elevator, planed and sanded boards in a lumber mill, labeled jars of chicken and noodles, cased mail, tidied the Boneyard of wrecked aircraft at Sand Point Naval Air Station. As a college graduate I would do more of the same. One stipulation: I would gladly sell my body, but never my brain.

When peace broke out, the Depression awoke, hot to go. Vets had some measure of just compensation for their lost years, the GI Bill, the 52-20 Club, and Rosie the Riveter being told to give her job back to the men and go home and make babies. We 4-~~ers~~s, it was our fate now to give up the fat for the lean of the cow. Table scraps. My ticket with the Lumber & Sawmills Workers Union was canceled. The Help Wanted was not mine. Scab shops devised a new way to stick it to working stiff, putting ~~their~~ jobs up for sale. I signed over a month's paychecks to a widow woman of the Ernst Hardware family and thereby my strong back was given full charge of a one-man warehouse, two storeys of heavy merchandise and no freight elevator. Once on the wooden ramp (slippery when wet) I lost hold of my handtruck, watched it cannonball down to the sidewalk and across the street, and saw a ^{appear below,} face/timidly peering around the corner. My months on the ramp bruised and battered but failed to kill me, as was the fate of a later warehouseman. However, I smarted off to the company owner and was turned out to let the widow-woman fillet a fresh fish.

A Placement Office had been set up by the University to help non-vet grads somehow insert themselves in the nation's economy. The good people were sympathetic and eager but baffled. What could be done with a magna cum laude English major (minor in philosophy) who aspired to be a working stiff? They shuffled their card file. Twice. Paused at one, ^{card} embarrassed. "You wouldn't want this, of course." Their jaws dropped at my ~~ing~~ alacrity. The Chairman of the Chemistry Department was not surprised. This was precisely what he'd always predicted for the feckless who fluttered from Lower Campus to Upper.

Three years I contentedly weighed out chemicals and poured solvents ~~to~~ ^{for} customers of my stockroom window. Most of their time was spent in labs, leaving me abundant freedom for Gammer Gurton's Needle, Ralph Roister Doister, The Jew of Malta, "'Tis Pity She's a Whore," War and Peace, Death in Venice, Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, and The Decline of the West. Had there been a Master's Degree in Dilletante I'd have got several.

My major, ^whowever, was not the writings of man but of Nature. In ~~two~~ ^{three} years at the stockroom I got up and down seventy-odd peaks in the Olympics and Cascades and Canadian Rockies and Selkirks. Had climbing been esteemed by the University as highly as the Rose Bowl I'd have proceeded to Dr. Mountain Bum, Ph.D.

Angst, was it? The Eisenhower Somnolence was not especially anxious. Weltschmerz. The Faustian Culture had burned out, the ashes of Civilization were settling into the post-history of the Fellaheen. The nation's elections were the chariot races of Constantinople all over again, the ^{Blues} ~~Greens~~ (Emperor Justinian's favorites) and the ^{Greens} ~~Blues~~ (Empress Theodora's), the Reds and the Whites along for the ride.

Or not. The morning after a night at the Rainbow or Blue Moon, rehydrating from a weekend on very high, very dry mountains, ^{my} ~~the~~ ^{brain was disabled by} the stockroom reek, ~~disabled my brain.~~ The students and their cookery of poisons disturbed my reading. I cashed in my University retirement to have time for peaceful thinking and serious drinking. Betty had spells of surliness when she was on the way to work in the morning and passed me at the Pink Palace playing pinball.

I didn't bother the good people at Placement. On the bulletin board outside the office was a listing for Black & Decker. I repaired electric drills half a year, the armature, the field, the roller bearings, the sleeve bearings. Thousands and thousands of drills. Enough.

On monthly visits to the state Unemployment Office to pick up my check I was compelled by law to sit in an auditorium and hear out recruiters for door-to-door peddlars of knick knacks/^{and} nostrums and snake oil. But even had they been honest jobs I couldn't be interested. I didn't have ~~the~~ time to earn a living. My academic career had taken me to the top, dean of faculty of the Climbing Course, responsible for directing dozens of professors and teaching assistants (ropeleaders), alumni all, unpaid all.

Yet there was no living with ~~that~~^{the} surliness on my roomie's face. That way lay divorce and the Skid Road, and a person might panhandle nickels for cups of coffee, but for pinball, not bloody likely. Nor could I expect succor from my blue collar. The merciless social engine forced me over the Great Divide, where the Bus Ad majors and frat boys lived. I chanced to have a suit in the closet for weddings and funerals. That, however, though indispensable to my sell-out career, was not the means. The fellow to whom I was directed by the note on the Placement Office bulletin board had been my student in the Climbing Course. That made the score Mountain Bumping 1, Magna Cum Laude 0.

The Sales Control Department^{ment} of the Post-Intelligencer. Merchandising arm of Hearst Advertising Service. What is this "merchandising"? It is a free bonus given national advertisers to maximize the value of the ads they buy. How is that done? By the activities of three bright-looking young men in suits and ties, the Sales Controllers.

Market surveys. When the advertiser was in, say, the margarine business, we Controllers went "on survey" to our list of fifty Barometer Stores, noting which brands were on the shelves, asking the grocer which sold best. A survey required two or three days, counting time spent at home playing with our children. One morning a Hearst account executive came sweating into our office saying we had to do a survey and do it right now. We three adjourned to a coffee shop and after two cups and a donut returned to the office, the survey complete. After that a survey was good for taking the kids to the beach or a matinee.

The Roving Shopper. The ad for, say, Twistee Noodle Dinner would announce that at one or another unnamed grocery a Roving Shopper in mufti (suit and tie) would be checking shopping carts. If he found a jar of Twistee, the lucky winner would receive a free toaster. Twistee was not a big seller, winners were hard to come by, and that's why friends and relatives of Controllers got a lot of free toasters, not to forget their names and photos in the P-I.

Pet Milk. This was our supreme triumph. The Hearst^fexec was in a panic. For years the Pet multi-color spreads had been a feature of the Sunday magazine section. Now the Pet people were disappointed, were considering a change. We steamed at flank speed to several Barometers whose managers were friendly and had good senses of humor. We splashed their store windows with banners, busiad their shelves with point-of-sale "talkers," built awesome pyramids of cans, and snapped photos. Then we restored (as promised) the status quo ante. Our staff artist created a "close out" album of colorful art paper, calligraphy text, photos of banners, talkers, pyramids, and the smiling (not smirking) store managers standing in front of their establishments holding up cans of Pet. The account was saved.

The Hearst execs were not evil people, they were on the average very decent people, simply doing what they'd been taught in Bus Ad and the fraternities. However, earlier on they'd gone to Sunday School and an inner guilt persisted. Consciences gnawed, there was bickering and snarling, factions and feuds and tantrums.

Sales Control^{was} run by a manager chosen by the Hearstlings as a group. No choice ever pleased every faction. The last episode I witnessed had the manager^(successor to the one who hired me) being assailed as incompetent. He couldn't be defended because he was. But he adroitly shifted the turd into the pocket of the Controllers. He vowed that he could shape up the Control group if he were allowed to fire one.

He couldn't shape up himself much less Sales Control and was fired. But I went first. Not "for cause" but as a "reduction in force," which required a month's severance pay. I bought a new suit.

A Hickey Freeman! In the Navy Dad was a bluejacket dude in tailor-mades and gob's hat crimped just so. As a civilian he was a fashion plate of the Roaring Twenties. The Depression was the pits, of course, but he had rebounded from blue-collar truckdriver to the top gun of his company's sales force, king of the road. He led me into ^{the princely} aroma of cigars and aftershave at Seattle's most prestigious haberdashery as if he belonged there, and he did. He didn't so much as sneak a peek at pricetags. It was, he said, a crime against nature to fritter away my termination bounty on food and rent. Being out of work with no prospects did not excuse looking poor.

A chum (Lincoln High prewar, Eastlake Gardens postwar) was delighted by my preposterous elegance. He laughed and laughed over a succession of pitchers as ^{he} fleshed out a joke of the moment into a full-scale Restoration farce featuring me in my finery. Happy fellah that he was in a world that had no future (and therefore why should he), his beer and cigarettes were earned as a platter-spinner at a ridiculous little radio station owned by a certifiable loony. In his story line I was an account executive of Hearst Advertising Service who had wearied of paper and become intrigued by spot announcements that came out of the air.

Lippy the Loony had been mesmerized as a little boy by voices that spoke through his crystal set. In manhood he became Sheriff Tex, twangy maestro of hillbilly and cowboy. Authorized by a First Phone ticket issued by the FCC to stick his fingers and soldering iron in transmitter wires, he switched to the engineer side of the business and went to work for Weyerhaeuser upgrading its communications from telephone to radio. Good pay -- augmented by kickbacks from equipment suppliers -- enabled him to achieve an ambition nourished since the crystal set, to own a radio station.

KISW-FM went on the air just ^{as} FM was everywhere going off. The radio industry had grasped at the "high fidelity" straw ~~of~~ ~~to~~ to save itself from sinking under the waves of TV. But lo and behold, if FM was not the future, neither was AM the dead past.

The car radio out-chattered the bellow of the freeway, focused the ears of commuters stuck in traffic . Portables went to the beach, the picnic, the party, the kids' bedroom. In the niches beyond reach of pictures were riches. Rings on your fingers, bells on your toes, youse can have music wherever you goes. Not the music of old, surely, The Sweetest Music This Side of Heaven, the Manhattan Merry Go Round, Alexander's Ragtime Band, the Lucky Strike ~~xxx~~ Hit Parade. Bubble gum, teenybopper, "race," drums and guitars to screw by, to pray by, rumble by. Business on the AM band was great.

On the FM band in Seattle, Lippy the Loony hawked his spots alone. He had set himself up with the sort of staff customary in the heyday of Sheriff Tex. Now he fired his sales manager, his office manager, his program director, and his AM-experienced announcers. He did it all solo, except when he had to be putting in a day's work at Weyerhaeuser. Swarms of youngsters hoping to break into show business happily accepted \$1.25 an hour for the chance to lay their lips on a microphone. His salary and graft at Weyco, and his IRS "business deductions," made ~~it~~ ^{the station} an affordable hobby. Yet he was nostalgic for the days when he walked down the street in a little Oregon town and was greeted on every hand by "Hi Tex!". It was lonesome in the forest where he kept chop-chop-chopping down trees that nobody heard fall because they weren't really there.

Members of the local arts community led him out of the woods. In New York, Chicago, Denver, and San Francisco, Mozart was alive and well, and Bach and Vivaldi and Wagner and Stravinsky, even Palestrina. AM radio had stampeded into ^{a single} ~~the same~~ closet to plink the same guitar. FM was not, as Lippy and his hi-fi fanatics ^{tiny band of} imagined, all about woofers and tweeters. Out there in the American air ~~were~~ were masses (yes, small masses) of educated ears. Their owners patronized firms that sold books and records -- and Danish flatware, Swedish crystal, and the snubnosed little cars that carried the Afrika Korps back and forth across North Africa.

Disoriented in strange lands beyond the horizon of Roy Acuff, Lippy welcomed good advice. And bad. Con men flocked. A fellow who was third cousin of a well-known network announcer. A Brit with an accent, from Inja, where his family had been in the Black Hole of Calcutta. Assistant conductor (under "Lenny") of the New York Philharmonic. Director of the Bayreuth Festival. Each had awed Lippy and briefly ruled his roost, then took the money and run. He was an easy mark for a Hearstling in a Hickey Freeman.

I turned out to be not a total fraud, made a comfortable living selling spots, lifted Lippy's teapot to the point he feared he might be caught by the IRS and forced to pay taxes. I could envision myself growing a beard and becoming a venerated pillar of the dolce vita of refined Seattle.

It was not to be. Lippy began to experience the delusions of grandeur that inflated him on the dusty streets of the town on the Oregon prairie, that he had as a boy seen in the magic of the crystal set. Knowing the lifestyle of our audience, I mildly suggested that we extend broadcast hours ~~from 10~~ to midnight. Snorted he, "I don't want listeners who stay up that late." A platter-spinner who was on duty when Lippy, ^{as was his wont,} reeled in the station so drunk he needed both hands to light up his soldering iron and get his fingers on the wires told me of crouching behind a desk. No question about it, sooner or later there would be a snap-crackle-pop and the loony would vanish in a great blue flame and no severance pay for me.

A band of two-bit crooks had acquired a decrepit daylight-only AM teapot and devised an obscure scam that involved, for openers, wedging a sliver of "Good Music" (Offenbach and Ferdy Grofe) into Seattle's guitar Babel. My success in selling the KISW "Finer Music" caught their eye. With my reputation (and my accounts list) I was a useful accomplice. I stuck out half a year ~~at~~ KXA and then, in paraphrase of Chief Joseph, pronounced I would sell no more advertising forever.

Ten years after busting out of grad school, six years after succumbing to suit and tie, no resume arrow pointed forward or even sideways. I answered weeks and months of want ads. Life insurance. There flashed before mine eyes a vision of a glum wife grown old and angrier, a houseful of kids bigger and hungrier. But when I searched the eyes of the prospective employers I knew they knew I couldn't do it.

I wrote letters of application not in hope but to allay Betty's fear she might forever be solely responsible for the new shoes the babies always needed. Late one afternoon I blew off a postage stamp to a manifest scam simply to fill the day's quota of begs. "New York publishers" do not employ the want ads to recruit "book salesmen." The "books" doubtless were calendars or personalized memo pads, the "publisher" was a basement print shop in Brooklyn, the ad was placed by a roadrunner who would sell a sucker a box of "books" at a discount to hawk from door to door.

I later was informed by Bud, who hired me as his replacement when he was promoted to San Francisco, that this was the only occasion Macmillan lowered itself to the want ads. Bud took that daring step out of disenchantment with bookstore clerks who envied the peddler's life of adventure, wondered what a plow might unearth out there in the tall grass?

He'd made his choice before I went to his hotel room for an interview. He was a KISW-FM listener, intrigued by the mind behind the peculiar spot announcements. The clincher was my letter's reference to a hobby of mountaineering. Born and raised in the horizontal Midwest, his transfer to Seattle had given him, east and west, vertical horizons. He bought hiking boots and a pistol and ventured onto trails. Not far. But far enough ~~to~~ to wonder about me.

At eight o'clock of a fine ^{summer} ~~spring~~ morning the DC-6 engines exploded, rushing the cumbersome hulk down the tarmac like a fat hen pursued by coyotes. Up up and away. The seat-belt sign panicked, we were flung about by the cumulonimbus permanently parked above Kansas. The exposure was terrifying, the Earth farther down than the Columbia River had been from the summit of Sir Donald. By a factor of five. The Sun abandoned us. The electric glower below was so fierce that to get any sleep the Man in the Moon would have to pull down the shades or move to the dark side.

At midnight, Seattle time, I checked into Mark Twain's Grosvenor House and sortied out on Fifth Avenue for supper. Around a corner some holiday of the Mysterious East was in progress, bars and restaurants crowded, and bookstores and head shops too. It was three o'clock in the morning, New York time, and this was Greenwich Village. I'd heard a lot about it.

Come full morning, I set out on Fifth Avenue to do some sight-seeing. King Kong holding Fay Wray in his hand and dodging the Army pursuit planes. Dirigibles loading passengers from the tippy-tops of skyscrapers. The temperature and humidity both were in the 90s, the standard Eastern Seaboard summer, in which my Massachusetts relatives got postcards from vacationers in Vermont, "Having wonderful time. Sleeping under blankets."

Attaining Rockefeller Center, my broiled feet were oozing from my shoes. They'd never get me back to the Grosvenor. From underground came street-shaking bursts of Hellfire. I wouldn't dare. Surface buses were safely adjacent to the sky. I made to enter one. The doors snapped shut on my nose. As the next neared I felt a nudge and over my shoulder saw that a sardine-can scrum had formed. Doors opened. The scrum surged. I was turfed out. Elbows and hips and animal ferocity got me on the third bus. I might, after all, be one of the fittest who deserved to survive in New York.

The speedometer of the spanking new Chivvy topped at 120mph. I let 'er out all the way on the High Plains of Montana but the best she could do was 105mph. At lesser speeds I sold books to shops and libraries and exulted in the geography of the Oregon coast, Columbia Lava Plateau, Snake River Plains, the Rocky Mountain front under the Big Sky. I slept in timberline meadows of Mount Hood, walked the trail to the highest remnant of Mount Mazama, skipped over the border to climb Mount Lassen. I threw my bag on the ground beside the Going-to-the-Sun Highway, where the grizzlies eat tourists, and on the lone prairie of the Big Hole, where coyotes ululate under the stars, and ascended Garnet Canyon into the bowels of the Tetons.

In December I was ticketed for New York when a call from the Trade Department Manager's secretary detoured me to San Francisco. The manager, Bo, had flown west to deliver face-to-face the verdict that the fall list had bombed so disastrously that the road crew had to be decimated, last man on (me) first man off.

Beyond the call of duty, he took pains to find me safe haven. My new business card read "Pacific Northwest Manager Paper Editions Company," a brandnew book jobber. Recycling the Chivvy, I set out to sell the hell out of Washington, Oregon, northern California, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, British Columbia, Alberta, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, and Singapore. My hide having been toughened by selling advertising that nobody really needed and certainly didn't want and in fact wasn't there at all, books were easy. I was the company star, kept on out of gratitude and admiration after the bubble had popped and everybody else was gone except the guy with the broom.

The lonesome ships in a large ocean are attentive to their scattered brethren. Eyes were keeping track of the sudden star. Offers were reputed to be in the offing.

Mac, proprietor of the Old Oregon Bookstore, was de facto communications center of the West Coast, linked to the Mysterious East and even England. The traveler for Oxford University Press was retiring and in the leisurely Old World manner/seeking a successor. Mac recommended me and his opinion was so respected that I was a shoo-in for the best job in the business. Oxford published little for the commonality except Bibles. These were the class and sold themselves. The travelers didn't dirty their hands writing up orders. They were a Presence. Their semi-annual gatherings were not "sales conferences," but convocations. In alternate years the site was not New York but Oxford, by golly.

At Mac's instance I wrote an elegant little note that could not be misinterpreted as a brash application, yet indicated that it would be my pleasure to meet, perhaps for a touch of fine old sherry.

I waited for an answering note, a phone call, in August, in September. Paper Editions had sunk out of sight. Lew, the owner, scion of old San Francisco gold, had been commanded by the family physician to go into a dark room and wrap his head in a cold towel. As a last gesture he posted me as a clerk in Hartman's, the Seattle bookstore he had acquired from Harry's heirs. But Hartman's was failing too and Lew's mother, who kept the key to the Gold Rush fortune, felt he had squandered enough money and should find some other hobby. The poor Hartman's manager, who saw her own career swirling down the drain, asked me daily when I was leaving.

Mac assured me that Oxford was money in the bank. But when? To an American, "immediately" meant today. To the bloody English, it could be next spring. Was there, somewhere, a loan shark who would see me through the winter? A vanishingly small -- yet not inconceivable -- chance existed that Mac was not officially empowered to speak for Oxford.

On an October evening the phone call came! Inviting me to a spot of sherry on the morrow's noon. But meanwhile there had been another phone call, an American immediacy. At noon I would be in a cumulonimbus 20,000 feet above Kansas.

In two-plus years I flew to New York half a dozen times, lived on Manhattan Island a total of three months, learned to jaywalk, hail a cab, go underground to Hell. I shared middle-of-the-night tequila shots with a witty darling, passing the lemon back and forth. In the AM street I was an honest bull charging the raincoat cape of a matador who had run at Pamplona. After a conference ended, when I should have been airborne, I was instead at the City Center, Friday evening, Saturday matinee, and Saturday evening, ten hours immersed in Balanchine, in passionate love with Tanaquil Leclerc.

I flew to academic meetings in Spokane, Eugene, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, and New York to tend bar at hospitality suites. My terror in the air did not diminish, rather intensified, but I developed a management technique. Rising from a nervous bed on Cougar Mountain I would take an Equanil with coffee to get to the airport, three double martinis (nobody in the bar but Joe and me) to get ~~me~~ on the airplane, a second Equanil over Kansas, washed down with the first-class passenger's lunchtime double hit of Scotch, supplemented as the turbulence required by the pint in my attache case. Hurricane Diana demanded a third Equanil in the maelstrom somewhere, only golly knew. When little blue lights raced by the window I discovered the bottle was empty.

My five states and three provinces were vastest of the company's territories, traveled by 105mph Chivvy, DC-6, DC-9, and 707 at elevations up to (the new jets) 30,000 feet. The geography was a continual, daily joy and there was more geology than is dreamt of by your microscope, Horatio. The universities at Edmonton and Saskatoon gave me an excuse to savor the past ("...a foreign country, they do things differently there."). I booked a roomette on the Canadian ^{National} Pacific up the Fraser River Canyon, through the Canadian Rockies. Sitting in the club car, sipping a McEwan's Strong, I had a twilight view of Mount Robson. I almost climbed it once, or almost tried.

There was adventure ("a sign of incompetence") on the road, because we drove fast, we drove by night, we drove through the winter. A peddler froze to death on the Snake River Plain, lost his way in a ground blizzard and wasn't found until spring, far from the highway in the sagebrush. An October morning I opened the door of my Bozeman motel ^{to} a foot of snow silently fallen in the night and west of Helena crossed a high pass where a few shovels of sand had been scattered at sharp turns, just enough that a light foot on the pedal could maintain traction.

I'd been three weeks in Utah and was determined to sleep that night on Cougar Mountain and was not to be deterred by the radio's warning of a mighty storm sweeping in from the ocean. The Columbia Plateau was all a-scurry with the tallest and darkest dust devils I'd ever seen. The news reported garages being deroofed in Yakima and chickens being whirled away to Oz. But my Chivvy was not afraid with eight cylinders driving its tons of metal through the tempest like a hot bullet. Then a horrid blackness roared out of the corner of my eye, lifted the front of the Chivvy ~~fast~~ in the air and when it let go I was still doing 85mph but on the wrong side of the highway and the windshield was a galaxy of new stars.

At Ellensburg the dry wind gave way to a light rain which quickly grew to a cloudburst that didn't quit. What! The highway ended in a brown torrent and a heap of gravel and boulders! Momentum hurtled the Chivvy through to a resumption of pavement. The interstate was being de-created in the night and I was alone in the end of the world. Where was everybody? Parked at Snoqualmie Pass, crowds of passenger cars, dozens of over-the-hump trucks. But I had come from Utah since breakfast and was late for supper and in another hour could be home.

Not to worry. No more torrents of mud and gravel. Headlights ~~on high~~ punched a tunnel in the deluge, windshield wipers kept a porthole open. The family was amazed to see me. The "Main Street of the Northwest" had been closed since I left Ellensburg, the State Highway Department following along behind me putting up the barricades.

The knight errantry of the open road, the band of brothers who take risks together but always alone... That peddler lost in the Idaho blizzard, ~~who~~ taught me to always carry mountain garb and survival rations in the Chivvy trunk. The ~~peddler~~^{at} last seen having coffee in North Bend as I was having coffee in Ellensburg. Last seen alive, that is, or for that matter dead. Weeks later a battered mass of metal was found in the Snoqualmie River and identified as his car by the number stamped in the engine block. As my headlights, aimed west, showed me the pavement leading me home, his headlights, aimed east, did not see the gap into which he plunged. A matter of minutes after I passed the quarter-mile ^{stretch} where the Snoqualmie River was reclaiming the channel the engineers had taken from it, my westbound lanes ~~were~~ also gone. The rigs I saw parked at Snoqualmie Pass were still there a month later.

"We took risks, we knew we took them," wrote Scott in his journal at Death Camp on the return from the South Pole. But life on the expense account was a party. Performance as a college traveler was supposed to be judged by success in getting textbooks adopted. That, however, is virtually impossible to determine. What the New York headquarters can do is note the names of professors on the expense account, the lunches or dinners or drinks the company bought them. Betty and I often shared the ~~company~~ bounty, of course, though when tying in to martinis and steaks we might whisper to each, ruefully, that the babies needed new shoes and given the size of the restaurant tab I would be hard-pressed to steal anything extra for family frivolities.

~~But I was amused by my~~ ^{contentment in the} role of Father Christmas. My finest moment was the noontime in the greasy spoon frequented by indigent grad students-teaching assistants when I went booth to booth picking up the checks and telling the startled recipients of my largesse that when they got their degrees and professorships and were adopting textbooks to think of me and those Rinehart hamburgers.

An evening in San Francisco I bumped into the Director of Freshman English at Seattle College, a Jesuit shop. His students had insisted he do Irishers', so we did. Women ^{were performing} ~~did~~ the slow-motion shimmy on the bar inches from our eyes. In speech increasingly slurred but steadily insistent he repeated over and over again that the patches and pasties would not require a lengthy confession to wife and priest because telling his beads was saving him from thoughts of concupiscence.

Whenever Betty was asked how she could cope with my extended absence in five states and three provinces and New York, she said it was the only thing that saved our marriage. The long vacations, June to September, helped too. Higher education then got by without the booze provided by travelers and our family could trip together to the ocean and forests and meadows.

The traveler's lot was quite a happy one in a firm small enough that travelers and editors and secretaries could fit cozily in a hotel suite, as we did at the conclusion of every conference prior to bundling into cabs and flinging off for tequila and bullfights.

However, higher education was in the process of becoming big business. Texas size. Henry Holt & Company mergerized Dryden Press, then Winston, then Rinehart. Holt-Rinehart-Winston. The Combine was assembled at a (formerly) grand hotel in Greenwich for the aliens to be commingled. After several sullen-drunken days we Rineharters pulled a sneak, ran off to an evening (and morning) on Manhattan, as of old.

When shall we dozen meet again,
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?
When the hurly burly's done,
When the battle's lost and won...

Rineharters scattered to refuges elsewhere. Having none in sight, I stayed on until fired for not having traveled the best part of a year, just wandered.

Nobody who runs a want ad for a writer wants a real one but it was a long long way to Buffalo and the gin was ~~running~~^{gettin'} low and Betty kept shoving the newspaper in my face. The company was in Renton, a half-hour from Cougar Mountain, so I joined the ~~low~~ line of obvious losers and was handed two test forms. One was in English, spellings and punctuation to be corrected. I breezed through and turned to the other. It was in a foreign language invented after I left school so I shrugged and went home.

I was called back. The Chief Quality Control Editor had built twenty errors into the English test. I corrected twenty-three. His boss had just taken the Climbing Course, was awed to meet the auteur of the brandnew Freedom of the Hills, and was certain I could quickly master the new electronic lingo, including the cryptic "bit." The "writing" was by engineers who knew "bits" but were hired if they scored as high as twelve on the English exam. "Quality control" was sorely needed.

Milmanco (Military Manuals Company) began in WWII to do how-to books for the tanks built next door by Pacific Car and Foundry. It moved ~~moved~~ smoothly into the Cold War as a subcontractor for the prime on the Atlas built by German veterans of the V-2. Our subject was the Atlas G, already obsoleted by the H and its hardware scrapped but its paperware required by the logic of aerospace to be completed before it could be tossed.

I'd been juggling bits half a year when the boss man arrived late one morning, still half-drunk, eyes hidden by opaque glasses. The guy from prime had come by on an inspection tour and got drunk and truculent and canceled the subcontract. Being sufficiently cynical about the aerospace con game but innocent of its truly amazing incoherence, I asked the boss man if we were now getting the accustomed two weeks' notice. He giggled hysterically, "Please be off the premises by noon so we don't have to pay you for the full day!"

A subcontractor for the prime on Titan had been attracted by word of the dead meat and come by to pick up a carcass or two. He was also drunk but Stalin doubtless was too so out of the frying pan into the fire. In July I moved to a cheap motel in Moses Lake and a desk in a former B-52 hangar, redesignated MAMS (Missile Assembly and Maintenance Shop) at Larson Air Force Base.

We were housed in a prefab office inside the MAMS. Out the door of the low-ceilinged prefab one looked up to the high roof of the MAMS. Out the door of the MAMS was the high blue roof of the Columbia Plateau sagebrush steppe. Above that was -- twitch twitch -- dear God and the choir.

Our boss was Smitty, a retired Marine sergeant with a boxful of ^{medals} ~~medals~~ for campaigns in the banana republics. Once a month he ^{sat in a chair} ~~was~~ in his mobile home, ^{keeping their child quiet,} with wife and ~~child~~ three straight days. Aside from that he was never drunk. Our typist didn't drink at all. She drove at high speeds over the ^{compass-line} ~~endless~~ straightaways of the plateau. She had graduated from Moses High in June. By October one in five of her graduating class had crashed on the highway and she didn't hear nobody pray.

A cowboy thoroughly busted up by rodeo imagined he was the lead writer. He took our rough drafts "out to site" to check them against the hardware being installed. He invariably returned declaring ^{them} ~~his~~ perfect. I became suspicious, went "out to site" myself, down into the siloes that were to hold the birds and discovered he was illiterate. No use in the Cold War but good for laughs. He had been a roughneck at Vandenburg when the Atlas was being tested. He told how one had gone a thousand feet straight up as it was supposed to, then ~~turned and came~~ a thousand feet straight down, and he ^{a wicker from terror to find} ~~found~~ himself and several companion roughnecks under a Volkswagen, ^{somewhere} Then there was the one that went a hundred feet straight up and ~~then~~ ^{over} flipped and set out due west, rocketing close above US 99 and US 101 and steeples of small-town churches. Next Sunday the preachers told their flocks it had been the Devil.

The actual lead writer was saving up for a trip to Sweden, where he hoped to get roles in Bergman films. He was very smart, competent even when drunk, which was most of the time. In September the cops nailed him for putting the make on a teenage boy who shouldn't have been in the bar in the first place. Smitty bailed him out and the judge dropped the charges on condition he cross the state line before sunset and never come back.

Two of the writers had flown B-17s over Germany, one as radio operator, the other as waist gunner. I don't know if their mental conditions were a prerequisite for being in heavies over Germany or if they were the result.

The radio man never did any writing at all, though periodically he would pull text from the office file of other Titan site manuals and ~~turn~~^{give} it ~~into~~ our typist, so Smitty assumed he was turning out "product," which in a way he was, aerospace style. He was forever telling about his plans ~~when~~^{once} he "made his stake" on this job. He'd move into a motel in Santa Monica and hang out in its bar chatting up B-girls. He never mentioned his intentions beyond chatting up, likely because he couldn't get it up. My usual diversion was zapping flies with a rubber band. The office had a map of the West on the wall and I pinned a dead fly ~~to~~ⁱⁿ Santa Monica. It was funny but disgusting.

The gunner had watched many balls of flame plunge from his formation but didn't dwell on them, ~~aloud~~. The buzz bombs over London haunted his memory. He had been atop an English Sheila, nearing climax, when a buzz came overhead -- and stopped. He completed the anecdote by holding a middle finger in the vertical and abruptly lowering it to the horizontal. ~~He didn't show at~~^{In October come to work} ~~WANS~~ for a week. Smitty dug him out of his motel and put him on a bus for his home in New Mexico.

We had a Brit who had flown ~~for~~ Lancasters over Germany. His comment on the Yanks was that they did their missions and went home, whereas he and his mates were in the war until it was over. He

contrasted the "impregnable" formations of the Flying "Fortresses," and their daylight raids using bombsights that ^{were claimed to} let them drop bombs down factory chimneys, with the RAF flights by night in "scatter" formation that forced the MEs and FWs to hunt for them; ~~and~~ ^{bombardier} the ~~pilot~~ released the bombs when the navigator said they were on the hostile side of the English Channel.

I never got drunk except in the motel at night and brought joy to Smitty by turning out our units' first genuine product, the Mechanical and Hydraulic Systems and the MAMS System, and doing a first draft on the Blast Protection System ^{for} (when the Soviet missiles arrived).

I left long before our manuals could ever have been completed. Not that it mattered. Titan I was obsolete when the birds were ^{replaced} ^(by) superseded by Titan II in entirely new silo complexes, not to mention the Minuteman, reputed to have the capacity to actually hit the Soviet Union, if not precisely Moscow.

Again Freedom rode to my rescue. A Mountaineer friend learned I was not in Moses Lake for the waters, informed another Mountaineer friend who was a professor at the University, who told the Director of University Relations that I was a good candidate for the writer-editor he was seeking. I sent him a copy of the book and was hired. I attended a University convocation, the faculty parading in academic gowns to be addressed by the new president of the United States, and settled into an office in the Administration Building for a 9½-year stay.

In June of 1971 the budget was being ^{completed} ~~prepared~~ for the biennium to begin in July, ~~and~~ ^{divining} that no provision had been made for my salary, at noon I slipped my resignation under the boss's door, went off with a birdwatcher crony ^{for} ~~at~~ a three-Manhattan (doubles) lunch, returned in late afternoon to clean out my desk in an atmosphere of jubilation (mine from the Manhattan, ^{theirs} from my departure), and went home to Cougar Mountain to burn my suits and ties and junk my razor.

Harvey Manning
May 3, 2004