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A Grandpa's Notebook

Ideas, models, stories and memoirs to encourage intergenerational outreach and communication.

Meyer Moldeven

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Media Reviews of Author's Previous Editions

BOOKLIST; November 15, 1987 (Book Evaluation Journal of the American Library Association)

Moldeven, a 70-year old grandfather turned author and publisher, sets a wonderful example and shares many practical lessons on keeping in touch with grandchildren in these times of mobile families. When it is impossible to see or talk to grandchildren as often as one would like, Moldeven suggests writing them stories. His book offers general tips on getting started along with 25 sample stories. The author emphasizes simplicity and imagination in the creation of plots and illustrations. For grandparents who lack confidence in their writing or picture-making abilities, Moldeven suggests working with photographs or magazine pictures and devising custom-made stories from classic fables or folk tales. This encouraging, easy-to-read guide for grandparents (near and faraway) can also be used as a resource for senior citizen's projects.

The Rocky Mount Evening & Sun Telegram, August 23, 1987 Rocky Mount, North Carolina

This book was written for grandparents, primarily; but parents and kindergarten and primary teachers will find the techniques and stories of value in relating to young children.... This supremely useful work, while designed for the too-far away relative, offers exciting possibilities for intergenerational communication, even if the family is settled in one community, next door, or even in the same house. It has the additional virtue of promoting activities that encourage the grandchild toward reading and writing skills, strengthening ties, and establishing values, easily taught through family history and traditions.'

Introduction

There are more than 60 million grandparents in the United States and their numbers are increasing as a portion of the general population. Enormous changes have taken place in longevity and lifestyles since today's older adults were, themselves, young grandchildren. Experts estimate that there are thirty to fifty thousand living centenarians, up from the 1980 estimate of fifteen thousand. Also, centenarians are not as feeble as they once were; disability rates among older people have been falling since the early 1980s.

Life expectancy at birth in the United States has increased nearly 30 years since the turn of the century, from 47 to about 76. On the other hand, families are more widely dispersed, successful interaction by grandparents with their distant grandchildren, whether for geographic reasons or barriers of circumstance, increasingly calls for innovation and improvisation.

A vast store of practical knowledge as well as a culture's lore languishes in almost every family, especially among its elders, more than ready to be passed along to succeeding generations. An important source for ideas and models for grandparents to meet the needs-and the yearnings-of this era's grandchildren and children generally are in the observations and experiences of older adults. It is not up to our young grandchildren to say what in our life's experiences might be useful or enlightening to them? If it was up to them, how might they draw it out of us? A paradox indeed.

This is not a child's storybook, although some of the stories, vignettes and essays may interest youth from toddlers to young adults and, from other perspectives, parents, grandparents, and teachers. The book's intent is to demonstrate one older lay person's approach to fostering interaction between generations in the context of family, school and culture.

PART ONE WE LEARN FROM EACH OTHER

One of the ground rules in writing my 'grandpa' stories was to keep within the youngsters' range of comprehension and imagination, and about living things, objects, activities and places to which their imaginations could relate. In fantasy stories, when my grandchildren were very young, for instance, I animated toys familiar to them, or modified characters from their favorite books and sent them off on adventures that did not frighten or cause them apprehension for the toy's safety. At the story's conclusion, the toys and characters were back in a familiar and comfortable setting.

Deliberate destructive behavior in stories and anecdotes for the very young, I believe, serves no useful purpose. The young are already exposed to far more negative forces in the general run of storybooks, television shows, Internet games and the real world. Grandpas and grandmas don't need to pile them on. To the contrary, grandparents can influence a young mind toward reason and compassion. The tales they tell can be stabilizing forces in the day-to-day bustle and high excitement of the very young and, by the nature of a grandparent's role, suggest channels for positive values.

First Letter to a Distant Grandchild

Don't let that blank sheet of paper intimidate you. Here's a model that you can rework to suit your situation:

Grandma and Grandpa now live in a house that is very far from the town in which you live. We'll still see each other as often as we can, but sometimes the wait will be just a little bit longer.

One way for us to visit is by telephoning. Another is by our writing letters to you that Mom or Dad will read aloud to you. I'll start my writing to you by telling a little about Grandmas and Grandpas.

Grandmas and Grandpas are older than mothers and fathers. They usually have gray hair or white hair. Sometimes, Grandpas have no hair at all, but that's all right because Grandpas don't need to use a comb and hair brush every morning.

Grandmas and Grandpas like to take grandchildren to the zoo to see the elephants and the deer and the monkeys. They also like to take grandchildren to the park to ride on the merry-go-round, and to the lake to throw bread to the ducks and the geese and the swans.

On the way home from the zoo or the park, Grandmas and Grandpas take grandchildren to the

bakery. There, they stand at the counter and smell the fresh bread, and buy cookies and cakes for desserts.

Grandmas and Grandpas like to play games with grandchildren, listen to grandchildren tell what happened in the park and at school, and answer questions. They especially like to read stories to grandchildren from big books with lots of pictures.

Grandmas and Grandpas like to hold grandchildren in their laps and hug them. Grandpas also like to shake hands, or pat grandchildren on their heads. That is a little bit about Grandmas and Grandpas and Grandchildren.

Too-Faraway Grandparent

During a talk I gave to a senior citizens group a woman in the audience remarked, 'I'm a volunteer helper in a class of first graders at (naming a nearby school.) I haven't given it much thought until now, but I've come to realize that some youngsters see their grandparents regularly, others rarely, and still others see their grandparents not at all. For a few, grandparents live too far away, and others don't know where their grandparents live or even if they have grandparents, but saddest of all are the kids who don't know what grandparents are.'

Grandparents and grandchildren are natural allies, but when their homes are too far apart, or other barriers intervene, their alliance weakens. Everybody loses, including the youngsters' parents-the generation in the middle.

How My Stories Began

I live in one city, my grandchildren in another almost a thousand miles distant. During one of my visits I took my, then, three-year-old granddaughter for a stroll. We paused to examine a spider's web spanning a space between two shrubs. A rain shower had passed shortly before and droplets festooned the web's strands and rainbow-sparkled in the morning sunlight. Standing there, both of us bent forward peering into the web, I wove a story that transformed the sparkling strands into a carnival and the spider into an acrobat. Granddaughter's eyes widened with wonder.

We continued on and stopped at a house to observe a cat on the porch playing with a yellow ball. I wove another tale, this time of a cat and a strange ball that bounced too high. Again, my granddaughter's expression showed her pleasure in hearing grandpa's story. For the remainder of my visit, and during subsequent visits, I told her, and when he was old enough, my grandson, of the world around us and how we hoped to, some day, live together on Planet Earth.

Visits, in either direction were infrequent. Adult-oriented telephone calls usually left only brief moments for talking to grandchildren. Long distance calls just didn't generate the right ambiance and enough time for the relaxed talking and easy listening that goes naturally with a grandpa story. Then, too, at the close of an adult telephone conversation the youngsters are usually busy at other things, and sometimes grandpas just don't do well as talkers.

In my situation, I filled the gap with hand-scribed and, later on, typed stories. The letter-stories lengthened our telephone chats to plot the next story, flesh-out characters, the environments of settings and scenes. There are no better aids to a grandpa-grandchild telephone story conference than our faithful friends Who, What, Where, When, Why and How.

One letter-story followed another, often illustrated with pictures from discarded magazines. When I couldn't find the right illustration, I laboriously sketched an all-thumbs grandpa original. It was an enjoyable experience for me, and feedback from the family showed it was enjoyable for my grandchildren as well.

Family History Scroll

The extended family's history scroll is shipped from one relative to another in a mailing tube. Each family adds a paragraph or so about what happened to them since the previous go-round that might be of interest to others. Generally, the messages are hand scribed, but may be typed and snapshots pasted on or attached with plastic adhesive tape.

When a scroll becomes too large for easy handling it may be retired and stored with one of the family members and a note added to the next scroll stating where the preceding scroll is stored.

What's In It for You?

Long-term studies of large communities offer evidence that individuals with strong family and social ties tend to be healthier than who live in isolation.

A conference of doctors and social scientists proposed a theory that altruism, particularly when the helper observes its benefits, can reduce feelings of helplessness and depression and thus enhance health. Also, persons who came in direct contact with those that they aided reported a strong and lasting sense of satisfaction, even exhilaration, an increased sense of self-worth, less depression, and fewer aches and pains.

Relating the theory to the theme of these notes, what a grandparent gets back often depends to the value he or she places on, and the efforts he or she makes toward building positive intergenerational relationships. If family has significance, then interacting with a grandchild, near or faraway, manifests that significance and the returns it generates.

'Returns' imply 'investments.' As grandparents age, their 'investment' is transformed into a 'return.' The 'return' contributes vitality, vibrancy and enrichment to a grandparent's latter years.

Picture Postcards

During a discussion among older adults, one of them said he was having trouble coming up with what to write on a picture postcard that he wanted to mail to his faraway grandchild. He said he'd been a salesman but, in this situation, he was at a loss for words.

I asked him what he had done earlier that day. He mentioned several ordinary activities and added, as an afterthought, that he had strolled along a nearby beach.

'What did you see during your walk?'

'Seals and pelicans on the rocks offshore. Big waves rolling in. One of the seals slid off the rock and into the water. The tide was out, and I explored a tide pool. I saw a....'

He stared at me for a moment, grinned, took his pen from his shirt pocket and made notes on a slip of paper.

Grandparent's Role

Grandparents generally accept and enjoy the many roles into which they have been cast. One of the many is that they are the grandparents of all their grandchildren, not just of one whom they chose to be their favorite. Favoritism invites disaster.

A young mother of two posed the following dilemma to an Internet discussion group devoted to family relations and child behavior. I altered the text slightly, primarily to protect the writer's privacy. She wrote:

'Since the birth of our second child our family has received lots of warm wishes. Yet, often, in offering congratulations, well wishers remarked along the lines 'You must be happy to have a boy now.' This confused our older child, a four-year-old girl.

'Of course, she is a much loved and cherished child and we could not love her any more if she were a boy. And we are very happy to have our new son, but would have loved a second daughter just as much. But the casual remarks about having a son are secondary to my concern about my parents' relationship with our children.

'My parents reside within easy driving distance and we are a close-knit family. Rarely a week passes that we and my parents don't do something together. They are my daughter's primary baby-sitters and are very generous toward her.

'However, I am starting to see that there will be a difference, based solely on gender, in my parents' treatment of both children. When my son was barely a week old, my father said that he was looking forward to taking him fishing. When I remarked that my daughter had a fishing pole and, due to the age difference between her and her brother, would be a more appropriate companion, still no invitation was forthcoming.

'When my father invited my husband fishing the following week, my father grumbled at the suggestion that they take my daughter along.

'My son is now two and a half months old, and my father is looking forward to participating with him

in Little League, soccer, etc. Again, both my husband and I chimed in that the same activities are also available for girls. Silence.

'What really disturbs me is that after these rebuffs my daughter sometimes quietly says to me, 'Mama, I am proud we both are girls.' I don't know where she gets this from, but she'll often repeat it several times and in more of a forlorn tone than an enthusiastic one.'

Grandpa Too Far

You telephone your son or daughter who lives in a distant city. He or she now has her own children. You chat with your son or daughter in the usual fashion. Closing, you ask to talk to your grandchild. The youngster comes on line:

'Hi,' Grandchild says.

'Hi, there! Know who this is?'

'Grandpa.'

'Right, Grandpa. How are you, dear?'

'Fine.'

'Good. What are you doing?'

'Playing with my toys.'

'What did you do yesterday?'

'Went to the park.'

'...have a good time there?'

'Yes.'

'That's nice. Well, I'm sure glad we had this little chat. Aren't you?'

'Yes.'

'Bye.'

'Bye.'

The following morning at day school the children talk about what happened over the weekend. It's Grandchild's turn.

'Oh, I played with my toys and went to the park and I talked to my grandpa on the telephone.'

'What did you and grandpa talk about?'

Long pause.

'Oh...nothin'.'

Think a Story

If you can think a story, and if you can write a letter or express your thoughts orally or visually, then you can combine them into a message to a grandchild. The more often you do it, the easier it becomes. If the mechanics of writing or drawing is the problem, then audiotape. The point is to interact and communicate with a grandchild so that the youngster knows of your caring, and that caring is normal. Grandchild will readily grasp that Grandma or Grandpa wants to share, and that sharing is fine.

The type of communication most desired by my grandchildren until their fifth or sixth years, and under the circumstances of the distance between us, was the letter-story. The written stories evolved out of our infrequent family get-togethers. Occasionally, an idea for a story called for follow-up negotiations over the telephone to clarify plots, scenes, and characters. My grandchildren liked the stories, and both they and I enjoyed the discussions that preceded the writing. The give-and-take stimulated our imaginations and creativity, and often provided me with opportunities to pass along family history.

Today's youngsters know more about the world than children of previous generations, one of the many benefits of our expanding telecommunication capabilities and greater education and travel opportunities. Youngsters get their view of the world from what they see, hear, and learn from and about their families.

Letter stories, anecdotes and lore give grandchildren a better view of their grandparents, and about what older adults believe. The process, if positive oriented, contributes toward the grandchild's maturity, and offers them encouragement, values, models, and incentives.

There are tens of thousands of homes across the land where treasured possessions, tangible and otherwise, were created or acquired by the occupants or their forebears. You have them in your home as I do in mine. In time, those possessions: properties and artifacts, along with their histories, will move along to your children and grandchildren. In every culture, 'grandpa and grandma stories', along with 'mom and dad stories,' are part of that inheritance.

When youngsters know that Grandpa or Grandma wrote a story expressly for them, that more than qualifies the story for the special collection of treasures to be shared with close friends, presented at school as a show-and-tell, and eventually absorbed into the treasured memorabilia of childhood.

Story Openers

Are you groping for words to open a story? Here are a few starters:

- My future might have been prophesied from these events...
- Let me tell you about....
- Here, get under the shawl with me and listen to this hair-raising story.
It was a wild and woolly....
- During my early years....
- Long ago and far away.... (still an all-time favorite)
- Once upon a time.... (another treasure)
- I am uncertain about what my memory truly recalls of these events but there I was....
- I was about 8 years old when this happened. One morning....
- My older brother/sister had a tendency to.... and this once caused....
- As children, we often....
- I am reminded of the time....
- There was a particular kind of....
- If only I could have....
- One day I was watching....
- It was in the Fall of 19xx....
- I particularly recall....
- The toys I remember....
- Sometimes, in the dark of night, when the wind howls through the eaves,
I think back to the time when....
- 'Twas a dark and stormy night.... (another Old Faithful)

Grandchild and grandparent know they enjoy being together, and storytelling is part of the fun; also, grandchildren know that grandmas and grandpas usually have fascinating memories of their childhood and about what happened to the family over the years. Grandchildren want to enter this little bit of grandma and grandpa's world. Perceptive grandparents see the world through a grandchild's imagination. Using the anticipation generated by a familiar opening phrase or sentence to set the stage works well for both storyteller and listener.

Grandparent-grandchild interaction is more than a custom; it is a deep and powerful bond. By its very nature, the alliance is biological and cultural, and molded by trial-and-error through the hazards of millennia. It is an alliance not to be treated casually; it demands nourishment, and storytelling by a family's elders is an essential ingredient.

Grandparent-Grandchild Interview

A fun way to open lines of communications while visiting grandchildren, be they nearby or far away, is the audiotaped interview. Living nearby, the grandchild knows grandma and grandpa, they're part of everyday life. Far away is different, geography causes gaps. The one-on-one interview builds self-esteem and confidence in a youngster. It's an excellent learning experience, and creates a record of lasting memories for the family's archives.

An interview structures a conversation. Men are often as reticent as women are eloquent: women are

much more socially oriented than men and communicate easier. However, the interview technique can be a starter to work through Grandpa's reserve. It quickly engages the participants in a dialogue and is as much fun for one as for the other.

Vague questions by adults should be avoided; they're confusing.

Let's set up an interview.

Grandma and Grandpa plan to visit Son or Daughter and the Grandchildren. The visit will include Grandpa or Grandma being interviewed by Grandchild.

In arranging the visit, Grandma or Grandpa discusses with Son or Daughter what they have in mind. A tape recorder or camcorder, in good working order, is available or will be brought along. It's fine with Son/Daughter and they agree to prepare Grandchild, including a set of preliminary questions. It's a fun experience, but don't insist having an audience that will make anyone present self-conscious or uncomfortable.

When all concerned are ready (recorder checked and set up, the date, time, place, names, occasion, and whatever else considered prefatory has been recorded in advance) Grandchild opens with the first question. In this example, Grandpa is being interviewed.

In responding, Grandpa avoids the simple 'yes' or 'no' answer even when such might suffice. Sure, Grandpa could respond with 'Yes' or 'No' to 'Grandpa, is your first name 'Tom'.' But wouldn't it be more fun if Grandpa transformed his reply into family lore with 'Yes, it is, and let me tell you how I got that name. The Sunday after I was born, my Dad hooked ol' Dobbin to the sleigh to take us all to....' and he's away into another bit of Lore Americana.

Unless agreed to in advance, questions and answers are serious. Knowing what a young grandchild likes to talk about is important and can focus the interview.

Youngsters, though, have minds of their own and might well pop an unexpected question. Using 'we' or 'us' and encouraging inputs from Grandchild keeps the interview from becoming one-sided. Grandchildren pile up their experiences and feelings for an anticipated interaction, and an interview will provide opportunities to talk about them and themselves.

Grandpa creates opportunities. For instance, in answering a question, he closes with: 'That's how it worked out for us; now, how about you? Did you ever....?' and the switch is made.

The interview can go in one direction then the other for as long as both want it to. In the give-and-take Grandchild learns a lot about Grandma and Grandpa, and everyone involved in the game broadens their awareness, and renew and revitalize family traditions and values.

Expect spontaneity and deep probing by youngsters when they are the interviewers. They are interested in the origins of people and things; depending on their ages, of course, be ready for such questions as:

What are stars in the sky? What keeps them up when everything else falls? Why is the sun? The moon? Who made them? Why? Where do eggs come from? Did I come from an egg? Well, then, where did I come from? Is that where you came from? Where is a baby before it's born? Why did (Grandpa/Grandma) die? Where is (he/she) now?

Create an Heirloom Catalogue

Family treasures are passed along from generation to generation. In time, they acquire the venerable aura of heirlooms. The passage of years transforms them into antiques that are honored in the family's lore and traditions.

You have several, you say? Heirlooms? Where? And antiques too?

Squirreled away, at the moment, in your cellar, attic, or garage, or proudly displayed in your den or sewing room, the ancient objects eventual departure for elsewhere is inevitable. They have survived one house cleaning after another and denied candidacy for garage sales and flea markets. Some are treasures from previous generations, or the product of your own hands and, without doubt, they belong to posterity. OK, so this or that artifact doesn't have museum value; it could still be of enduring interest to your family and to the progeny of your progeny's progeny, even unto the xth generation. Who's to say?

The heirloom, or heirloom-to-be, might be a brooch or wedding dress great-grandma wore, or a long

ago foot-pedaling or hand-turning sewing machine. It might be a delicate tea set, a venerable book of sheet music your grandpa's great-grandma brought with her from the old country, a 1920s typewriter on its original stand, a set of ancient but still usable wood carving tools, a widget that the inventor (your Grandpa!) was certain would be a technological breakthrough, or, you name it.

And that may be the problem. You might be able to name it but how much do you know about it. If you made it, usually no problem, but if it's from a past generation, it may not be that simple. Generally, our forebears gave little thought, if any, to an intergenerational communication that would accompany one of their possessions into the future. To the original owner, the Thing might have been for everyday use around the house, barn, shop, wherever. Nevertheless, such Things do acquire uniqueness over time, and even if no longer of practical use, they represent an individual's, a family's, or a community's history and perhaps, grandeur.

Cataloging an heirloom rediscovers and records the past and, through the memories of you and others, builds another bridge from the past to the present. Family history and tradition are enhanced by facts that emerge in what you can recall from way back when.

Elements to consider in cataloging an heirloom:

The Thing: What it is, and what it's made of. Look at and feel the watchamacallit if it lets you. Record what you see, feel, smell, hear, taste (watch that last one), and otherwise sense. If possible, sketch or photograph the Thing.

Its History: Where and when it was made; where it's been; anecdotes, legends, evidence of significant events in which it was used or 'was right there in the middle of that mess,' and the family and community personalities who were and are associated with it, and in what way.

Its Use and Care: How the original and successive owners used it; suggested uses for now. (Oldness is not necessarily equated with uselessness. Right? Right!) **Conditioning or preservation:** oil it, polish it, display it away from direct sunlight, put it to work, coddle it, take it for a walk, just leave it be right where it is, etc.

Many heirlooms eventually find their way into museums, historic societies, and community archives. Even if they do not, preservation and conservation are important. To slow an heirloom's deterioration, store or display them carefully away from harsh artificial lights, sunlight, heat, and dampness; inspect and restore as required, use acid-free wrapping paper, and just keep them out of harms way. Visit museums and historical societies for ideas on how to protect and display your heirlooms.

What you get in return is personal pleasure, and a store of anecdotes, history, lore and traditions for grandkids, nieces, nephews, and nearby and distant family whatever their ages. Photos and sketches, along with verbal descriptions and commentaries are constituents of tradition and values-and the finest kind of intergenerational communications.

Values and Traditions

Many older adults have interests other than family. They work, play golf and other sports, have active social lives and hobbies, and so on. So, indeed, what's in grandparenting for them?

It depends on how much value a grandparent-and a parent places on family ties and the need for and the flow of intergenerational communications. Where family has meaning, interacting with a far away grandchild adds substance to a 'value'. Then, as the grandparent ages, communicating with the distant grandchild retains its strength as a positive force, and enriches the remaining years. It reduces loneliness, and is an antidote for apathy and depression. Entering grandparenting with tolerance, constancy, and sincerity adds pleasures to a person's life. In storytelling, grandparenting invites a call from a distant grandchild to 'Send me another story,' or better yet, 'I've got an idea for a story. Let me tell you about it.'

The grandchild chose the grandparent over television and the many other forms of professionally polished commercial entertainment that thrusts forward for his or her attention. In so choosing, the youngster notifies the grandparents through his/her appeal that they, the grandparents, are wanted and needed. It's Grandchild reaching out and inviting Grandma and Grandpa into his or her world-with affection.

In single-parent families and in families in which both parents work away from home, there might not be as many opportunities to pass along traditions, awareness, and values. Be that as it may, throughout history the family and tribal elders passed their knowledge and codes of conduct on to those who, as part of the natural process, carry the torches into the future. This responsibility to family and

community is in the substance of existence.

Living History

For many of us, our lives are keyed to significant events, transitions, locales, or something that has importance to ourselves or to our families. For me, the important events and episodes happened to be on a time-line by location: the places where my family resided over the years. I spent the first twenty-five years of my life in the city where I was born and raised. Afterward, a few years in a distant city, then on to another and still another, each invariably distant and different than before.

After I retired, I took the time to make notes on as many important events that I could recall, and keyed each to a geographic location. I gave each episode a title or sketched a brief outline that would stimulate my memory to the place and help me to talk about it. My list began with city A: my preschool and school years (with several sub-headings because those times had been chaotic); the Great Depression, the first job, etc. City B: why I was there; the job; etc. I continued on to the next and the next.

When I finished my initial list of 'cities' or 'countries' and numbered them I found that I had more than two hundred events, episodes or time periods. I arranged them so that one followed the other as they had occurred or were otherwise linked. That became my outline.

I took the list along when I visited my grandchildren (my daughter had briefed the family beforehand about Grandpa's list.) Evenings, relaxed at the table after dinner, Grandson or Granddaughter would call out, for example, 'Grandpa! Number 67!' I made a big deal out of hauling the list from my back pocket, carefully unfolding it, locating the number and reading the title aloud. Then, on to chin-rubbing, head scratching, ceiling staring, and after enough 'C'mon, grandpa! Get with it!' from all directions I went into my act, narrating in words, tone, gestures, and body language the events of oft-told 'Number 67', or whatever number they had chosen.

They would listen, spellbound and cut in with comments and questions. To them, it was their family history and often, drama, and they really want to know. Invariably, the story was followed with reminiscences by their Mom and Dad who added variations, details, interpretations from their memories, and spin off comparable events in their lives, often long into the wee hours.

Autobiography became living history-the occasion of the telling, itself, is now an event not to be forgotten-and the finest kind of intergenerational communication.

Folk Tales

An old, old man lived in the home of his son. The son had a wife and a young son of his own. At meal times the old man sat at the kitchen table. His eyes were dim and he barely saw; his ears were dull and he barely heard, and his hands trembled. He had difficulty holding his spoon as he tried to feed himself broth from a bowl. Now and then a few drops fell from his spoon on to the tablecloth, or the bowl tipped too far, spilling.

His son and his son's wife were disgusted at the sight of him. Finally, one day, after the old man's trembling hand caused the bowl to fall to the floor and break, they gave him an old wooden bowl, and made him sit with it out of sight behind the stove. At mealtimes, they put food into the wooden bowl and left the old man alone to manage as best he could.

One evening, after dinner, they were all in the sitting room. The old man's son noticed that his own young son had gathered few pieces of wood and stored them in a corner among his playthings.

'What have you there?' The youngster's father pointed to the wood.

The child looked up. 'I am making wooden bowls,' he answered quietly, 'for you and for Mommy to eat out of when I am grown, and you are both very old.' *** I received a letter from a woman of Japanese ancestry who read the preceding story. She wrote that her father, who had passed along to his children much of the lore and tales of old Japan, had another version:

In many villages of old Japan, the townsfolk suffered deeply and often the extremes of hunger and cold. It was vital to the survival of the able-bodied that those who were in their final hours of life be taken to the nearby foothills and left there to die. This sorrowful task belonged to the senior son.

So it was, indeed, that a dutiful senior son, at the appropriate time imposed by illness and tradition, wrapped his dying mother in the family blanket reserved for such sad occasions. He lifted her gently, cradled her in his arms, and made his way to a sheltered place among the nearby foothills' rocks and

underbrush.

Lowering his mother to the ground, he kneeled beside her and tenderly made his final good-bye. She listened silently, breathing shallow, eyes closed. Finally, he stood, bowed deeply and, tears in his eyes, turned to leave.

'Wait, my son.' Her voice was barely a whisper. 'Do not forget the blanket. The day will come when it will be needed for another and, in time, for you.'

Turn-the-page Stories

A grandmother told me how she sometimes became part of a story to her very young and distant grandchild. She wrote:

I audiotape the story and mail the book to him along with the cassette,' she wrote, 'but there's more to it than that. In recording, when I get to the end of a page, I talk about the illustrations on that page, and then say 'turn the page'. He loves this part and tells his Mom that he wants to listen to Grandma's 'turn the page' book. When children are too young to read by themselves, they can follow along independently when you tell them-on the tape-when it's time to 'turn the page.'

Record Your Albums

Inquiries I've received from too-faraway grandparents include audio taping stories, family lore and anecdotes, especially family history. Several commented that talking was easier for them than writing.

In my responses I told about the time and circumstances that I had taped a commentary to our family's photo and document album, and how I went about it.

For almost 40 years my wife and I, and before they left for college, our children, moved about the United States and the world, working and living our lives. We had accumulated a fair number of photos and documents over the years; they were important parts of our family history.

During those active years, family archives were low priority. During periods of relative quiet we reminded ourselves to organize our records, add notes on the reverse sides of photos and important documents, and file them away in albums. As with most families, my wife had all the names, dates, places, and the why and how details catalogued and stored in her mind. We thought we had plenty of time. We did not.

Months after the tragedy, when I was able to focus my thoughts again, one of my many tasks was to gather the cartons, shoeboxes and envelopes of photos and documents. I spread them across every available clear space and tried to make sense of the lot. Many, from past generations, were scenes from the early part of the twentieth century and before. I separated the collection into two groups: Group One: preceding our meeting and marriage, and Group Two: our life together and those who became a part of it.

Group One went into albums as Part A: my wife before we met and her side of the family, and Part B: the same for me and mine. I arranged Group Two (our married life) into collections according to the places where we had resided. The result had many sections.

Organizing the material in each section chronologically, I inserted them into the albums and numbered each photo, document and page. I identified each album sequentially on its spine with a gold foil letter from a packet purchased at a supermarket.

Setting up my tape recorder, I opened the first album. Contemplating the first two facing pages, I recorded what I was going to do in a general introduction, then waded into the narration: photographs, documents, and the flooding memories. Nothing fancy, low key, free association.

The first volumes dealt with people of whom I knew little, so my comments were brief and sketchy. When I reached familiar ground, my remarks were detailed: 'Picture 4 on Page 12 was taken in August of '52 when we lived in beautiful downtown XYZ. Our house is on the right; in the foreground is A, B and C, and coming down the walk is the D family: H, I and J. Soon after the photo was taken, by K, we all drove to AA, visited the city of BB, and had lunch at CC. It was that afternoon that the ZZ incident occurred, and about which I've often talked. For those of you who haven't heard the story, here's what happened....'

And so, far into the night and for days and nights afterward. The task is done, and the archives are ready to pass along to the next generation.

Whenever the subject comes up with others, or when I speak to groups, I urge against putting off this task. We all share in the two great mysteries: mortality and uncertainty. Among the treasures we leave behind are our memories, especially those of family and happy times.

No Answers

Occasionally, among the letters I received, was one that reflected deep disappointment and anguish. The writer had tried to contact a grandchild-or a grandparent-who was too faraway geographically or beyond a barrier of circumstance. There were no answers. *** A man in his eighties wrote that he had a couple of dozen grandchildren and great-grandchildren scattered around the world. Not one had written to him or telephoned, either on their own or in response to his letters and gifts. He was a widower, lived alone, and was the only remaining grandparent. He wanted his grandchildren to know that he was still alive. He had much to offer them, he said, about the family's history and traditions.

'Should I just give up?' he asked.

I suggested that he, as the only living grandparent, persevere and to not accept defeat. Whatever the past might have been, his advanced years called for him to be nonjudgmental, empathic, and healing. I suggested that his grandchildren have or will have families of their own and, in time, will also be grandparents. As elders, they will reflect on their lives and, with a perspective vastly different from their youth and middle years, recall that Grandpa, in his advanced years, had tried to reach out to them as a grandparent in deed as well as in name.

In remembering, they would better understand their own roles as grandparents and their needs as elderly. Through their remembering he will become the 'grandpa' he had sought, long before, to be. Persistence, I reminded him-not giving up-was vital to his well being if not to his life. To stop trying would be to accept defeat. The elderly do not take defeats lightly; at some point the added weight accelerates their downward spiral.

What he was doing for his grandchildren, I wrote, might have profound effects long after he was gone. Grandparenting is both here and now and for the long haul, and it influences grandchildren across their entire life span, not merely for the few years that grandparents were right there to offer guidance and hold them close.

Grandchildren rarely realize it when they're kids-very often not even well into in their middle years-but the grandparents in their lives are forever. Most adults finally figure it out in their latter years. In time, grandkids figure it out-in their turn. *** A woman wrote to me about her pre-teenage daughter's repeated but futile attempts to communicate with her grandfather. He was in his eighth decade and resided in a distant state; the youngster was his only grandchild. Intelligent and caring, she had written to him regularly, sent holiday cards and gifts, and baked and mailed cookies. He did not acknowledge.

When Grandpa did telephone-not often-he spoke briefly with the youngster's parents but avoided talking to her. He had not visited for a long time, lived alone, and was a loner with few friends. The mother's letter did not mention a Grandma, and appealed for a 'suggestion.'

I responded that the parent review grandfather's wellness and what his self-image might be in the light of his past. Had he always been as withdrawn as he now appeared to be? How had he related emotionally to his family when his children were young? Had the family been close, or had Dad been distant even then toward his children and their mother? If he had been a close and caring father, when did changes occur that were significantly different, as currently displayed toward his only grandchild?

What might have brought the changes on? Advancing age can be an important factor: changes that occur during a person's eighth decade and beyond can be ravaging, especially if health had seriously deteriorated or a great personal loss experienced. If such was the case, Grandpa might feel strongly not to impose his difficult problems on to Grandchild?

'I don't know if Grandfather can be changed,' I wrote. 'I do believe that Grandfather needs your understanding and your compassion, and the same from your spouse or partner. Equally, but perhaps not aware of it, he needs the understanding and compassion of his Granddaughter. She keeps reaching out to him; I conclude her sense of compassion is strong. Compassion will not be a burden to her; to the contrary, reaching out strengthens her sensitivity and her developing maturity.'

In closing, 'I address to Granddaughter the 'suggestion' you asked for: 'Granddaughter, keep trying. Grandpa might not respond, but he hears you. Do not default; do not ever, ever give up.'"

The following article, Joint Day Care for Young and Old, appeared on the op-ed page of The Wall Street Journal, issue dated December 31, 1986. It is as relevant today as when it was first published.

The author, Tara McLaughlin, was a former day-care administrator in Washington, D.C. and, at the time of the publication, a research associate with the Urban Ethnic Research Program at Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona. I was preparing my first edition of grandpa stories and Ms McLaughlin kindly gave me permission to include her article.

I believe the article deserves wide dissemination to care centers for all age groups, schools, senior centers, retirement residential communities, health care institutions, and other places, especially to where young and old gather or reside. *** Joint Day Care for Young and Old (With the author's permission.)

One evening after work, my husband and I picked up our three children from their day-care center, and we all went to get her great-grandmother at hers. As we entered the adult center, we were struck by the immediate outpouring of love from the elderly to our children.

The day-care adults spontaneously asked questions, and our children, delighted with having an audience, embraced and talked with their newfound friends. As any parent will attest, children and grandparents are allies, because the elderly have the perspective to realize that when a five-year old girl says she wants to be a ballerina, it does not necessarily preclude the possibility that she will become a nuclear physicist. The great expectations of exuberant and excited kids need to be encouraged by attentive adults. A child's special plans or ideas don't always keep on hold until after dinner. And, too, our raucous eight-year old son is never more attentive and loving than when he is with his great-grandmother. She, in turn, cherishes the time with him as she would a special gift.

Because over 50% of mothers work and many grandparents cannot remain at home all day without assistance, the time for wouldn't-it-be-nice-if kind of talk has clearly passed. Broader social issues are really the roots here. Why are we segregating these two groups in the first place? Our elderly are feeling they are being shuffled off to homes, and young people are growing up without the benefit of elderly role models. This is a society where most mothers work and most children don't live close to grandparents. Dual day-care is a simple, loving solution to this separation of the generations.

A Musty Room

As a former day-care administrator I have seen 30 children mobbing a teacher and clamoring for attention-praise for a project, a kiss for a hurt or applause for their ability to count all the way to 10. At the other end of the spectrum, one of my most haunting childhood memories is of making a Christmas visit with my Girl Scout troop to a nursing home, eager to 'brighten a day.' Instead I remember walking into a musty room and helping her to write a letter to her family. The quizzical look she gave me as she asked 'What shall I write about?' and my own awkward groping for an answer are a vision I carry with me today.

Day-care children don't have a lack of playtime; they have a lack of one-to-one attention. And the day-care elderly don't have a lack of time on their hands; they have a lack of someone to share and laugh with and glean excitement and energy from. Combined, dual day care, built on these needs, probably would cost no more and would disturb no one, and, in fact, it just might be the perfect solution.

Learning that a particular bird is called a sparrow or that a particular tree is called a pine is very special to children who cannot read and who have an active curiosity about the unknown elements of their world. Older adults can read and tell children about this existing world of ours, and what's more they have the time to share with the children. While the elderly would not have the special training of the early-childhood teachers, they would be a supplement to, not a substitute for, staff. Parents and grandparents, after all, don't need diplomas. Conversely, some day-care adults might have ambulatory problems that call out to children who have an intrinsic energy and desire to help. None is prouder than the child who has helped do something for someone else.

Voluntary Participation

Walk through a model dual day-care center for a moment. Most facilities for children wouldn't need to be modified, and adult centers would need only slight modifications. One room for adults, one for children, and a shared recreation room, eating room and yard. Simple.

Now, how popular could the idea become? Given half a chance, most elderly in day-care centers would enthusiastically welcome the idea. With voluntary participation, concern about temperament compatibility need not be a problem. But how would working mothers respond to this? How could they be convinced?

To promote the idea, working mothers could be offered half-price subsidies as an experiment, providing the initial incentive. The elderly could be bused to the children's day-care centers just as they are now being driven to their own. Schedules could be coordinated so that public school buses are used at times when they are not needed for schoolchildren. Each child would be paired with a designated grandparent.

'Adored Attention'

Preventing staff burnout has long been the problem of both adult and child day-care centers. Dual day care would take some of the pressure off. The two age-segregated groups can come together-kids will grow intellectually, gaining the knowledge of age and experience; the adults will recapture the spark of life from the kids; and both will gain the special gift of 'adored attention.'

Cost-effectiveness needs to be given a true test, perhaps by the government at its day-care centers for welfare recipients. This would free government funds for other people in the community. Of course, dual day care would be especially effective for families with both day-care needs.

As a mother, I see that the minute-to-minute problems, vital to kids, don't keep well and just can't wait until later. As an adult, I am not looking forward to my own future in adult day care, looking blankly at a piece of stationary because I have nothing new to write about.

Grandparents in the Virtual Classroom

The following exchanges illustrate e-mail interaction and communication between elementary school students in one community and older adults residing either nearby or in various locations throughout the country. To ensure privacy of the children involved, I use first names only. Many older adults participated in this program, however, quoting from their letters, except where the remarks are most general, might be inappropriate, and so are not included. The manager of the school project is the teacher.

>From the teacher:

I am a teacher in Southern California (land of many lost families) who is very desirous of establishing an intergenerational link (or many links) for my class.

I think a large part of the problem our children and our society face is a sense of 'rootlessness'. I plan to devote a considerable part of my curriculum for this school year to developing a sense of self, family, community, national identity and global citizenship. I want my students to start knowing who they are, why they are that way and that they can influence the conditions they experience.

I plan to use telecommunications as much as our school's limited resources will allow. I would like to communicate with other classes all over the U.S., especially from areas where ethnicity, cultural values and religion are known to vary from the majority. I would also like to involve as many age groups as I can. I will be interacting with college students, high school and middle school students as well as with all levels of my K-5 school.

>From an older adult:

I would be pleased to work with your students. I have been quite close to (a high school) intergenerational project and believe that this sort of thing could help a lot of kids.

...another adult wrote:

I will be honored to interact with your youngsters. Being an old newspaper reporter I write in short sentences. Being a little not-yet- grown-up myself I understand and speak their language. My grandmother gave me a vivid recounting of her trip from Missouri to Colorado in a wagon train. And her first trip back in a Model T and many other stories. I'll be glad to share. I love young, open, inquisitive minds.

To which the teacher replied:

You are wonderful! Thank you so much for being willing to interact with my students. I think your perspectives and insights will really enrich their understanding of the world and of life. I will do most anything to help my students expand their thinking and I really appreciate your willingness to help me!

One more adult...

I am fascinated with your project; it sounds and feels just right. I am a seventy year old retired physician who is enjoying his retirement. I believe we are all witnesses to our time; we are all making

history which succeeding generations will read about in their texts. Real immortality, I believe, is in the passing of ideas from one generation to the next, in holding out our hands to help or to be helped—the gestures are much the same.

Shortly afterward, from the teacher

Ready or not, HERE THEY COME! Thanks for your patience. I hope you enjoy their introductory letters.

>From 'Jessie'

Hi my name is Jessie. I am in the fifth grade. I am a girl. My teacher is Mrs.— . By the way, she is the best teacher there ever was and she's great at making it fun to learn!

My favorite color is purple. What's yours? Do you have any pets? I have two dogs. I like to read about the past and the future. My cousin wants to be a Doctor. I want to be a Lawyer and yell at people. Allen says I'm good at that!

>From Daniel

I'm ten years old. My name is Daniel. I love to draw and play football. I really love football. What do you like? Do you like to draw? I do. Maybe I can draw you a picture. I have a turtle and a dog and a snake for a pet. Do you have any pets? Write back please....

>From Joey

How do you do? My name is Joey. Please tell me more about yourself and the newspaper business. My favorite sport is basketball. I like to play Nintendo.

>From Aubrey

Hi. My name is Aubrey, and Amanda and I are sharing you. This is so exciting talking to you online. I'd like to know about you and your great grandparents. Oh! and thank you so much for the postcard, too. I know we are going to have so much fun online. Thanks.

The teacher added: That's all for now! The children look forward to hearing from you all.

>From an older adult

Dear Jessie,

Thank you for writing your very nice little note to me. I think it was very well done and makes me want to write more. Mrs. ——— sounds like a neat teacher; I'm sure she is proud of you. My favorite colors are violet and purple—my wife likes those colors, too. We have a dog and a cockatoo that is getting old. All he does is scratch. He is hard of hearing, which makes for interesting times.

I'm glad you like to read. The past gives you some idea about how other people did things, and gives you a clue of what to do in the future. The present is where we are now. We all make our own futures, which quickly, too quickly, become our pasts.

Actually, (as a lawyer) yelling will lose you more cases than you will win. Lawyers have to be able to argue, that is, discuss the pros and cons of a case. It takes reasoning ability and a calmness of spirit and a love for justice. I'm sure you are good at a lot of things. You sound full of vim and vigor and enthusiasm. That's great!

Please write to me what you are doing, about what you like to study and whatever else you would like. I will try to be more prompt in answering you. These last few days were hectic for me.

Dear Jessica,

It's nice to meet you this way. I'm glad to hear that Mrs. —— is your teacher. She sounds great. I'm in good health, thank you for asking. I have three grown boys, but no grandchildren yet. We have an old dog that thinks he is our boss. We really like cats better, but our dog is too old and set in his ways to tolerate any cats.

My youngest son and his girl friend have four cats between them. I like being a retired physician. I don't have to attend emergencies and I can get all the rest I want. When I go to the hospital it is to get medicines.

I like your goals, they are very nice. If you change your mind as you get to look at different professions, that's OK. Whatever you decide, go for the best. A neo-natal nurse is a very good kind of person to be. I think I will be proud of you.

Thank you for writing to me. I will look forward to your reply.

Another....

Hello Daniel.

It was a pleasant time I had reading your letter to me. Thank you very much. Football and drawing are favorites of yours. I like football also. In fact, I did play football in high school and college. I was a fullback, but never got to handle the ball. In those days the fullback was like a guard or a tackle. All he did was block for guys who carried the ball.

As for drawing, I'm not very good. In fact I'm terrible. Freehand drawing, that is. What I do instead of drawing is use my computer to do graphics and illustrations.

As you work with computers during your school career I'll bet you'll love some of the creative things you can do with computer drawing programs. My favorite drawing software is called 'Arts & Letters'. It has a lot of pre-drawn illustrations. These are called 'clip art'. I can, for instance, call up an illustration of an airplane. Then I can do all sorts of interesting things to change how the airplane looks. It's a lot of fun.

As for collecting things, I like funky menus. The funkier the better. Last month I was in a place in Wyoming where the menu was printed inside an old newspaper. The newspaper had stories that actually were in newspapers from the late 1890s, when trappers and explorers were just pushing into Wyoming territory. I got so interested in reading all those stories the waitperson had to come by twice to get me to order. The menu was in the middle of the foldout old paper. So if you ever run across a funky menu, send it my way. Thank you for your thoughtfulness.

Thanks, and let's keep exchanging information. I enjoy hearing all about you, your school and your friends. And what you like and don't like. Turtles? Snakes? My goodness! I'll pass on both of those. I live in an apartment and no pets are allowed. But for several years, until he died, I had a cat, properly named BearCat. Bear hated to ride in the car. It was an annual battle of wills between Bear and me to get him his shots at the vet. I miss Bear. *** >From the teacher, addressed to all who wrote to her students

Dear friends,

My students have so enjoyed the exchanges we have had so far. I hope you will continue to write to us!

My students are afraid you will forget about them and asked me to remind you that we are here and we love your messages. If we owe you letters, please forgive us; we will remedy that as quickly as we can! If you 'owe' us letters, please write.

I leave you with this somewhat apt quote from LIVE AND LEARN AND PASS IT ON (a lovely little book given to me by a former student):

'I've learned that young people need old people's love, respect, and knowledge of life, and that old people need the love, respect and strength of young people.' (The writer was 85 years old.)

An elderly person wrote and asked, 'How do we get to write to children?'

To which the teacher replied:

Writing to the children is easy! Just jump right in and do it! They are really 'into' this now and will snap up your request. I would like to start having them each (29 of them) choose a particular friend here so I still need a larger pool of adult writers.

What others have done is simply write and post a brief letter telling about themselves, some idea where they live, their interests, anecdotal family history that children might relate to, work background, etc.

Thanks for your interest. We hope to hear from you soon!

Show-and-Tell Expert

An elder, whether he or she is a biological grandparent or not, can be an excellent show-and-tell for a youngster. If you haven't tried it, give it thought, the experience is one of the best antidotes for the 'blahs.' The experiences range from the hilarious to the poignant, and deserve being shared.

During a visit to my distant grandchildren they invited me to accompany them to school to tell a few stories. On the appointed day, waiting in line with my granddaughter to enter her classroom, she glanced around to see if I was still there. Seeing me, she waggled her thumb at me over her shoulder and loudly proclaimed for all to hear, 'That's my Grandpa. He's my show-and-tell today!'

Acknowledging students' stares and giggles with dignified bows to left and right, I trailed along into the classroom, was graciously received, told stories, responded to questions about how the stories came to be, and asked questions in return. I then repeated my performance in my grandson's class. Both sessions went well.

During the storytelling and the discussions that followed, the youngsters were fascinated: they were sharing their thoughts with someone who really wrote stories and, equally important, they were talking with an elder and a grandpa (grandpa-surrogate?) who had come to visit with them from beyond their everyday routines. I was reminded once more that grandparents were nearby for relatively few children, the reasons include circumstances as well as geography. For most, grandparents were distant, deceased, or unknown. *** Some time previously, a friend invited me to accompany him to a children's day care center in his city. He, along with several other elders, visited the center occasionally to interact with the youngsters. Conforming to the center's schedule, we arrived about half an hour before lunch. The children, about 25 three-to-four year olds, were still in the play yard. With permission from the play yard supervisor, we circulated from one group to another and participated in their activities where we could safely do so.

After a while, the attendant assembled the children to return indoors, and we followed. Inside, the youngsters and elders took seats in a circle, the elders spacing themselves about equidistant from each other. To my surprise, it was story time, and we elders were to be the storytellers.

The first storyteller told of a voyage she had taken as a child with her parents, and the second described a winter sleigh ride along a country lane. My friend, a retired aeronautical engineer, spoke of airplanes and spaceships and stars in the skies. Throughout, the youngsters concentrated on the speaker, asked questions, voiced opinions, and, in many ways expressed their wonder and interest. The adults were getting as much from the telling as the children.

I had been engrossed in observing the reaction of the children to the stories being told and I was unprepared for my part. Suddenly, it was my turn. What could I say that would have meaning to these young children? Searching my memory, I recalled that, when my children were young, I had often baked bread for our family. My story would be about baking braided bread, and I would pantomime the process and have all present join in.

The children, and the adults as well, quickly entered the spirit of the story. When, with elaborate motions, I drew forth baking pans and supplies from an imaginary cupboard and placed them on a phantom work table, they did. When I cracked pretend-eggs into an enormous bowl that wasn't really there, they did. Together, we vigorously mixed the invisible ingredients, dumped, floured, and kneaded the phantom mess, centered it on the ghostly table, and raised our arms grandly above our heads and touched fingertips high up to match the height to which our magic dough had risen. Solemnly, we pounded the non-existent lump flat, cut it into unseen chunks, and rolled each chunk into an invisible branch. Watching closely as I solemnly went about it, each child braided their three symbolic branches into their personal loaf, placed it in the shadow oven, and drew it out a moment later, sniffing the fragrance of freshly baked bread.

Faces reflecting their deep concentration, the children were involved. Elders and youngsters had shared an experience, and it had been good. Having worked up our appetites, we were also ready for lunch. *** I've told this story on several other occasions. Preparing for one telling, I rolled three packages of play dough of contrasting colors into eighteen- inch sticks, wrapped each in the clear plastic used for food storage, and secured the plastic with adhesive tape. At the proper moment in the telling, and in elaborate pantomime, I withdrew each colored length, one at a time, from a mysterious-looking case beside me. Youngsters crowded forward, eyes wide and riveted. I held each colored wrap aloft for all to see, and continued with the game. The contrasting colors made the braiding process clearly visible and more understandable. *** I was invited by the Resource Teacher of a local elementary school to participate in their Authors and Illustrators Invitational. Each appearance would be a one man or woman show: a visiting writer or artist and an audience of children. Arrangements fell into place and each of the five sessions I conducted found me in the school library, seated in an ancient wooden grandpa-style rocking chair, with twenty-five to thirty second- to fourth-graders spread out before me in a half circle with their listeners on and tuned in.

To each group I told a story or two, and encouraged questions about how my stories came to be. Planet Jupiter was the setting for one story (told here in another chapter), and I mentioned that the plot and characters had been created by working out details with my grandchildren. Discussing collaboration in writing a story got us into long distance interaction between grandkids and grandparents. With another, middle school group, I dragged out one of my book-length manuscripts and explained the why and how of manuscript preparation and independent publishing and what might happen if (the big IF) the manuscript was accepted by a trade publisher. Questions, lots of questions, no two sessions alike. *** During a visit to my distant grandchildren, then nine-year old Joshua invited me to read a story to his class of about fifteen students during the lunch period. I would have about half an hour, following which the class would break for the schoolyard. Most of the youngsters knew me, as I'd read or told stories to them during previous visits. I was greeted with 'Hi' smiles and hand waves.

The tables had been arranged in a U with me at the open end. Except for the few who hadn't seen me before, they knew I had difficulty hearing. As a reminder I pointed to my two hearing aids and asked the students to speak up when offering opinions or asking questions. This immediately brought comments from several that their grandmothers or grandfathers also wore hearing aids and they knew what was expected of them. To a few, my hearing device was something new. I removed the aid from my ear, opened the battery clip, and walked along the inside of the U to point out up close its major parts and their purpose, then demonstrated how the aid was installed and removed. I activated the acoustic feedback whistle by cupping the device in my palm and rendering a 'shave-and-a-haircut' whistle and this brought several laughs as well as questions. I was off to a good start.

Rather than read or tell a story, I moved on to talk about the United States programs for exploring space, plans for a permanent space station and, in time, a base on the Moon and unmanned and manned flights to Mars. We speculated about the origin of the planets in the light of their relative sizes and orbits along the solar plane. I sketched a rough diagram on the blackboard. The students reeled off the planets' names, and recalled what they knew about this or that planetary satellite. One youngster wanted to be certain that the class was aware that Pluto's orbit was unusual in that it cut across the solar plane inside Neptune's orbit and back out into interstellar space. They knew a lot about the solar system and were proud and pleased to share their knowledge. It was a 'high tech' discussion.

The last item on my agenda was to read several single-page stories, each closing with a dilemma confronting the lead character. The author's answers to the puzzles were included in the text, but before disclosing it I invited the class to suggest their own. They didn't hesitate, and supported their ideas with logic.

As in our previous sessions which, for some students, were as far back as preschool, they felt that they were exchanging views with an elderly adult who had arrived from outside, who wrote stories as well as being a storyteller, and someone who was grandpa to a fellow student. The half-hour passed much too soon.

Talks and readings I've attended over the years gave ample evidence of their value to speakers and listeners. Whether a show-and-tell visitor to a class presents a story, a memoir, an artifact, a skill, or an art form, almost all have something worth sharing with children. The problem is often in bringing the two distant age groups into each other's presence so that the dynamics of their interaction and mutuality can take place. Preparations, as well as the main event, add zest to the experience. A show-and-tell takes many forms, however they occur, one constant prevails: each youngster, while you and I are with him or her, is 'the grandchild.'

Introducing yourself to a distant grandchild as a teller of stories or of family, cultural, or other anecdotes, or as someone who cares about him or her, calls for some initial groundwork. For instance, does your grandchild know you or only of you?

With increased life expectancy and life experience, grandparents of this era have more to offer youngsters than ever before. As life expectancy increases, our children and grandchildren, in their turn, will have more to offer their succeeding generations.

Grandchildren need easy access to grandparents. Casting the elderly into physically remote and psychologically passive roles works against the interests of grandchildren and their parents, as well as their grandparents.

For grandparent-grandchild interaction to flourish, if it is to exist at all, grandparents, themselves, need to take initiatives to reach out. This could call for unusual assertiveness to open lines of communication where there are none, and at keeping them open for a two-way flow.

Recalling that far more assertive and influential time in their lives, the elderly insist on their right to age gracefully, usefully, and so far as they possibly can, their way. Rather than merely riding off into the sunset, older adults choose to brighten the horizons of their minds and lives through continued involvement in family, schools, work place, and community. Most elderly reject the diminution of their abilities and interests, although as they age into the seventh and eighth decades they may be compelled to restrict their direct involvement somewhat. Their capabilities, reduced by time and the tides, are nevertheless firmly based on direct on-the-job experience in managing households, family affairs, and professional and technical careers. With such knowledge and experience the elderly will remain a vital resource.

(From *Surviving The Future*, by Arnold Toynbee, Oxford University Press, 1971) Man is a social being, and therefore, among all the objects for his love that there are in the universe and beyond it, he ought, I suppose, love his fellow human beings first and foremost. But he should also love all non-human living creatures, animals, and plants as well because they are all akin to man; they too are branches of the great tree of life. This tree has a common root; we do not know where the root comes from, but we do know that we all spring from it. Man should also love inanimate nature, because this, too, is part of the universe which is man's habitat.

(Our grandchildren) are not responsible for the existing state of the world. The reality is that the middle-aged generation (the parents of the rising generation) brought them into the world and is educating or miseducating them, or just ignoring their educational needs. If the middle-years or older generations are indignant at the rising generation, who is really at fault? Who shirked their responsibilities to their children and grandchildren? And with whom lies the initiative to resolve these inadequacies? In effect, it is up to the older generation to take the initiative to bring about reconciliation between itself and the generations that are to follow them.

PART TWO FIRST STORIES

Stories for three to five year old children are best told within their range of comprehension and imagination; stories that tell of things, activities and places to which the age group can readily relate. In fantasies, for example, I might animate familiar toys or modify characters from the youngster's favorite books and send them off on adventures that do not raise apprehension for the toy's or child's safety. Invariably, the stories close with the characters back in a secure and familiar setting.

Beyond the immediate pleasure of a grandma or grandpa story itself, the shared grandparent-grandchild experience transforms over time into recollections of enjoyable times in one's early childhood. The process helps to lay a foundation for a positive relationship between the generations and opens doors to future confidences and dialogues as the grandchild matures.

Stories from distant grandparents have a special aura. Young children remember the warm glow of family readings where Mom and Dad add their own versions of the story. ***

Grandpa Takes a Walk

Here's a simple letter-story that I mailed to my grandchild. Change it to one of your routine activities that you would like to share with Grandchild when next he or she visits. Add a bit of whimsy. When your story is read aloud to him or her at home, before the visit, it adds to the youngster's anticipation.

It is morning. I look out my window. The sun is shining. It's a good time to take a walk. I put on my sweater, leave the house and close the door behind me. Off I go on my walk, up one street and down another.

I come to a park. All about me are trees and shrubs and open fields. I start across the grass. A kite is

high in the sky. The kite has red and white stripes, and looks like a bird with a wide tail.

'Who is flying this enormous kite?' I wonder.

I look about to see who is holding the string that stretches from the kite to the ground. What a surprise! It's a black and white spotted kitten. The kitten scampers back and forth with the kite's string gripped in its mouth.

After watching the kitten for a while, I go along on my walk. I reach the other side of the park and see a row of houses. One house has a window shade raised and a flowerpot on the windowsill. The pot has a plant with a single yellow flower growing straight up.

A boy and a girl are on the lawn in front of the house. The boy is pushing a wheelbarrow with a yellow shovel in it. The girl is holding a pink parasol, folded closed.

'What will you put in your wheelbarrow?' I ask the boy.

He lowers the wheelbarrow and points to a pile of sand in the driveway.

'I'm helping my Dad move that pile of sand to the back yard,' he says.
'We're filling our sandbox.'

I turn to the girl.

'What will you do with your parasol?'

'When the sun is high,' she says, 'I will open my parasol. It will shade me.'

I nod, wave good-bye to the boy and girl, and continue walking. I come to a hill and climb to the top. In the sky is a small white cloud. In the distance is a rainbow.

I start for home. I pass the house with the boy and girl. The boy is pushing the wheelbarrow. It is filled with sand. He pushes it toward a walk leading to the back yard. His sister has her parasol open. It is shading her. She waves at me. I wave back.

The yellow flower on the windowsill makes the house look cheerful.

I come to the park. The black and white spotted kitten is still flying the kite. I stop to watch. It is a strange sight.

I keep walking. In a little while I am back home. I had a nice walk.

When you visit us, you and I will take a walk along those streets and across that same park. On the far side of the park we will look for the house with the flowerpot in the window, and for the boy and his wheelbarrow and the girl holding her parasol. We will climb the hill and look for a rainbow in the sky. If we are lucky, we might be surprised by a black and white spotted kitten-flying a kite.

Dooby and Katrinka Have an Idea

A popular story theme portrays friendly animals at play in a familiar setting. The story may be enhanced by the animals cooperating to overcome a problem to which the youngster can relate.

Dooby, the dog, has red fur, a droopy tail, and sad eyes. His friend, Katrinka, the cat, has striped gray and black fur, and a tail that usually sticks straight back with a little kink at the tip.

Sometimes, Katrinka makes her tail stiff and points it straight up like a telephone pole. That doesn't happen very often. Katrinka always has a cheerful smile.

Dooby wears a dog collar. Katrinka wears a ribbon around her neck. A tiny bell is attached to the ribbon. They live in a green house beside a road that disappears over a hill on one side and into a grove of trees on the other.

Dooby and Katrinka are great friends, and they love to play together. They chase a ball in the back yard, roll in the grass, or chase each other around tree trunks. Almost every day they sit side by side and watch the sun set. Dooby and Katrinka like to take walks and explore.

As we look in on Dooby and Katrinka this morning, we see Dooby dashing past Katrinka. Dooby barks as he runs, 'Katrinka, let's race along the road and have an adventure.'

That is all Katrinka needs to get her to tumble out of her comfortable bed, stretch along the carpet, and dash out of the house after Dooby.

Dooby is well on his way down the road. Katrinka runs fast and catches up. They race each other toward the hill, and then up one side and down the other.

They pass a shopping center and an office building, and are soon at a park with tall trees and wide playing fields. In they go.

Along one side of the park is a lake with rowboats, geese, ducks and swans. Dooby and Katrinka pay no attention to the rowboats, geese, ducks or swans.

They have something else in mind: the children's playground. There it is, up ahead. Along one side of the playground are a climbing maze, swings, and a seesaw. On the other is an large sandbox where children can play and build sandcastles. The sand can also be shaped into hills with roads winding along their sides, and long twisty rivers that run from one end of the sandbox to the other.

Dooby and Katrinka jump into the sandbox and chase each other from one end to the ether. They stop now and then to turn over pebbles and acorns with their noses or paws. They dig holes into which they push and bury the pebbles and the acorns.

Suddenly Katrinka stops playing and looks around.

'That's strange,' she says. 'Whenever we come to this park it's full of children. I usually see them with their mothers and fathers in rowboats on the lake, or along the shore feeding the ducks, geese and swans. I also see lots of children here on the swings and seesaws, or playing here in the sandbox. I don't see them now.'

Dooby stops digging, walks to the edge of the sandbox and looks around.

'You're right,' he says, and his tail droops.

A drop of water strikes Dooby on his nose. It goes splat. Dooby squints down his nose at the water trickling from its tip. His eyes widen with surprise. Another drop strikes him, this time on the top of his head. Still another, on his ear.

Three drops of water spatter Katrinka; two on her back and one on her tail. They both look up. The sky is full of gray, racing clouds. It's starting to rain.

'That's why there are no children here,' says Dooby. 'Their mothers are keeping them indoors because of this rain.'

Dooby and Katrinka continue their romping in the sandbox, but the sand is getting wet and harder to dig. They leave the sandbox and slip under a picnic table to get away from the rain. They shake the wet from their coats.

'Being caught in the park during a rain is a sort of adventure, I suppose,' says Katrinka, 'but I like to be where it's dry.'

They watch the rain falling. The raindrops are now larger and heavier.

'I'd like to start for home,' says Katrinka, 'but I don't want to get my fur coat any wetter.'

'I don't mind getting wet,' says Dooby.

He thinks about how to keep Katrinka dry on the way home.

'I know,' he says. 'Here's what we'll do.'

Dooby explains his idea to Katrinka. She chuckles. Dooby also chuckles. They look at each other and their chuckles change to laughter. They laugh and they laugh.

Dooby stands up. Katrinka, who is much smaller than Dooby, comes alongside and then slips in underneath him so that Dooby's body acts as an umbrella.

They walk all the way home, heads high, looking very proud and pleased with themselves.

It's still raining when they get home, but Katrinka didn't get more than a few drops of rain on her fur coat. She moves out of the way as Dooby shakes himself real hard, spraying water droplets in all directions.

Dooby and Katrinka have a late breakfast and head for their corners to take naps.

Circus Adventure

A favorite setting for a children's story is the circus, and following an alligator that sneaks about the grounds searching for an adventure offers the listener a sense of involvement.

The circus is in town. All the boys and girls and their mothers and fathers are excited by the posters and the circus parades along Main Street.

Abercrombie, the alligator, wants to visit the circus. The morning the circus opens, Abercrombie rises from his nest in the riverbank mud, climbs on to his bicycle, and sets off for town. He has lots of friends at the circus, and they like to have him visit with them.

Abercrombie also has a secret plan, but we won't talk about that yet. First we'll introduce a few of Abercrombie's friends.

One of Abercrombie's close friends at the circus is JoJo, the juggler. JoJo juggles three plates or, sometimes, three bottles.

Then there is Jingo, the jester, who struts along the circus Midway, looking important. He's OK, though.

Abercrombie also has friends among the clowns who do somersaults and fancy rolls, and play violins as they do their tricks. He knows the elephants that ride around the ring on huge, funny looking bicycles and the jugglers and clowns and elephants that enjoy making children laugh.

Finally, there is Bumble, the Bee. Bumble is the Circus Ringmaster. He buzzes from one place to another in the circus rink, telling people what to do and when to do it. He's bossy, but he's OK, too.

Let's return to Abercrombie. He has been planning his secret adventure for a long time.

We see him close to the circus tent with colored flags flying from the top. He sniffs the air and smells the popcorn, and he hears the booming of the drums and the blaring of the trumpets. Crowds of children and their parents are heading for the circus tents. Some of them stop to watch JoJo, the juggler and they laugh at JoJo jumping up and down, and twirling plates and bottles, catching them on their way up or down. It's lots of fun to watch.

Abercrombie walks up to JoJo and whispers in his ear. Then Abercrombie leaves JoJo; he's in a hurry to begin his adventure-his secret adventure.

Flattening down to the ground on his stumpy legs and arms, Abercrombie slithers into the big tent. All the boys and girls and their mothers and fathers and grandmas and grandpas fill the seats around the circular rink. They are concentrating on the clowns rolling and tumbling and standing on the heads and shoulders of other clowns. They are also watching the elephants ride their huge bicycles.

No one notices Abercrombie, and that is the way Abercrombie wants it. He doesn't want to be noticed until he is ready.

Carefully, Abercrombie works his way around a circus wagon, looking back over his shoulder to be sure he is not seen. Quickly, he climbs over a large red and white striped box, slips around a corner and, fast as an alligator can, he wiggles up, over the side and into an orange-colored barrel.

He waits inside the barrel. He peeks out through a bunghole in its side. He does not see or hear anyone close by, so he knows he has not been noticed. He grins, chuckles, and gleefully rubs his palms.

Abercrombie takes another peek through the peephole. The way is clear. Taking a deep breath, he tightens his muscles, and leaps out of the barrel.

Rearing up on to his hind legs, his heavy tail straight out behind him Abercrombie dashes into and across the circus rink. His stumpy arms wave furiously, and his head is high and wags from side to side for balance. His legs pump and pound so fast they look blurry, like bicycle spokes when the wheels turn fast.

Bumble, the Bee, Ringmaster of the circus, sees Abercrombie racing across the ring and the direction in which he is heading.

'Stop, stop,' he shouts.

Abercrombie pays no attention. He reaches a ladder attached to a red and white pole on the side of the center ring. The top of the pole is close to the tent's peak, and that's really high. A ladder is fastened to the pole all the way to the top.

Abercrombie wraps his stumpy arms around the pole and begins to climb the ladder. He climbs and he climbs. Finally, he is at the very top and stands on a tiny platform. Abercrombie leans out and twists his head to look at the crowd far below.

The crowd is silent. They stare up, watching Abercrombie high up on the tiny perch. Bumble, the Ringmaster, stands at the bottom of the pole and shakes his fist up at him.

Abercrombie's secret ambition is that ever since he first attending a circus he wanted to swing from a trapeze-a circus trapeze. The tiny platform to which he climbed has a trapeze fastened to its railing. The trapeze is now a few inches from where Abercrombie is standing.

No one can stop him now.

Abercrombie unties the trapeze, grasps the bar with both hands and takes a deep breath. He looks down at the crowd once more and gripping the trapeze tight, leaps from the platform. Away he G O E S!

Oh, what an adventure! What AN ADVENTURE! Back and forth, back and forth from one side of the huge tent to the other.

First, Abercrombie holds on with both hands, then he holds on with one hand and waves to the crowd below with the other. He twists and he turns, then holds to the bar with only his teeth and waggles both arms and stumpy hind legs. To cap that, he does somersaults and back flips, and then twists himself so that he catches the bar with his hands, his feet, and his teeth. Once, even with his tail!

The boys and the girls and the mothers and the fathers and the grandmas and the grandpas watch Abercrombie from far below. They shout and laugh and clap their hands. They're having a wonderful time, too.

Well, as you can imagine, after a while Abercrombie gets tired. It's time to rest. He takes a few more swings, does a somersault and a back flip, and catches the rail on the tiny platform where he started. He ties the trapeze back to the railing, and climbs down.

When he steps away from the ladder at the bottom, the crowd welcomes him with smiles, shouts, and clapping hands. Even Bumble, the Ringmaster, is happy to see him and they shake hands.

Abercrombie waves to the crowd and makes his way to where he left his bicycle. He heads for home.

Arriving home, he enjoys his supper and, as he is very tired, he puts on his red pajamas and slips into his nest on the riverbank.

As he closes his eyes he says, 'I sure had a fine adventure today.'

Dinosaur's Nest

The introduction to this next story is about an experience I had ten or so years ago at the Portland Museum of Science and Industry. My daughter was a volunteer at the museum at the time and, often, when I visited she invited me along to help at the museum too, which, of course, I did.

A popular exhibit at museums everywhere is one that displays models of the large reptiles that roamed the Earth millions of years ago. During one of my visits to my grandchildren in Portland, Oregon, the local museum had such an exhibit. There were so many different reptiles in the exhibit that, for my convenience in stories I hoped to write, I assigned each a popular and easily pronounced-and remembered-name. The names appear in this story: there was Albert the Apatosaurus, Pete the Pentaceratops, Palmer the Parasaurolophus, Sally the Stegosaurus, and Alice the Ankylosaurus. The exhibit also included a Petrushka the Pterodactyl and a Tallyrand the Tyranosaurus.

The museum's Albert the Apatosaurus had a baby daughter, Alexandra, and she slept in a doughnut-shaped nest after the museum closed for the night. As you can imagine, a doughnut-shaped nest, for even a toddler apatosaurus, is not the size of the bakery doughnuts with which you and I are familiar. Alexandra's doughnut-shaped nest was about ten feet across. The model had eighteen-inch diameter inflated tubes that enclosed a soft brown plastic floor.

When children touring the museum saw Alexandra's nest they rushed to climb the tube, jump down inside, and land hard on the soft plastic floor. With hundreds of jumping children each day, four or five

at a time, the soft plastic soon scuffed and frequently needed repair. Alexandra didn't care to see her nest abused like that, and I felt sympathy for her. Fortunately, I was able to help; my job was to be the museum's official Fixer of the Apatosaurus Nest's Floor. My tools and supplies were a large roll of aluminum-colored adhesive tape, a tape measure and shears. Twice each day I inspected and repaired Alexandra's nest.

'Stand back for one moment, please.' I would say as I approached and identified myself to the jumpers. 'It is time to inspect the dinosaur's nest.'

The youngsters gathered round as I removed my shoes, stepped across the inflated tube into the nest, lowered to my knees, bent, and carefully inspected the nest's floor. With elaborate gestures I inspected all surfaces and seams, measured the damaged areas with my ruler, cut the proper length strip from my large roll of duct tape, and pressed it into place.

Children and mothers and fathers and grandparents came from nearby exhibits to observe the Apatosaurus Nest Floor Fixer at work. When the repairs were done I rose, stepped back over the side and out of the nest and waved to the jumpers, saying, 'OK, have at it!' And they did.

My grandchildren were proud to see grandpa at work repairing a baby Apatosaurus's nest so that it would remain a safe and comfortable place to sleep after the museum closed for the day.

Several times, as I made my way back from the nest to the shop in the basement below the museum I happened to glance up at Alexandra's dad, Albert. I think I saw him wink at me, as if to say, 'Thanks for fixing Alexandra's nest.' ***

Dinosaurs? Having a Birthday Party?

Albert, the Apatosaurus, lives with his mother and father in a huge forest at the edge of a swampy lake. Every morning, soon after the sun is up, Albert awakens, crawls out of his nest, and shakes himself to get the sleepy out of his eyes. Awake and stretched, Albert waddles down to the lake to munch the sweet grasses that grow along its shore. He has reached an age that he doesn't need to be constantly watched over by an older Apatosaurus.

This morning, when Albert awakens, he looks around to see if his friends, Pete, the Pentaceratops, Palmer, the Parasaurolophus, Sally, the Stegosaurus and Alice, the Ankylosaurus are also awake. They are, so Albert visits with them for a while. They chase each other around the trees of the forest, and then head for the lake to seek their breakfast.

At the lake, they nibble at the tall grasses that grow along the shore, or in the shallow water. Now and then, the leaves of a bush or a tree look appetizing and become part of breakfast.

Finished, Albert waves good-bye to his friends and heads off deeper into the forest. Albert likes to explore. He is also looking for another Apatosaurus like himself. He wants very much to find one about his age.

It's a cool and pleasant morning. Albert comes to a meadow, crosses to the trees on the other side and continues on. Finally, he arrives at a lake that is almost as long and as wide as the lake where he had breakfast.

The lake's shore is quiet and Albert looks about for a snack. He waddles into the water and lowers his long neck. He yanks up a mouthful of grasses and water plants and chews.

Suddenly, he hears a splashing sound behind him. Turning his head he sees another, smaller Apatosaurus. Albert quickly finishes chewing, swallows, and smiles.

'I'm Albert,' he says. 'What's your name?'

'Alexandra,' replies the smaller Apatosaurus. 'Where are you from, Albert?'

'I live near the lake on the other side of the forest.' Albert waves his long tail in the direction of his home. 'I was out exploring and came here to see if any neighbors moved in recently. I haven't seen you before. Are you new here?'

'Yes, I am,' Alexandra replies. 'My Mommy and Daddy and I just moved here and we think we'll stay. It's quiet in this forest, and the lake's shoreline has plenty of the food we like. I hope that we'll remain here for a long time.'

Albert tells Alexandra about Peter, Palmer, Alice and Sally. 'Oh, I want very much to meet them.'

Alexandra is excited at the thought of making new friends.

'I'm sure they want to meet you, too.' Albert wiggles his tail as he speaks. 'Do Apatosaurus children play coconut ball where you came from?'

'Sure do,' Alexandra says.

Albert stretches his long neck and plucks a large coconut from the top of a nearby palm tree. He flips the coconut over his shoulder and as it falls he bats it toward Alexandra with his tail.

Alexandra, who has studied ballet, is well balanced. She catches the ball easily in her mouth. Tossing it high with a graceful twist of her body she bats it with her tail in a high arc back to Albert. He dashes toward the coconut and, with a tail flip, returns it for another round.

Albert and Alexandra play with the coconut ball for a while. They stop for lunch along the shore, and then rest and chat.

When the day moves into afternoon, Albert says good-bye to Alexandra and promises to return soon. They are friends.

'My birthday is coming soon and my mother and father are giving me a party,' Alexandra says as Albert turns to leave. 'Will you come to my party and will you bring along Pete, Palmer, Alice and Sally?'

'Of course I'll come,' Albert says as he waves at her over his shoulder, 'and I'll tell my friends about you. I'm sure they'll want to come to your party.'

Albert heads for his home near the lake on the other side of the forest.

Alexandra rushes home. She tells her parents about Albert, and they're pleased that Alexandra has found a friend.

Alexandra has her supper and plays with her toys. Then, feeling tired, she climbs into the nest her father had just lined with fresh twigs and leaves, and is soon asleep.

When Albert arrives home he tells his friends about Alexandra. They are excited to hear that another dinosaur family has moved into their neighborhood, and that a birthday party was coming soon.

Of course they accept Alexandra's invitation.

On the day of the party Albert, Pete, Palmer, Sally and Alice race each other to Alexandra's home on the far side of the forest.

Colored streamers, bunting, balloons and 'Happy Birthday' signs stretch between trees. Cookies and candies for Alexandra's friends are in dishes on tables and gifts are stacked everywhere.

Children from different reptile families play games among the trees, sing songs, and swing on an enormous rubber tire hanging from a tree branch. Near the tables, other reptile children laugh and eat cookies, candies and ice cream, and drink sodas or milk.

Albert invites Alexandra to meet his friends. Alexandra's father snaps their picture with his camera. The camera is the kind that makes instant pictures, so he passes them to the guests as soon as they are dry.

'These are very interesting pictures,' says Albert. 'Please take some more and let us have them to show to our parents?'

'Of course,' says Alexandra's Daddy. He takes many snapshots of Albert and the others and gives a few to each to take home.

After the children have played for a while Alexandra's mother slaps her long tail on the ground to get their attention.

'Let's all gather around at the table,' she calls to the children.

As everyone moves toward the table Alexandra's father carries out a huge, three-layered chocolate cake with whipped cream all over the top and sides. The cake has four candles on it for Alexandra's fourth birthday.

When the cake is on the table Alexandra stretches her neck forward slightly, takes a deep breath, and with a single whoosh blows out all four candles.

Everyone shouts 'Happy Birthday, Alexandra!' and they waddle-dance around the table. Alexandra is very happy. Her daddy plays on his fiddle.

It's time for Alexandra to open the many gifts that her friends and parents piled on the table.

Alexandra unwraps a special Apatosaurus doll that goes 'beep' when she squeezes it, a dinosaur doll's nest lined with tiny leaves and twigs, and a blackboard on a tripod with different colored chalk sticks. There are many other gifts, too. Alexandra holds her gifts up so that everyone can see them. Then, with a big smile, she hugs her mother and father and thanks her guests for their gifts and for coming to her party.

All too soon, the party is over. Time to start for home. The children wave good-bye to Alexandra as they leave. Sally and Alice hug Alexandra.

'We must see each other again,' says Alexandra.

'Yes, real soon,' says Sally.

Sally and Alice nod.

Albert is sorry the party is over. He waits until the very end, when all the others have left.

'Thank you for inviting us,' he says to Alexandra. 'I'll come again soon and we'll play coconut ball. Would you like that?'

'Oh, yes,' she replies. 'I'd like that very much.'

With a wave of his tail Albert turns toward home. He catches up to Pete and Palmer, who are waiting for him. They all run ahead and, with Sally and Alice, reach their side of the forest by late afternoon. They wave good-bye to each other as they separate to go to their family nests.

When Albert reaches his nest he tells his mother and father about the good time he had at Alexandra's Birthday Party. He shows them the pictures Alexandra's Daddy gave him.

Then Albert moves to his part of the nest, curls his tail around to cover his toes, and falls asleep.

The sun sinks behind a low hill and night settles on the forest.

Leah and the Family Meeting

In their early years, many children create a relationship to an imaginary friends with whom they play. Without getting into child psychology, these friends are often partners in adventures as well as conversations. Think back to when your children, now parents, were very young and romped in the back yard with their personal frontiersman, pardner or 'friend' who was steadfast and always alongside. They climbed trees together, sat side by side in the swing, or shifted the furniture about in the dollhouse.

Inevitably, the time arrived to replace a companion of imagination with the reality of growing up. The 'friends' or 'pardners' become memories, but do not fade away entirely?

This story reflects reminiscence by an older person and, in that respect, it serves as a model through which to welcome back pleasant memories from childhood. The memories may be expanded and transformed into a story to share with grandchildren. The grandchildren, in their turn, might take it along with them into adulthood and share it with their progeny.

All the woodchucks in Woodchuckaton crawled deep into their burrows. The chipmunks crept under piles of chips. Even the beavers, over on the other side of town in Beaverton, stayed home.

It was raining. It had been raining all day, and here it was now, late afternoon. It was time for the rain to move along somewhere else.

Leah rested her elbows on the sill of the big picture window and cupped her face in her hands. Shifting about on the big red cushion, she stared out through the misty pane. Sheets of water billowed along the street, one following close behind the other like a parade.

Leah heard her mother humming in the kitchen preparing the evening meal. The evening meal was special. Daddy left home for work early each day, before anyone else was awake. The evening meal was when they all came together for the first time each day as a family.

Mother hummed or sang often as she went about the house. Leah loved to listen, and, staring out the window, she sang the words. Their voices blended and finished the song together.

The sounds of pots and pans and mixers also meant that Daddy would be arriving soon. When Daddy showed up, David would wake from his afternoon nap, and then Daddy, David, and she would play, roll about on the rug, and talk until it was time for her to help Mother set the table.

Meanwhile, Leah was restless. She felt her left foot falling asleep so she left the window and jumped up and down to get rid of the tingling pins and needles. The tingling gone, she ran to the patio screen door in the dining room and peered into the back yard. She knew it would be raining there too, but at least the scenery was different.

There was another reason.

Twisting so that she could see into the far right corner of the yard, Leah imagined the little house under the oak tree where Sarah had her stall. Sarah was her personal flying unicorn. Leah waved and, in her mind, Sarah answered by tossing her mane and scraping at the ground with a front hoof. It was time for another pretend adventure.

Sarah poked her white horn through the doorway of her little house and shook her head from side to side. When Sarah—a flying unicorn—waggled her long white horn like that, it carried only one message: Sarah wanted to fly. Leah sat on the floor, next to the doorway, and missed being with Sarah.

Leah glanced up at the sky again. The rain had changed to a fine misty drizzle and the clouds to light gray with patches of blue peeping through. A shaft of sunlight cut through the clouds and the patches of blue widened.

Suddenly, the rain stopped. Off in the distance a rainbow formed an arch across the sky. Leah dashed to the kitchen. 'Mommy, mommy,' she said excitedly, tugging at her mother's apron. 'The rain is over. Sarah wants to play and so do I. May I go out to play with her?'

Mother knew, of course, that when Leah and her pretend friend, Sarah, played together, Sarah would often nuzzle Leah. That would be Sarah's invitation to Leah to climb up on to her back and twist her hands into Sarah's white mane. Once that happened, Mother was certain, Sarah would spread her feathered wings and, in Leah's imagination, they would leap to the skies.

Smiling to herself, Mother looked out through the kitchen window at the sky. The clouds were breaking up, but the grass was still wet, the ground soggy, and the trees dripped.

'Daddy will be home soon, Leah,' she said, 'and he'll be looking for big hugs from David and you. Then we'll need to prepare the table for dinner. I'll need your help. You know you have a job to do, don't you?'

'Oh, yes.' Leah's curls bounced as she nodded. 'But I won't be long. Sarah and I have been cooped up all day. The rain has stopped. I want to skip and jump.'

'... and fly.' Mother's eyes twinkled as she stooped, laughed, and smoothed Leah's ruffled hair.

'Well, maybe.' Leah grinned as she hugged her mother.

'I suppose you and Sarah do need some fresh air,' Mother sighed as she rose and looked out the window again. 'Wear your rain boots and red raincoat, and don't go beyond Daniel's back yard, next door. When Daddy comes home he'll call you in.'

'OK.'

Leah rushed to the hall closet and rummaged about among the shoes and boxes on the floor. In the far corner, a round red boot toe stuck out from under a large paper bag. That was one found. Pulling it out, Leah searched nearby for the other. There it was, behind the umbrella. Waving them high, she jump-skipped to the big cushion beneath the picture window, sat, and pulled them on. Mother came in with the red raincoat and helped Leah into it.

Ready.

Dashing to the back yard doorway, Leah jumped the short step to the patio.

'Sarah, Sarah,' she shouted, 'come on. Let's go.'

That was all Sarah needed. She came frisking and prancing out of her little house, raising first one

hoof and then the other as she came close. She nuzzled Leah's shoulder, and then unfolded and stretched her wings so they would be out of the way for climbing aboard. That was the invitation Leah was waiting for.

Taking a tight hold on Sarah's mane, Leah swung her leg across the unicorn's back and she was on. Twisting both her hands into the long silky hair Leah pulled herself forward until she was well out of the way of Sarah's wings.

'All set,' Leah shouted. 'Away we go!'

Sarah trotted to the far end of the yard until she was close to the fence. She faced about and began to run, faster and faster. Suddenly her wings spread wide and with a leap they were in the air.

Up. Up. They spiraled around the old oak tree, rising higher with each loop. From far out, they dipped into a long glide and swooped down under the tree's branches, around and around the swing that grandpa had made for David and her, and up and around again. They flew along the top of the back fence, lifted, and cut across the roof of their house from one end to the other. Twisting about, Sarah hovered above the front yard.

Along the horizon, Leah saw the city of Portland hidden in rain curtains and mists.

Leaning forward, Leah spoke into Sarah's ear. 'Let's fly over to Daniel's back yard and see if he and Herbie the Lion are at home.'

Sarah snorted her understanding. She could talk, but did that only when it was absolutely necessary. She had a soft gentle snort and would rather speak her thoughts that way. It was a lot simpler, and Leah understood.

Curving around toward Daniel's yard, Sarah cleared the top of the fence, swooped, and held steady just above Herbie the Lion's house.

'Herbie,' Leah called out. 'It's Sarah and Leah. We're just flying by today and stopped to say 'hi' to Daniel and you. Come on out.'

Herbie the Lion stuck his shaggy head out of his house, blinked, and opened his jaws in an enormous drowsy yawn. Looking up, he grinned and said, 'Hi, there. Where are you off to?'

'Oh,' replied Leah, 'we're keeping close to home today. Rain, y'know. Also, Daddy will be home soon and I want to be with David to welcome him and roll on the rug and talk. I'll also be helping my mother get ready for dinner.'

'Quite right. Quite right,' Herbie said, shaking his head wisely, 'that is as it should be.'

'Where's Daniel?' Leah asked.

'Daniel and his mother are at the library,' Herbie answered. 'Daniel's books were due to be returned today.'

'I see. Well, Herbie, we must be off. Please tell Daniel we stopped by to say 'hi' and that we'll see him another time.'

'Will do.' Herbie the Lion yawned again and pulled his shaggy head back in.

Sarah's wings fluttered and they rose higher and higher. A moment later they were looking down on Daniel and Leah's homes and all the other houses on their street. Leah saw the glowing signs of the shopping center a few blocks away. The mists and rain curtains still hid the tall buildings of Portland in the distance.

Looking toward the end of their street Leah saw Daddy's car turn the corner.

'Daddy's home. Daddy's home,' Leah shouted. 'Time to head back, Sarah.'

Sarah snorted and dipped into her landing approach. Circling, she lost altitude each time around. Finally, coming in over the fence, Sarah arranged her wings for landing and bent her legs slightly to soften contact with the ground. Leah tightened her grip.

Close to the soft earth near the patio, Sarah's wings beat the air. She hovered for an instant, then lowered until all four hooves touched down. A four-point landing. The flight was over.

Leah slipped off Sarah's smooth back, wrapped her arms around her neck and gave her a tight hug. Sarah's hoof scraped the ground and she gave another of her soft, gentle snorts.

Daddy stuck his head out through the patio doorway.

'Hi, there,' he laughed, 'what's happening.'

'Out and about, Dad, been flying, don'tcha know?' Leah answered. 'Sarah and I just got in from a short flight around the yard and over to Daniel's place.'

'I see,' Daddy said. 'Well, I'm pleased you made it back in time for our before-dinner get-together. David is up. Come on in and we'll roll on the rug and talk for a minute before you help set the table.'

Daddy smiled down at her.

'Leah,' he said. 'Your mother, you and I are also going to have a talk this evening. A meeting; very important. Coming in?'

'Yup, Daddy, just about ready.'

She turned back to Sarah and gently pretend-stroked the unicorn's nose. Turning away, she crossed the patio and stopped at the short step to the dining room. Daddy opened the screen door and bent down. Leah wrapped her arms around his neck. Daddy rose, lifting Leah as he did, and caught her rain boots as they slipped from her feet. He stood them up outside, beside the doorway, to dry. Hugging each other, Daddy and Leah turned back into the house.

Leah hesitated, and glanced back. In her imagination, she saw Sarah fold her wings gracefully along her sides, lower her head and nibble at the soft, green grass. It was also time for Sarah's dinner. *** With dinner behind them, Leah joined Mother in clearing the table. Nesting one plate into another and picking up a few utensils she carried them to the kitchen counter near the dishwasher.

Daddy rose from his chair, went into the kitchen, and dampened a cloth. On his way back to the dining room he winked at Leah as they passed. Leah turned to watch.

Daddy tiptoed behind David's high chair. David, finished with his eating, busily rolled leftover peas round and round his food dish. Without warning, Daddy quickly reached around and with the damp cloth wiped breadcrumbs, mashed peas and potatoes, and smears of chocolate pudding from David's face and from behind his ears.

David howled and twisted away, but Daddy was ready for him. A moment later, his face and hands cleared of food-well, as much as could be expected with only a damp cloth-Daddy hoisted David from his chair and lowered him to the floor.

Looking back over his shoulder as he scampered on hands and knees into the living room, David tangled with a fire engine. He rolled over on his back, looked up at Daddy, and laughed. The laugh stopped Daddy from rushing forward; the tangle had not been hurtful.

Daddy stooped and pushed the fire engine toward David, then joined him on the floor. They put their heads together, and as their hands touched and explored the fire engine they explained to each other how the different parts worked.

Leah, drawn from her work by the sounds of David's tumble, peered into the living room. Seeing all was well, she smiled, and carried another armful of dishes and tableware to the kitchen counter.

'Looks like our men are busy,' she said.

Mother nodded as she spooned leftovers into containers for the refrigerator.

'It's always good to relax after dinner,' she said. 'When we're done here, we'll join them. Then, in a little while, I'll bathe David and put him down. You will take your bath, and then you, Daddy and I will have our meeting.'

'Daddy did say something about a meeting when I came in from the yard,' Leah said. 'What's up?'

'Let's just wait and see,' Mother smiled mysteriously as they loaded the dishwasher. *** Finished with her work, Leah skipped along the hallway that connected her room to the living room. Little brother was down for the night. Leah, bathed, hair washed, blow-dried and brushed, was squeaky clean in her red nightgown.

She squeezed a space for herself on the couch between Mother and Daddy and they eased aside to make room. Daddy put his newspaper aside and Mother placed a card in her book to mark her place.

Glancing up at one, then the other, Leah put on her serious business face.

'Meeting time?'

'Meeting time,' Daddy said.

'What's the problem?' Leah folded her arms across her chest, straightened her legs, and fixed her eyes on the opposite wall to help her concentration.

Family meetings were important. The meetings were still only for the three of them. When David was old enough to share in the family responsibilities, he would join the meetings.

'It's not really a problem,' Daddy said, 'but we're going to have a change in the way we live.'

'A change?' Leah frowned. 'Everything is going fine. I'm satisfied with the way we're living now. Why change?'

Leah turned to stare at Daddy, then shifted about to look at Mother, who smiled at her. Daddy put his arms around Leah and pulled her close. Mother reached over and straightened a wisp of her hair.

'Leah,' Daddy said, 'you may be a child, but you're no longer a baby. You're growing up. Before long, you'll be a young woman. Young women and young men need to learn about the world in which they live. Mothers and fathers, and grandmas and grandpas teach children much about the world and about what is right and what is wrong. That's fine, but knowledge about the world around you also can be given to you from somewhere else. Do you know of another place where a youngster learns about the world?'

'School?' Leah's voice rose.

'School.' Daddy nodded slowly.

'School.' Mother's soft voice repeated.

'I'm going to go to school?' Leah wriggled from Daddy's embrace, slid off the couch, and hop-skipped to the middle of the living room. Whirling to face her grinning parents, Leah bounced with excitement.

Daddy motioned Leah back to her place on the couch.

'Our meeting is not finished,' he said. 'We have more to talk about.'

Leah immediately stopped her bouncing. Meetings, she knew, were not to be interrupted by rude behavior. Climbing back onto the couch, she leaned back, folded her legs under her, and folded her arms again. Only now her eyes were sparkling with excitement. Pressing her lips together tightly, she forced the no-nonsense business look back to her face.

'OK,' she said, 'I'm listening.'

'We'll tell you what to expect, Leah,' Mother said, 'and, afterward, you may ask questions.'

Leah nodded.

'Not far from where we live here in Woodchuckaton,' Mother began, 'is the city of Portland.'

'Right,' Leah cut in. 'We've been to the city lots of times on shopping trips and for sightseeing and for visiting parks and....'

'Leah,' Mother put her hand on Leah's arm. 'Concentrate on what we say. OK?'

Leah looked sideways at her mother and her eyes twinkled. 'You mean no more interruptions. Right?'

'Right.'

'OK, I'm switched to my listener.'

'In Portland, and in all the cities and towns around it, are schools where children go to learn about the world. You're going to be a student in one of those schools. You will attend every day except weekends and holidays. Is that clear to you?'

'Yep.'

'At the school are worktables, books with lots of pictures, playgrounds, games, and many things to do that are fun. Children who are the same age as you will be there too. A grown-up will be in the room with you and the other children to teach and help you to understand all the new things you will do and see.'

Leah was having a problem being a listener.

'I think Leah either wants to say something or ask a question.' Daddy grinned. 'Shall we give her the floor for a moment?'

'Very well,' Mother said.

The questions tumbled out of Leah. 'When will I start? What will I learn about? What's the teacher's name? Will I get new clothes for school? What about....?'

'Wait a minute. Wait a minute.' Daddy laughed. 'Let's take them one at a time. We can answer a few of your questions, and the teacher of your class will answer others.'

Mother turned Leah to face her.

'You start school in three days,' she said. 'They know you are coming, just as they know of the others who will be with you. What you learn will depend on your teachers and on you.'

Suddenly Leah's face drooped.

'What about Sarah?' Her face clouded, and her voice changed to a whisper.

Mother and Daddy glanced at each other. Daddy picked Leah up, placed her on his lap so that they faced each other. Their eyes met.

'Tell me, Leah,' Daddy said as he drew her close and gave her a full all- round hug, 'When we have a change in our lives in which you will be at school every day, where do you think Sarah will be while you are gone?'

'Sarah will always be my friend,' Leah's voice was a whisper as she leaned her head on her Daddy's chest. 'She'll be with me always, wherever I go. Maybe we won't go flying as often as we did before, but I'll always feel her close to me.' Leah raised her head, grinned, and added with a laugh, 'and that will always make me feel good.'

Leah and her Mother and Daddy sat on the couch, talking about the changes that would come with school. There would be a new time to get up in the morning, dressing to go out, packing a school lunch and having a comb and brush kit, and things like that.

Leah listened, and voiced opinions which Mommy and Daddy considered very carefully. The meeting was a sharing.

After a while, Daddy and Leah went to the dining room table and Mother brought cookies and milk. They sat around the table, munched the cookies, sipped the milk, and talked some more.

Leah yawned.

Daddy rose, came around the table where Leah sat, and picked her up. Mother kissed Leah's cheek as her head rested on Daddy's arm.

Daddy carried Leah down the long hallway, passed David's room, and opened the door into her softly lit bedroom. Daddy lowered drowsy Leah to her bed, tucked her in, and kissed her good night.

PART THREE THE PALM TREE STORIES

Realizing that Grandpa does well with stories, Grandchild wants to share in the process. One way for

Grandpa to get the youngster involved is to have him or her suggest settings and names for characters.

Often, negotiations for story and character development, in themselves, become family stories and anecdotes; e.g., how a story came to be, and why and how it developed in this or that fashion. Injecting such background as introduction to a series gives a sense of involvement to the immediate and extended family, and to future generations that might come across a copy in an old trunk or tucked away in an obscure corner.

As the grandpa-grandchild discussions move along, and characters, settings and scenes take on substance, Grandpa or Grandma, whichever is the storyteller, may be transformed into a character in the story. I found a way to handle this, and remain inconspicuous, is to assume the role in the story as listener or recorder of adventures narrated by the leading characters.

In this series, Grandpa and Grandchild set the stage for the storytelling. That being done, Grandpa steps back and takes on the role of listener, rarely injecting himself into the narration. Throughout, Grandchild is aware that Grandpa is close by.

Put Palm Trees in Your Stories

'Grandpa, where are you, Grandpa.'

The call reached me from down the long hallway. The sounds of scuffling slippers grew louder and, a moment later, Granddaughter's curly head peeked around the edge of the kitchen doorway.

'What are you doing, Grandpa?' she asked.

'Coffee,' I replied, peering in her direction over the rim of my glasses.
'Mornin' coffee.'

'Oh,' she said, standing in the doorway.

Her eyes focused on the scene beyond the kitchen window. The broad fronds of palm trees close by outside waved about furiously in the brisk November wind. There are no palm trees in the city where Granddaughter lives, and having arrived late the previous evening she had not seen the ones near our home.

Granddaughter stared. Dashing past me to the window, she placed her hands on the sill, and jumped to see out.

'When you visit us next year,' I said, 'you will be taller, and see over the sill without jumping.'

'I want to see now,' she demanded, reaching up. 'Pick me up, Grandpa.'

With Granddaughter seated on my forearm and her arms wrapped around my neck, we stared through the window. The palm nearest the window bent before a gust and straightened. The fronds of two palms across the driveway thrashed atop long, graceful trunks that leaned, straightened, and yielded again to the boisterous wind.

'Grandpa,' Granddaughter said, turning to look at me, 'tell me a story that has palm trees in it.'

Her eyes gleamed mischievously as she reached up to stroke my liberal expanse of bare dome. She knew I couldn't resist that gesture.

'We've got a busy morning ahead of us, young lady,' I said. 'Here's what I'll do. I'll write a letter to you with a story in it about palm trees. Then Mother or Dad will read it to you and Grandson. OK?'

Granddaughter stared at the three palm trees and their gyrating tops.

'I want more than one story,' she smiled as her hand patted and stroked.

'Hm,' I grandpa-growled, 'you're a hard bargainer, my dear.'

'Gampa, Gampa,' an impatient shout burst down the hallway.

Pajama-clad Grandson tore into the dining room like a tornado and climbed chairs. Too small to notice what was happening outside, he pounded a seat with tiny fists. His mind was on something far more important.

'French Toast, French Toast,' he demanded. 'I want French Toast.'

Now!

Granddaughter twisted from my arms, further talk about stories replaced by this much higher priority.

'Me, too!' she shouted, joining the pounding.

Pots and pans rattled, dishes and bowls clattered, refrigerator doors slammed, and utensils baton-waved in all directions. Grandpa had launched into his traditional and celebrated French Toast Extravaganza that began early each Thanksgiving Day morning. *** Thanksgiving is past. The grandchildren are back home in a distant city. Grandpa has a promise to keep.

Creating a Setting

"Where will the story take place?"

'Where there are palm trees, of course.'

'What kind of palm trees? For example, there are coconut palms, and there are date palms, and there are also banana palms.'

'Grandpa,' impatiently, 'I want them all!'

That's one decision.

'Should I put the palm trees on a steeple on top of a tall skyscraper?'

'Just a minute now, Grandpa, who ever heard of palm trees growing on a steeple on top of a skyscraper? That would be silly. Forget it.'

'How about in the middle of a freeway?'

'C'mon, Grandpa, be serious. A palm tree wouldn't last long in the middle of a freeway. Cars would bump into it all day long. Nope, freeways are out, too.'

'By the sea? By the sea? By the beautiful sea?'

'Hm, that's a possibility.' Long pause. 'OK, let's go with it.'

'Check. Keep in touch. Over and out.'

'Grandpa?'

'Yes?'

'You and Grandma. Love ya.'

A picture began to form. Three palm trees close to each other on a beach. They have thick trunks and huge fronds. One palm tree is a coconut palm, another is a date palm, and the third is a banana palm.

Little waves tumble over each other to the shore, and some distance behind them are rolling waves and a white, churning surf. Beyond the surf is the endless sea. A summer breeze is blowing, raising whitecaps. Two small islands are far out where the sea meets the sky. Add soft, fleecy clouds. The sky, even with the clouds, is empty. Skies and birds go well together. There! Three gulls, flying in from the left, low, skimming the waves.

What's missing? Aha, children! A boy and a girl, about your age. What are their names? That's your job, Granddaughter. Ask Mother which letters to draw on a sheet of paper to spell them out. Put the paper into an envelope, and ask Mother to address the envelope to Grandpa. Don't forget the postage stamp.

The names arrived in this morning's mail. 'Suzanne' and 'Roger' fit our characters well. I see you've named their adventures 'The Palm Tree Stories.' Fine, that's when we'll call them.

Along the Ridge of the Dunes

One adventure is to explore the beach to search for seashells; another is to build sandcastles. Still another is to watch the sea gulls and pelicans dive and fish for food.

Suzanne and Roger enjoy watching the pelicans. They often watch the large, clumsy-looking birds fly low above the water until they see a fish beneath the surface. The pelican slips into a dive, folds its

wings to cut the water cleanly to reduce the shock of hitting, disappears in the spray and rises with the fish in its beak pouch. The bird flies off with the fish to eat it, or to feed it to the baby pelicans. That's a little adventure for Suzanne and Roger.

There are also big adventures. Those happen when Suzanne and Roger and their mom and dad go sailing. Sailing often takes them far out to where the islands meet the sea. There they hike and explore the hills, and at night, sleep in a tent ashore or in bunks on the sailboat. Those are real adventures and we'll be talking about them soon. *** I was thinking of Suzanne and Roger this morning and wondered what they were doing. I pictured them on the beach in the bright sunlight, walking toward where sand dunes had been built up by the wind and waves.

The dunes slope down to the beach, and tall reeds grow on the sides and along its ridges. When the wind blows, the reeds lean far over and rustle.

Birds build nests among the reeds. Sometimes, small animals rush up or down the dunes and through the reeds on their way from here to there, or from there to here. The dunes are among Suzanne's and Roger's favorite places for exploring.

I walked to the beach. Suzanne and Roger were waiting at Three Palms. They had a story for me. Suzanne told the story just as if it was happening right then.

Suzanne's story:

When we get to the beach, we climb to the ridge of a dune. The wind is a gentle breeze and the reeds make a soft, sushing sound.

I see a movement in the reeds.

'Roger, Roger,' I shout. 'Come quick. We have company.'

Roger dashes over. I'm on my knees, separating the reeds with my hands to see better. Roger helps and we see a baby jackrabbit.

We stare at the jackrabbit and don't move. We don't want to frighten the baby jackrabbit and, of course, the baby jackrabbit doesn't want to frighten us.

A rustling sound comes from behind a clump of reeds off to the side, and out jumps a fully grown jackrabbit. It's as big as a cat, but has long, flapping ears and a cotton-ball tail, which cats don't have.

The grown jackrabbit rushes to the baby and, with its mouth, grips the back of the baby's neck and lifts it up. This must be the baby's mother, because that is the way most parent animals carry their young. It doesn't hurt the baby, and the mother does feel better knowing exactly where her baby is.

The adult jackrabbit looks up at us. All this time we are very still. I don't think the jackrabbit is frightened of us, but I suppose she has other things to do and can't just stand around visiting.

After looking us over for a moment or two, the jackrabbit wriggles her ears, turns away, twitches her cotton-ball tail and jackrabbit-jumps into the reeds. She and her baby are on their way from one place to the another. I guess only the jackrabbit really knows where and why.

'I hope they find their way to where they want to go,' Roger says, 'and I hope the baby stays close to it's mother. A baby can get lost among these reeds.'

'The mother jackrabbit knew where to find the baby,' I said. 'She must be pretty smart. Don't you think so?'

'Yes,' Roger agreed, 'she's smart, all right.'

We walked back to the palms and, from there, home.

Gone Sailing

I strolled down to Three Palms and looked about. Suzanne and Roger weren't there.

Maybe they're at the sand dunes looking for the floppy-eared baby jackrabbit and its mother. I walked to the dunes to look for them. They weren't there, either.

Climbing to the top of a sand dune, I looked around. Two big, white clouds drifted across the deep blue sky, pushed by the wind. The wind rustled the high reeds along the ridge, and they sounded like

whispers. A black and white gull flew low above the water, swooped, rose with a fish in its beak, and flapped up and away.

I looked out toward the horizon and saw a sailboat dipping across the waves. It was outward bound toward the islands. It looked like the sailboat that belonged to Suzanne's and Roger's parents. Suzanne and Roger must have decided to go sailing that day, and took their Mom and Dad along for company.

I looked for them each morning for the rest of the week, but they hadn't returned. I supposed they were having a long vacation.

Finally, this morning, when I arrived at Three Palms, Suzanne and Roger were there, waiting for me.

'Hello, Suzanne. Hello, Roger,' I said. 'It's good to see you back. I missed you.'

'Oh, we're glad to be back at Three Palms,' said Suzanne.

'We sure are,' Roger added. 'We had a real fine time sailing and visiting on the island. We hiked in the hills and did other things.'

'Did you have any adventures?' I asked.

'Yes, we did,' said Suzanne. 'Would you like to hear about them?'

'I sure would.'

'We had many adventures,' Suzanne said, 'We couldn't possibly tell them all today. How about my telling one today, and then Roger telling one tomorrow, and then me again the next day, and so on?'

'Sounds reasonable,' I replied.

We sat on the sand under the date palm. I leaned back against the tree. A date fell and bounced off the top of my head.

'I'm glad we didn't sit under the coconut palm,' I said, rubbing my head where the date had struck. We all laughed.

'OK, Suzanne.' I shifted about to get myself comfortable. 'Let's hear about the first adventure.'

'I'm going to tell our adventures just like they're happening right now,' Suzanne said.

'That's fine with me,' I said.

These are the stories told to me by Suzanne and Roger. I'm writing them down using the same words as Suzanne and Roger as we sat on the beach at Three Palms.

Dolphins Alongside

It's a beautiful morning to go sailing, Suzanne began the telling. It's Dad's vacation and we're going to Snug Harbor.

We load Snow White-that's the name of our sailboat, you know-with suitcases and boxes of food. We take our special toys and lots of other things for a long stay. When we are all ready, we cast off.

When we're far enough away from the slip, Dad hoists the sail. The breeze fills the sail and we head out to sea.

Roger and I sit with Dad at the helm to steer and Mother goes below to make sandwiches. We all wear life jackets. That just makes good sense, like wearing seat belts when you're riding in a car.

The sea is gentle and we're moving right along. Roger is looking out to sea as Dad and I talk.

Suddenly Roger shouts and points.

'Look. Dad. Suzanne. Look.'

'Where?' I ask. 'What do you see?'

'There, there,' Roger shouts, and points again. 'Do you see them?'

'See what?' I'm excited, but I don't know what to look for. 'Tell me what you're pointing at, Roger.'

'Dolphins. They're jumping out of the water and diving back in again. There. He points off the bow.

I look again, real hard, and I see what Roger is pointing at. A school of dolphins, leaping.

'Dolphins are mammals', Dad says, 'and different from fish. They're also very intelligent and friendly. Wave at them. Maybe they'll come closer and leap near the Snow White.'

So Roger and I wave at the dolphins and call out to them. 'Come on over,' we shout.

They must hear us because they change direction and jump and dive in our direction. When they're close they turn and swim alongside. Mother comes up and holds on to us as we lean against the rail and wave and call out to them.

The dolphins stay with us most of the way to the island. About a mile offshore they turn away. We're sorry to see them leave. I guess it's time for them to head for home.

'That was our first adventure of the trip. Would you like to hear about another one?'

'Sure would,' I said.

'OK,' said Roger. 'Let's meet here tomorrow, and I'll tell about our sailing into the harbor.'

Snug Harbor

Today was Roger's turn, sailing into Snug Harbor.

Roger spread a map of the island to help follow the stories.

After the dolphins leave, we go forward to Snow White's bow. We watch the shoreline slip by as we near the harbor entrance.

We're sailing east around Singalong Point. The sea is choppy as the breeze picks up.

We go aft to the stern. We're helping Dad and Mother do all the things that are important when a sailboat enters a harbor.

Dad gives Suzanne and me important jobs: the port and starboard watch. Suzanne has the port side and I have starboard. In sailing talk the 'port' side is on the left when you're facing the bow or forward, and 'starboard,' is on the right, also when you're facing forward.

We're in the channel that leads into the harbor, and we'll soon need a place to drop the boat's anchor. 'Dropping anchor' are more sailing words. They mean about the same as setting a car's brakes when the car stops in the driveway and the motor turned off.

Suzanne is watching to port, looking for drifting debris and logs, and to make sure the boat doesn't cut too close to the island. I'm taking care of starboard, watching for the same things, and for traffic heading our way from the open sea.

Mother is standing by to lower the sail when Dad gets Snow White to the mooring. Mooring, used this way is like a parking space. Dad is steering the boat and trying to watch everything.

I see a speck on the horizon. It gets larger fast, coming in our direction.

'Dad,' I shout, 'motor boat. Big.'

'Where away?' Dad shouts back.

'Off the starboard bow,' I yell back and point. Dad and Mother look. Suzanne looks, too, but for only half a second, then she goes right back to her job, which is very important.

'Looks like she's really coming fast,' Mother warns.

'You're right,' Dad says, raising his binoculars to examine the motor boat.

'It's a tour boat from the other islands,' Dad says, 'She'll tie up at Snug Harbor pier. With all those extra people on board this place may get crowded. We'd better get in as quickly as we can and find a good place to pitch our tents.'

Dad tells Mother to keep the sail spread and the lines taut to take as much wind as possible. Soon

we're passing the Snug Harbor pier and wave to a man who is fishing. He waves back.

After our boat passes the pier we're in the sheltered part of the harbor. Mother lowers the sail, and we drop anchor near the shore next to the flagpole. The tourist boat pulls in close behind us and ties up to the pier.

We load our camping supplies into our dinghy and row to the beach. As soon as Suzanne and I step ashore we dash along the trail to the campsites and pick a good site for our tents.

Mother and Dad follow us with the gear. Working together, we pitch the tents, and get our food stored so it will be out of the way of animals. Soon, we're settled for the first night of our vacation.

'Well,' I said when Roger finished. 'That sounds like an exciting start. What happened afterward?'

'Let's meet here tomorrow,' Suzanne said, 'and we'll talk about it.'

Hike

Think back to the last story. Roger finished telling about Snow White's arrival at Snug Harbor and the race to the campsite. They did locate a real cozy campsite and settled in for the night. Now it's Suzanne's turn to tell what happened afterward. Today's story will be in Suzanne's words.

We pitch our tent in an open space just across the trail from where a girl is flying a kite. It's late afternoon by the time we're settled, so Dad makes a campfire and Mother cooks our dinner over the flames. We sit around the campfire and balance our plates on our laps.

After we finish we help Mother and Dad clean our campsite, and get rid of leftovers. The sky is still light, so we take a hike.

Dad leads the way single file along the trail, then Roger, me, and Mother at the end. In that way Roger can watch Dad, just in case he needs help, and I take care of Mother. Well, Dad and Mother do sort of look after us, too. Anyhow, off we go.

Dad heads toward Mount Nokomis, a low hill a short distance from the campsite. We push through tall grass and around bushes and rocks. Soon we're climbing the slope of Mount Nokomis.

I hear a rustling sound behind a bush.

'What's that noise?' I turn to Mother and whisper.

'I really don't know,' Mother says. We look to where the rustling is coming from but can't see anything unusual. Meanwhile, Dad and Roger stop and Mother and I catch up to them. We stand close, the four of us, and look into the bushes.

There it is again. The rustling sound is like leaves and branches gently shaking. We can tell from which clump of bushes the sounds are coming. Dad steps between us and the bushes. Roger and I stand right behind Dad to protect him. Mother is very close.

The rustling is louder. From out behind a bush steps a doe. We relax. Whew!

The doe isn't very big and it's friendly but shy. It looks us over and wiggles its ears in our direction to hear any noises we might make. She also lifts her head to smell the air. Deer have very sensitive noses for smelling danger, and that's what the doe is doing. She's trying to decide if we're also friendly. We stand quietly so as not to alarm her. After a while the doe moves a little way toward us and smells the air again. I guess it's satisfied because it comes close.

Slowly I reach out and touch the doe's fur. She doesn't seem to mind. The fur feels firm and smooth.

After a short while the doe moves away. It really is getting late, you know, and the setting sun changes the day into evening. The doe needs to find a place to spend the night. Wiggling her ears and flipping her tail, she moves off and disappears into the bushes.

We start back to the campsite and make our way along the trail down the side of Mount Nokomis. Soon we're back at camp.

Dad lights a lantern and gets the campfire going. We put sweaters on, sit on logs next to the fire and

sing camping songs. The girl with the guitar joins us, and so do other campers and everyone joins in the singing. The moon and stars shine in the sky and it's very peaceful.

Suzanne and Roger rose, waved to me, and headed for home.

'Don't forget to be here tomorrow,' Roger shouted. 'We had another interesting experience the next day.'

'I'll be here.' I waved back.

Visit with Two Seals

True to their word, Suzanne and Roger arrived at Three Palms the following day. We sat under the banana palm, and Roger told the next story.

This is the day for the hike to Point Nemo, on the other side of the island. It will be an all day trip, so we start early.

Mother packs our knapsacks with sandwiches, cookies, and cans of juice while Dad inspects our hiking gear, like for extra socks, sweaters, towels and things like that. We're ready and off we go. Dad takes the point, then, in line, Suzanne, me, and Mother.

Instead of the trail that winds up and around the top of the island, we head straight across, passing other campsites. We say hello to people camping along the trail.

We stop to listen to a woman strumming a guitar. She is singing 'On top of Ol' Smokey....' We gather round and join in the singing. We wave good-bye and move along.

We see a man with a camera; he is taking photographs of flowers. We stop to watch. We leave him and return to the trail where it opens into a field. We follow the trail across a hill to Point Nemo, and from there to the Point Nemo Lighthouse.

At the lighthouse it's time for lunch. Dad spreads a big checkered cloth on the ground and Mother takes the sandwiches and drinks from our knapsacks. We have lunch, rest, and sing songs. It's time to explore.

Climbing down to the beach near the lighthouse we run to the water's edge. Suzanne and I take our shoes off and race each other through waves that tumble over themselves on their way in. After a while we stop running so that our breath can catch up with us. Standing at the water's edge we shield our eyes with our hands, and look toward Seal Rock.

Brown shapes swim in the sea. They wriggle out of the water on to the narrow strip of sand below the rocks. They're seals. More seals wriggle out of the water. They're brown and of all sizes.

They bark. Have you heard a seal bark? It sounds like they have something stuck in their throats. They really don't, you know. That's just their way of talking to each other.

'Look, Roger, look,' Suzanne calls and points.

A seal is heading toward the beach nearby. Reaching shallow water, the seal raises its head, looks around and sees us. I think it knows we're friendly because it comes up on to the beach. The seal is followed closely by a much smaller seal. It's a mother seal and her cub.

Suzanne and I want to get closer to the two seals, but we know that if we move we might frighten them away. We watch and don't move.

The cub goes to its mother and they play in the sand. Then the mother seal cuddles and nurses the cub. In a little while they head back to the water's edge. The two seals look back at us. I must have imagined it, but for a moment I think I see the cub wave its flipper toward us. Anyhow, I think they know we're their friends.

The seals slip into the water and swim off in the direction of Seal Rock. Soon they disappear among the whitecaps. They've gone home.

Suzanne and I walk back to Mother and Dad sitting on the beach. They were watching, too. Dad talks to us about seals and other animals of the land, the sky, and the sea, and how they and we all fit together on Planet Earth.

We start back to camp. By this time the sun is starting down. It's late

afternoon. There is still light when we arrive at our campsite. Dad lights the campfire and Mother makes supper.

After we've eaten, and clear away the leftovers, we sit around the fire.

Dad tells more stories about sailing and long hikes. Then we sing songs.

We stood, stretched, and walked toward the dunes.

'Any more stories?' I asked.

'Oh, yes,' Suzanne replied. 'The best is yet to come. Telling our adventures is such fun we're going to make it last for a few more days.'

'Tomorrow?'

'Tomorrow.'

Noises in the Night

The next morning we're back under the palms. Suzanne takes up the story.

This is about what happened late the same night we hiked to Point Nemo. As with the other nights, we get into our pjs, brush our teeth and wash our faces. We hug and kiss Mother and Dad and I pick up our flashlight. The tent doesn't have electric lights, so we have an electric lantern that we hang from a hook in one of the wooden rods that hold up the tent.

We take our flashlight along to see by as we get ready for bed. As we move the light around it makes shadows on the tent walls. The shadows jump in all directions, stretch tall and shrink short, first on one wall, then on the other.

Roger waves his arms, jiggles his fingers and twists his body, which makes his shadow twist and shake, too. It's weird and very funny. We laugh at the shadows.

After a while, we stop, crawl into our sleeping bags and zip them up. I reach out and turn off the lantern. A faint glow comes in from under the flaps. Everything is normal, just as it's been since we arrived at Snug Harbor. I guess we fell asleep.

Suddenly, I'm wide-awake. I hear Roger sleep-breathing. That can't be what wakened me. I listen hard. There it is again. The sound is like someone shaking and rustling paper bags. Then another sound, like tin cans rattling. I'm curious.

'This needs to be looked into,' I think.

I unzip my sleeping bag, reach over and tap Roger's sleeping bag.

'Uh,' Roger says sleepily. 'Is it morning already?'

'No, silly,' I whisper. 'Keep your voice down and listen.'

We lie quietly in our sleeping bags. There it is again, soft rustling and scratching sounds and, now and then, rattling.

'What do think it is?' Roger asks, now fully awake.

'I don't know,' I reply. 'Shall we check it out?'

'Let's do it,' he answers.

Very quietly, we slip out of the sleeping bags and crawl to the tent opening. Roger opens the flaps a crack and peeks out. I get above him and look out over his head.

There's just enough moonlight to make out the trees and the nearby tents. We can see Mother and Daddy's tent in front of ours. The sounds are coming from off to one side.

I look down at Roger. His eyes are wide. So are mine, I guess.

'Are you game?' I ask him.

'OK,' Roger says.

I lift the lantern from its hook. I don't switch it on; there's enough moonlight so that we can see well

enough.

Opening the tent flap just enough, we slip out, stoop far over, and tiptoe in the direction of the sounds. We're very quiet and don't even whisper.

Up ahead, among the trees, is where campers bring things they don't want, like empty tin cans and dinner leftovers that can't be saved until the next mealtime. The sounds are coming from that direction.

Soon we're among the trees and near the large plastic containers where the trash is stored. We're close enough to a container to touch it, but of course, we don't.

Roger and I hear loud rattling. We whirl in the direction from where it's coming and I switch on the lantern. Ahead of us are three trash containers, and they're overturned. Paper bags, tin cans, and bits of food cover the ground in all directions. Nosing about among the trash are dozens of small animals, picking at scraps. We make out squirrels, chipmunks, porcupines, woodchucks, and even a rooster and a chicken. They're bleating, yapping, squealing, chirping and clucking as they nibble and peck away at the leftover food.

'It's like a zoo,' Roger laughs.

'It's good that our table scraps aren't wasted,' I say.

'Yes,' Roger adds, 'but it'll sure be a mess for someone to clean up in the morning.'

The animals don't seem to mind our watching. They go right on scrounging and eating.

'Let's go back to the tent,' Roger yawns.

'I suppose we'd better,' I say, 'or we'll be too tired for tomorrow's adventure.'

'Right,' Roger yawns again, 'That's one I don't want to miss.'

Nor do I. I'm really looking forward to it.

Back in our tent, I hang the lantern back on its hook and switch it off. We crawl back into our sleeping bags. Roger yawns again as he snuggles into the softness.

I think of the little animals having a feast among the trees, and feel glad they can get at the food. I slip down so that my head isn't cold, pull up my knees and wrap my arms around myself. I feel cozy. ***
'What happened the next day?' I asked.

'Wait and see,' Roger grinned.

The Little Old Man's Strange Story

When Suzanne and Roger left after the last story they were mysterious about the next one, except that they did tell me to bring along a sandwich. The next morning, when we gathered at Three Palms, we each had a bag with sandwiches, cookies, and a container of milk.

'I took you seriously yesterday,' I said, waving my bag.

'Good that you did,' Suzanne answered as she settled down on to the sand. 'Are you ready?'

'Yes,' I said, 'I'm ready. Which of you will tell this one?'

'We're going to have to share this one.' Roger leaned back as he spoke. 'I'll start.' *** The next morning, bright and early, Suzanne and I have our breakfast and hurry to brush our teeth. We're dressed and anxious to be on our way. When Mother and Dad are ready we head for the trail. We're on our way to visit the Little Old Man on the other side of the island.

This Little Old Man is not just an ordinary old man. He's special. He lives in an old stone hut near the sea cliffs. The house is tiny; only the Little Old Man can get into it, and he does that only to sleep or for shelter on rainy days. The rest of the time he sits outside and children come from all over to sit near him and listen to his stories. That's why we're excited this morning. We want to hear one of the Little Old Man's world-famous stories.

The trail across the island is wide and not too long. We get there in time to join a crowd of children and parents who are walking around or sitting on the ground in a half-circle, waiting.

In the clearing, leaning on a cane, is the Little Old Man. He waves us in to join the others and points

to an empty space nearby. We make our way to where he points and take our places. Mother and Dad sit behind us. I look at the Little Old Man and understand why he is called that.

He is a small man, and, stooping over his cane, he looks small indeed. On his feet he wears leather sandals. His faded blue coveralls have patches on the knees and seat. A wide-brimmed straw hat is tipped back on his head.

He removes his hat to wipe his head with a red handkerchief. His long white hair is tied in a ponytail, and his wrinkled face is tanned to nut brown. Eyes twinkling, he smiles at the audience. I feel good just watching him.

The people who came to hear his story shift about to get comfortable and I do, too. The Little Old Man's voice is deep as he begins.

'When I was young,' he says, 'I was a sailor and traveled to lands in all the far corners of the world. I have been to strange places, and I have seen and talked to strange people. Listen to me about a strange place, and a stranger adventure.'

He stops, stares out to sea, and rubs his chin, deep in thought. His eyes open wide as he looks back at us as his head turns from one side of the seated audience to the other.

'After you've heard my story you'll decide for yourselves what to believe.'

Putting his wide-brimmed hat back on his head, he lowers himself slowly to a large flat rock. He places his cane on the ground beside him and crosses his legs just as I often do when I watch television. Everyone's eyes are on him; it's very quiet.

'Come with me to long ago and far away,' he begins in his deep voice. 'We're on a gallant, full-rigged sailing ship crossing a wild and stormy sea. After many weeks, we drop anchor in the cove of a mist-shrouded shore where high waves break against gray rocks. The rocks are huge, black, and jagged, and they line the shoreline as far as I can see in either direction. Beyond the beach is a dark forest.'

'We leave the ship in the care of my First Mate and swim ashore. Climbing over the rocks, we dash across the beach into the forest. It is not only a dark forest; it is a dense and drippy-wet forest.'

'We cut our way through heavy underbrush for many hours and finally come to a high mountain. Fierce winds roar down the mountain slopes, and swirling mists twist and churn in streamers across the mountain's slopes.'

'We climb and we climb, until we reach a pass close to the peak. Now we must lower ourselves by ropes along a steep cliff. The base of the cliff is hidden by a blinding snowstorm. Reaching the bottom, we are in a deep gorge. The snow and the winds disappear, but there are other dangers ahead.'

'We string a rope bridge across a wide, swift river. On the other side rise dense and wet forests of twisted trees and dripping, slime-covered vines.'

'Tree branches and sharp thorns brush against us from both sides as we push our way through. They scratch our faces and arms. Above us the leaves are packed so close together that we cannot see the sky. The mud is soft and squishy under our feet.'

'We're tired, but we can't stop to rest. We must reach our destination as fast as we can. There is no time to lose. We must rescue our Princess from the Trolls!'

'Now you know who we are. You and I are rescuers. We have sailed across stormy seas, climbed steep mountains, crossed deep and swift rivers, and now we are making our way through this strange forest for one reason only: to free our Princess from Trolls.'

'Our mission is to return our Princess to our King and Queen who are our Princess's mother and father. They love her and miss her. The Trolls were wrong to take the Princess away from the castle that is her home, and they have no right to keep her.'

'So here we are, slithering and stumbling through squishy mud in the deep, thorny, drippy forest searching for the caves of the Trolls.'

'From far off in the distance we hear heavy rumbling. We're close.'

'Up ahead is an open space filled with huge boulders. We know that the Trolls for whom we're searching make their homes in caves hidden among such boulders.'

'We move slowly and silently. We must not be caught. Luckily for us, we arrive while it's still daylight. Had we arrived during darkness, the Trolls would have been up and about. You see, these Trolls are awake at night and sleep all day.

'We tiptoe around a huge boulder. Facing us is the darkened opening of a cave. From inside we hear the sound of a Troll-snoring; that was the rumbling. Did you ever hear a troll snore?

'The snoring of one troll-I mean just one troll-sounds like ten locomotives, all working together, pulling long trains up a steep hill. Ga- a-roar and chlupp, over and over, and then a real heavy phytt-phytt, followed by a high whistling cha-leep.

'We're there, all right. We have reached the caves of the Trolls. Now we must find the Princess.

'Crawling on our hands and knees, looking in all directions, we make our way to the cave from which the snoring comes. Peering in, we see the troll in the half-darkness of the far side, sound asleep. His lips flap as he snores.

'The troll looks almost human, except for two horns that rise from his shaggy head, bristly-wire whiskers, bumpy nose, long pointed ears and no teeth. He looks interesting, but we didn't come all this way to stare at Trolls. We have a job to do.

'We do not see the Princess. We move on. Quietly, not to waken the Trolls, we slip among the boulders, peering into one cave after another. The Trolls are all asleep-that's what we think.

N O S U C H L U C K !

'A pattering noise from behind us. It's different from a troll's snore. Slowly we turn. We see no one. There it is again. Step by step, we move toward the noise. It's coming from the other side of a pile of rocks and boulders.

'Climbing close to the top of the rock pile, we peek through a space into a clearing. There, right there, in the center of the clearing, is the Princess. When we see her, and what she's doing, we know why the Trolls took her away from the castle.

'The Princess is baking bread! That's right, BREAD! Surprised, aren't you? Well, that's what she's doing, and there's no doubt about it. What does that have to do with her being taken by the Trolls? Listen, and I will tell you.

'Our Princess is famous, far and wide, for the delicious bread she bakes. When she's at home and getting ready to bake, people come from throughout the land to sit nearby and enjoy the sight of her at work and the aroma of rising dough. They especially enjoy the smell that spreads throughout the palace and across the fields when her bread and rolls are in the oven. That's not all, there's another reason why people travel to the palace at the Princess's baking time.

'Always, when the bread and rolls are baked, the Princess gives most of them away to the people. The people love the Princess because she loves them, and because she gives them bread and rolls.

'The Trolls must have heard about how well the Princess bakes. They, too, love bread and rolls, but they do not know how to bake. What's more, they're too lazy to even try to learn. The only way they can get bread is to have someone else do the baking for them.

'They also have no teeth and can only eat soft, fresh bread. That's why they took the Princess. They want her to bake soft bread and rolls for them each and every day. That's why they have her and want to keep her.

'And that's why we're here. We've come to this strange and distant land to rescue our Princess from a tribe of bread-and-rolls-loving Trolls who are so lazy they would not even bake the bread they need to feed themselves.

'The Princess doesn't see us. She's working hard, mixing and kneading dough, shaping loaves and braiding rolls, placing loaves and rolls on huge trays, and then sliding the trays into an enormous baking oven. She stops every few minutes to shovel coal into the furnace under the oven to keep it hot, and doing all sorts of other baking jobs. She hasn't time to look around.

'To add to our problem, a troll is watching the princess to make certain that she works every minute and does not try to escape.

'We see the troll guard watching the Princess. He leans against a rock and his back is toward us. The

hair on his shaggy head sticks straight up. A big club is beside him. He's our problem.

'Carefully and silently, we climb over one boulder after another until we're above and behind the guard. All-round are sounds of Trolls snoring, and the ga-a-roaring, phytting, chlupping and cha-leeping are so loud that the noise we make climbing down to the ground is not noticed, we hope.

'We're on the ground, sneaking up behind the troll. The Princess sees us. She looks surprised, but knowing who we are and why we're there, she acts as if she doesn't know and keeps working. The troll didn't notice the sudden look of surprise on her face.

'We're only a short distance from the troll. I step on a twig. The twig breaks with a loud 'snap'. The troll whirls around, sees us, and snatches up his club. He screeches, spreading the alarm.

'He sounds like a donkey braying. 'Help! Help!' he screams, and it comes out sounding to us like 'Hee haw! Hee haw!' It really doesn't make any difference how it sounds, we're in trouble.

'There's not a second to lose. We attack; you from one side, I from the other. The troll doesn't know which of us will strike at him first. He turns first one way, then the other. He is confused.

'You dodge in. The troll faces you and lifts his club. I rush up behind him, and as the club swings back over his shoulder I grab it and pull it from his hands.

'Not having anything to hit us with, the troll backs away. We don't want to hurt him, so we let him go.

'You dash to the Princess. She hugs you, then points to a space between two boulders. 'I know a way,' she whispers. 'Follow me.'

'We squeeze between the boulders and see a narrow, twisty trail. 'This is the way,' cries the Princess. 'We must follow the narrow, twisty trail. It will take us past the boulders to the edge of the enchanted, tangled forest. The Trolls are afraid of the enchanted, tangled forest, and we'll be safe from them there.'

'We race along the narrow, twisty trail, around a boulder one way, then around another boulder the other way. We wiggle, wriggle, wind, and even zigzag. The trail is as twisty as a corkscrew. The Trolls know where we're heading, and they try to head us off.

'We're almost out of breath. 'Only a little way to go now,' the Princess gasps. Two more zigs, three zags, a twist and a wriggle and we're at the edge of the enchanted, tangled forest. We look back. The Trolls have stopped. They know they must not approach closer to the enchanted forest.

'The Princess waves good-bye. 'It was wrong for you to take me away from my mother and father,' she calls across to them. 'I want to go back to them and to all my friends and neighbors. Now you must learn to bake bread and rolls for yourselves.'

'The Trolls look very sad as they wave back. We turn and walk into the enchanted, tangled forest.'

The Little Old Man picks up his cane, slowly stands, and smiles at us.

'Our perilous crossing of the enchanted, tangled forest is the next part of the story,' he says. 'Everyone rise and stretch. Stamp your feet and swing your arms.' He points to a drinking fountain. 'Have a drink of water if you wish. Then, let's gather again in a little while and I'll tell what happened to us along the narrow, twisty trail that cut through the enchanted, tangled forest.'

The Same Tale: And then...

The first part ended with the Little Old Man telling us all to stand and stretch. That's what we, at Three Palms, did too. As we ate half our sandwich, Suzanne went on with the story. *** The Little Old Man continues.

'Here we are now,' he says as his eyes move from one side of the half-circle to the other. 'The Princess, you and I have just stepped across the magic line into the enchanted, tangled forest. We have escaped from the Trolls. We must find our way back to the cove where our ship is anchored. From there we will sail across the stormy seas, heading for home. Our Princess will be back with her mother and father who love her and miss her very much.

'But first, we must make our way to the other side of this enchanted, tangled forest.

'The Trolls tell strange tales about this forest,' the Princess whispers.

'She stares about at the thorny, dripping vines.

'The Trolls say there are THINGS in this forest. I hope we can get through to the other side without seeing them.'

'We cannot delay; we must move on. Up ahead the trail twists among the trees and disappears under thick vines. We start along the trail. I lead the way, then the Princess, and you in the rear to guard us from behind. We force our way through the heavy vines and underbrush.

'After walking for a long time we stop and listen. There are no noises in the forest. No sounds of birds singing, or insects buzzing, or leaves rustling, or breezes blowing; nothing but silence. It is the enchantment. We try to walk fast, but we must be careful.

'The narrow, twisty trail leads us up one slope and down another. The leaves on the trees are so wide and densely packed that we are in deep shadow. The sharp thorns on the slimy vines that hang from tree branches claw at us, but we push them aside.

'Up ahead is an enormous tree with heavy branches stretched across the trail. It blocks our way. The trunk of the tree, off to the side, is very thick, and its branches and roots spread in all directions.

'We must get through the tangle of the tree's branches or roots, and find our way again on the other side. We search for a trail around the tree. The closely packed branches, roots, and steep rocks on both sides of the trail are too dense to push through.

'Standing next to a branch across the trail I reach out to climb across the tangle. The Princess and you are close behind.

'As I touch the branch, it draws back and away from my hand.

'What is this? A tree branch that pulls back and away when it is touched? Impossible! I reach for it again. It pulls away. The Princess, you and I stare at it, astonished.

'An enchanted tree,' the Princess says. 'We must talk to it, and trust it to understand.'

'OK.' I shrug and step back.

'The Princess turns to the tree. 'Tree,' she says softly, 'I am the Princess.'

'A rustling sound comes from the tree, and the sounds form into words.

'I am Omar the Oak,' the rustling words come slowly. 'What are you doing in the enchanted, tangled forest? It is forbidden to ordinary humans.'

'We are strangers in this enchanted, tangled forest,' says the Princess. 'My friends, here beside me, have just rescued me from the Trolls who live in the caves, and now we are trying to get through to our ship in the cove. My mother and father are waiting for me at home. They love me and I love them, and we miss each other very much. Please let us pass?'

'The fallen tree is very still; not a branch stirs, not a twig twitches, not a leaf flutters. Is the tree thinking?'

'After a long while, slowly, very slowly, a leaf moves, a twig bends, and a branch curves toward us. The branch stops near the Princess's hand. She reaches out and gently touches it.

'More leaves move and soon thousands are fluttering. The branches untangle and a way opens for us. Branches curve around to form a ladder and we climb up and over the branches that are too thick to bend. The branches on the other side bend and open to let us to pass. We reach the ground near the trail.

'We turn back to Omar the Oak. The tree's leaves flutter, its twigs twitch, and its branches wave slowly. We wave.

'Thank you, Omar,' says the Princess. 'Thank you for helping us across. We will never forget your kindness.'

'The rustling of the leaves becomes louder, and form words. 'Good-bye, good-bye,' says Omar the Oak. 'I wish you well. Be warned. You must prove that you deserve to leave this enchanted, tangled forest. Be warned! You must deserve!'

'How must I show that I deserve to leave this enchanted forest?' The Princess asks Omar the Oak. 'To

whom must I prove it? What must I do to 'deserve'?

'The rustling gets louder, and we hear again, 'You must deserve to make your way out of this enchanted, tangled forest. Be ready.' The rustling is very loud. 'Be ready,' the words repeat and fade away.

"What do you mean, Omar?' the Princess repeats her question, 'what has 'deserve' to do with our leaving the forest?'

'But the tree is silent. The leaves stop rustling, the twigs stop twitching, and the branches no longer wave. Omar, the enchanted oak, will say no more.

'We turn away from the friendly, but mysterious tree and move on along the narrow, twisty trail.

'The trail gets narrower still, and the leaves in the trees pack so close we hardly see our way. We trip over roots curling out from the squishy ground, and our clothes are snagged by the sharp thorns of slimy vines hanging from trees. The deep silence of the enchanted, tangled forest is all about us.

'Ahead, the trail takes a steep drop into a hollow with huge gray rocks on each side. The rocks are shiny with wet, green moss. We slip and slide about as we try to make our way down and across to where the trail curves up again to drier ground.

'But wait. We cannot make our way through this rocky hollow. The trail is blocked. Yes, blocked, and I mean really blocked. There, in front of us, completely across the narrow, twisty trail with its huge wet, slimy rocks on each side, stretches a huge, glittering, lacy-braided, closely woven spider's web.

'That isn't all. In the center of the huge web, waiting for us, is the Spider. Oh, the size of that spider! Enormous! Its legs are long and bent, and covered with jagged spikes at the ends of which are curved, red pincers. The spider's eyes, big as dinner plates, glare at us.

"We must fight that spider,' I say, 'or we won't get through.'

"No,' the Princess says. 'This is an enchanted forest, and the creatures that live in it are also enchanted. Let me try.'

'The Princess walks close to the web. She's so close that the spider can reach out and grab her with its curved, sharply pointed pincers. If the spider grabs her, it will not be a pleasant hug at all for our Princess.

'The spider doesn't move. The huge eyes glare at her.

'I am the Princess....' she starts to say.

'I am Cyril the Spider,' the spider interrupts and its voice is like a saw cutting through wood. 'What are you doing in the enchanted, tangled forest. Ordinary humans are not allowed here.'

'The Princess speaks; her tone is polite.

'Pointing to you and me, she says, 'these are my friends who came from far away to rescue me from the Trolls who live in the boulder caves. We must make our way through this enchanted, tangled forest to our ship in the cove. From there we will sail across the stormy seas to my home where my mother and father are waiting for me. They love me and I love them, and we miss each other. I want very much to go home. Please let us pass?'

'Cyril the Spider stares at the Princess, then at you and me. Cyril is thinking.

'Very well,' Cyril says, his buzz softening. 'I will let you pass.'

'The huge spider stretches one of its long legs to the bottom of the web and draws it up. The web's strands pull apart until there is just enough room for us to pass in single file. The Princess goes first, you and I follow. As I pass through the web, it closes behind me.

'The Princess turns back to the spider.

'Thank you, Cyril,' she says. 'You're very kind to let us through your web. I will never forget your kindness.'

'Good-bye, good-bye.' Cyril's buzz has softened to a hum. 'I wish you well.'

'Cyril's voice changes to a rasp. 'Be warned,' the Spider says, 'soon you must prove that you deserve

to leave this enchanted, tangled forest. You must deserve!'

'There it is again,' the Princess says, her voice now exasperated. 'I'm warned again about deserving to leave this enchanted, tangled forest, and that I must be ready. What does that mean, Cyril?'

'But Cyril doesn't answer. He is watching the trail again. We're now behind his web and Cyril will say no more.

'We turn away from Cyril and move on along the twisty trail. It leaves the narrow space between the high rocks. Once again we are in the deep shade of closely packed leaves, fighting our way through drippy, thorny vines and thick underbrush.

'We walk for hours. Ahead, we see a steep hill. The trail zig zags up the hill, and disappears into a dark tunnel.

'We stop. We must follow the trail through the dark tunnel if we want to reach the cove where our gallant ship waits.'

The Little Old Man stops. He looks round at the waiting faces. 'Would you like to hear what happens when the Princess and her friends enter the tunnel?'

'Yes, yes,' we all shout.

'Very well. It's time for another stretch so let's all rise and move about a bit. When you're ready, take your place and I'll finish the story.'

Still the Same Story: What a Finish!

Suzanne and Roger raced toward where I waited under the date palm.

'How far did you run?' I asked.

'Dunes,' gasped Roger, leaning against the trunk of the banana palm.

'...and back,' added Suzanne, running in place as she spoke.

'Ready for the last part of the story?' Roger's gasping slowed to regular breathing.

'Whenever you are,' I answered.

Suzanne stopped running in place and flopped down onto the sand next to her brother.

'Your turn,' Suzanne pointed at Roger as she leaned against the tree. 'I'll rest and listen.' *** 'OK, everyone,' the Little Old Man calls out. 'Jump up and down a few more times and then gather round and take your places. The sun is starting its downward journey into evening. We'll finish in time so you can hike back to your campsites and have your dinners.

He sits slowly, and places his cane beside him. He looks around.

We're all in our places and quiet, waiting for him to go on with the story. *** 'We left the Princess, you and me in the enchanted, tangled forest. We've passed through the web of Cyril the Spider and are now back on the narrow, twisty trail. Up ahead is the steep hill. Near the top of the hill the narrow, twisty trail disappears into a tunnel.

'We climb the slope to the tunnel's entrance. We look in, but can't see beyond a few feet. It's really dark in there.

'We have no choice,' the Princess says. 'We must pass through the tunnel to the other side so that we can get to our ship.'

'We search the ground under the trees for fallen branches. There are many to choose from. We make clubs and torches. I light the tips of the torches with my trusty fire-matches.

'Into the tunnel we go. It's wet and cold and damp. Under our feet the mud is squishy. As we round a bend the light from the tunnel's opening behind us disappears. It's dark ahead of us and dark behind us. We step carefully, our torches lighting the way.

'We walk for more than an hour. The end of the tunnel is still not in sight. Our torches are getting short. We didn't expect the tunnel would be this long, and we're wondering if we'll ever make it to the other end.

'Up ahead is a dim glow. We walk faster. Maybe it's the end of the tunnel.

'The light gets brighter. It's coming from around the next bend. We're especially careful now, and as we come to the bend we lean over to peer around and beyond.

'A piercing shriek cuts the air behind us.

"We gotcha!' a voice roars.

'We whirl around, staring into the darkness, ready to fight. We see nothing at first. After a moment, we make out tiny gleams, in pairs and close together. Eyes-many eyes-staring at us.

"Oh no, you haven't got us,' I shout. The Princess, you and I stand close.
'Come on,' I whisper, 'let's make a run for it.'

'We turn and dash around the bend. We stop in surprise.

'The tunnel ahead of us opens into an enormous cavern. Lighted torches along the walls cast shadows in all directions. The center of the cavern is taken up by a huge black box, and next to it, staring at us are-now, be ready for this. Are you ready? Elves! Elves, I say! Yes, Elves!

"Oh, no,' cries the Princess, 'we escaped from Trolls, and now we're among the Elves. Not again!'

'We whirl back to the narrow tunnel. We must escape. From the tunnel rush more Elves. They're the ones who sneaked up on us and shrieked 'We gotcha.' My goodness, they sure gotcha'd us. We're surrounded!

'Standing back to back, we raise our clubs, ready to protect ourselves against attack. I must say, though, Elves are not at all like Trolls. These Elves don't look fierce, as Trolls do, nor do they look like they would really want to fight with us, or with anyone.

'Out of the crowd near the black box steps an old, old Elf. Stooped over, he leans on a cane. Slowly, he comes closer, peering at the Princess through tiny eyeglasses perched on the tip of his nose. He points his cane at her.

'Who are you?' he wheezes.

'I am the Princess,' replies the Princess and points to you and me. 'These are my friends,' she says, 'who have come to take me back to the King and the Queen who are my father and mother who love me very much and whom I love very much. We miss each other and I want to return home so I can be with them. The narrow, twisty trail to the cove where our gallant ship is waiting led us into this tunnel. We have no choice but to follow it. Please let us pass.'

'The ancient Elf has not taken his eyes from the Princess.

'Do you bake?' he wheezes.

'Do I bake?' cries the Princess. 'What do you mean by that? Are you going to bake me?'

'The Princess, you and I raise our clubs. No one is going to bake our Princess. No siree, not if we can stop it.

'There is a long silence. The ancient, stooped Elf stares at each of us. We stare back at him. The crowd of Elves closes around us.

'The old, old Elf smiles.

'I don't mean, do YOU bake, but only do you bake? No, that doesn't sound right, does it? Can you bake? Can you bake bread and rolls? There, that's better.'

'Huh,' I say.

'Huh,' you say.

'The Princess looks puzzled. 'What do you mean? Can I bake bread and rolls? Why do you ask?'

'Everything changes. Instead of being ready to fight for our lives, we're talking about baking bread and rolls. I mean: baking stuff! Now really! How about that, all you boys and girls sitting here round and about? How about that, all you Moms and Dads and Grandparents sitting alongside your children?

'Well, we are really astonished, and although we're relieved, we're still very suspicious. We keep our

clubs ready.

'The Princess looks at me. I look at her. She looks at you. You look at her. You and I look at each other.'

'The Princess's face breaks into a gentle smile as she says to us, 'I think these Elves will not hurt us. I'll speak with this little old man and try get his help.'

'We lower our clubs, but hold on to them, just in case we do need to defend ourselves.'

"Yes, I can bake bread and rolls,' the Princess says, turning back to the little old man.

'Whispering sounds chase each other among the Elves crowding close.'

'She says she can bake bread.'

'Do you think she really can?'

'Well, she says she can.'

'...and rolls?'

'Yes, and rolls.'

'She can, really?'

'From someone in back, 'I'm willing to believe her. I'll say, yes, she can.'

'The Elves chant, 'She can. She can. Oh, yes, oh, yes, she can. The Princess can bake bread and rolls. Oh, joy, oh joy! The lovely Princess can bake bread and rolls. Beautiful bread and rolls. We are saved.'

'They dance. Round and round they go. Holding up colored cloths they form first a line, and then a circle, then many smaller circles, and circles inside of circles. They dance and they dance and they laugh and they sing.'

'The ancient Elf leans heavily on his cane. He looks very worn and tired.'

'Please,' he says. 'Our baker is very, very old, just as I am, and now he is also very sick. He is too weak to bake any longer or to tell us how to do the baking ourselves. So we have neither bread nor rolls. Please bake some bread and rolls. Then, lovely Princess, teach us how to bake. In that way you will save us from hunger.'

'The ancient Elf points to the big black oven.'

'We have a good oven, but we don't know how to prepare it for baking. Show us how to heat the oven for baking. When we are no longer hungry, we will help you. We will have the strength to guide you to the cove, and to help you to get to your gallant ship. Then you will depart across the stormy seas to the King and Queen, who are your father and mother who love you and miss you very much.' *** The Little Old Man stops talking. He pulls his big red checkered handkerchief out of his pocket and wipes away a tear.

'Well, boys and girls and mothers and fathers,' he says, 'you can imagine what happens after that. The Princess shows the Elves how to prepare the oven, and she has them bring flour and water and yeast and salt. She shows them how to mix and knead the dough.'

'After the dough has risen, the Princess shows the Elves how to roll it out and shape it into loaves and rolls. Everyone is busy. The Elves place the loaves and rolls on baking trays and pans. They lift the trays and pans over their heads and form a line from where they made the dough to the oven's door.'

'The Princess stands beside the oven as the Elves follow her instructions and slide the trays and pans inside. The oven is enormous, and there is room for all the trays and pans.'

'We sit in a half-circle in front of the oven, waiting. Soon, the cavern fills with the aroma of baking bread. Everyone, the Princess, all the Elves, and you and I, breathe in the warm soft fragrance that always comes from well-prepared bread and rolls baking in an oven.'

'When the Princess thinks enough time has passed, she says, 'It is time to take the trays and pans from the oven.'

'The Princess opens the oven door. A gasp and a shout rise from the Elves standing on their toes and stretching to see. Before them are dozens of loaves of bread and hundreds of rolls, all baked to a

glorious golden brown. It is a beautiful sight.

'Using long-handled scoops, the Elves draw the bread and rolls from the oven and set them aside to cool. While the bread and rolls are cooling, the Princess tells the Elves again how the dough should be prepared, and how the oven made ready for baking.

'When the Princess is satisfied that her instructions are understood, she says,

'Now, as all good people do, let us eat bread together.'

'We all stand silently, looking at the bread. The ancient Elf rises from where he sits and, leaning on his cane, walks slowly to where the bread is cooling. He places his hand on a loaf and looks at it for a long time, speaking very softly.

'He pinches off a piece of bread from the loaf and from that piece pinches off another. Leaning on his cane, he walks slowly to where the Princess stands, watching him, and gives to her the pinch of bread.

'We were in need,' he says, 'and you helped us. By helping those in need you have shown us that you, too, deserve to be helped.'

'You and I nod in understanding. The meaning behind the words of Omar the Oak and Cyril the Spider are now clear.

'The ancient Elf points to a tunnel opening in the cavern's wall. 'From here the tunnel has many branches, and many have turns that lead deeper and deeper into the enchanted, tangled forest. By yourselves, you would have lost your way. We will guide you through the tunnel to the cove where your ship waits.'

'The Princess and the ancient Elf silently eat the bread they hold in their hands.

'The other Elves crowd around and thank us for showing them how to bake bread and rolls. They wish us well on our journey home.

'We wave good-bye, and with ten stalwart Elves carrying lighted torches to lead the way, we walk along the tunnel. After many turns into branch tunnels and an hour of climbing ladders and stairways we are out again into daylight. We see the cove. A lively offshore breeze is blowing.

'The Elves drag a boat from among nearby reeds. We take seats in the boat and our escorts row us out to our ship. We climb aboard, and wave farewell.

'I turn away and shout to my crew, 'Hoist the sails.'

'The sails rise, catch the offshore breeze and fill out. Our gallant ship turns gently and moves gracefully out of the cove. We are on our way home.' *** The Little Old Man slowly stands. He is stooped, and leans on his cane with both hands. He looks tired and a little sad.

'That is the end of the story,' he says. 'I recall that the voyage across the sea was stormy, but we did reach the other shore safely. The Princess was happy to be back with her mother and father, whom she loved and who loved her and they had indeed missed each other very much.

'For many years afterward the Princess enjoyed baking bread and rolls for her father and mother and for friends who came to visit. In time, she married, and baked for her family. Every day, before dinner, she and her children carried baskets of bread and rolls and other foods from the castle and gave them to her people. The people all loved the Princess as much as she loved them.' *** The Little Old Man slowly straightens and waves his cane at us. We all stand.

'Good-bye, good-bye,' he says. 'The sun is low in the sky. It is time for you to return to your campsites. I will see you all again another time, and we'll all go on another voyage across stormy seas to strange lands and strange people, and even stranger Things. Good-bye, good-bye. I wish you well.'

The Little Old Man turns and, leaning heavily on his cane, goes into his tiny hut and closes the door. The story of the Princess's escape from a land of enchantment has ended. *** We hike back to our campsite. It is late evening when we arrive. We have a quick supper and slip into our sleeping bags.

'This was really a good vacation,' I say to Suzanne. 'Tomorrow morning we'll sail back to our home at Three Palms. I'm glad we're going home, because next week we start school.

Suzanne is sound asleep. *** And so these stories of Suzanne and Roger at Three Palms are finished. We stand and stretch. A gull swoops in from the sea, lands, and pecks about among strands of seaweed that had washed on to the shore. It is late afternoon.

Leaving the beach we head for our homes. At the top of a low rise we stop to look back. There, against the background of blue ocean and darkening sky the fronds of our three palms wave gently in a soft and gentle breeze.

PART FOUR REACH FOR THE STARS, GRANDPA!

Grandparents, and older adults generally, are excellent sources for stories and activities that fascinate children. Plotting, writing and then rehashing such stories can be as much fun for grandma and grandpa, as for the grandkids who hear or read them. In years to come, the young grandchildren of today will read to their own grandchildren the stories that their grandparents wrote for them. The process enhances a family's sense of continuity and cohesion, especially in circumstances where the family is dispersed.

Reviewing how a story came to be may refresh memories of childhood to the generation in the middle as well to the elders and, in time, to the young as they mature. Here is a model with which to experiment. Except for some moderate editing for continuity, the dialogue immediately following is pretty much as it happened.

(Grandma said) 'Mike, answer the phone. I'm busy.'

(Grandpa grumbled) 'It's probably for you.'

'Well, then, take the message.'

(Mumble, mumble) 'Hello.'

'Hi, Grandpa!'

'Yo, ho, ho! Looka what I got, and it isn't even my birthday! My too-faraway grandchild! How goes...?'

'I want another story, Grandpa.'

'Huh? What's this 'another' story bit all of a sudden?'

'A space story, Grandpa, write me a space story.'

'Space? What do I know about space? Where in space?'

'Far out.'

'How far? Space is humungous.'

'Tell me about it. I watch TV cartoons too.'

'Well then, as one expert to another, this calls for a telephone story conference.'

The next ten minutes consisted of an in-depth give-and-take during which grandchild enlightened me about our Sun and its family of planets. Together, we counted off and named the planets from Mercury on out, guessed at the number of moons orbiting each, and which of the outer planets had rings '...that look like flattened hula hoops.' It wasn't long before I was frantically leafing through the encyclopedia I hauled out to the dining room table as we talked. After all, to this (then) six-year old, I was 'grandpa', and grandpa, to a six-year old, knows, doesn't he? Finally, I succumbed to Grandchild's demands.

'OK. I'll write a story, but first I got questions. Holler Mom to the extension phone. Tell her to bring notepaper and a pencil.'

'Hi, Dad, what's happenin'.'

'Don't ask me, ask my grandchild; she gave me the job. But I wasn't born yesterday, ol' gramps is switching this around to a family project, so are you ready, I hope. OK? Write this down and call me back with the answers. I need a boy character and a girl character. Give them names. Next, where do they live? Just 'in space' ain't enough. Where in space? On the moon? On Mars along with that double-jointed six-wheeler we sent up a few years ago there to sniff around in potholes and climb over rocks? Where?'

'Maybe the characters live on one of the Asteroids? How about one of Jupiter's dozen or so moons? How about putting them on a pebble or a grain of sand that whirls along somewhere in an outer ring of Saturn? Or you folks have a family story conference and make up your own answers. OK?'

An anguished moan 'Oh, no!' from the other end of the line. Grandchild phoned back later.

'The girl's name is Stobey and she is a space worm, and the boy is Slutter and he's a slime.'

'Oh, my! Stobey the Space Worm and Slutter the Slime. That's a fine pair of characters you're giving me to work with. What else did you come up with?'

'Mom says for you to use your own imagination and not to bother her.'

'Hmmm, I'm being abandoned in deep space. OK, how about Stobey and Slutter in a story about a space bagel?'

'C'mon, you're kiddin'; but it's your problem, Gramps! Carry on!'

And that led to the story about':

A Bagel? In Space?

Stobey the Space Worm is a girl, and she and her friend Slutter the Slime, a boy, live on farms next to each other. The farms are on Planet Mars.

One morning, after breakfast, Stobey runs to Slutter's house and they race each other to their spaceships. Stobey's spaceship is squishy and is named Cream Cheese; Slutter's spaceship is as slimy as he and has the well-deserved name Lox.

Spaceship Lox is named after a kind of smoked fish that was taken along by the first expedition of colonists to Planet Mars from Planet Earth. It's a real slippery fish, even after it's smoked.

Stobey climbs aboard Cream Cheese and Slutter slides into Lox. They take off and head for a landing strip on the slope of a mountain on Phobos, one of Planet Mars' moons.

They land their spaceships on Phobos and explore the mountaintop. They come to a wide, deep hole near the center of the peak. Next to the wide, deep hole they see a sign. On the sign is printed 'The name of this mountain is 'Bagel.'

'Just imagine,' Stobey laughs. 'We flew to the moon on Cream Cheese and Lox, and where did we land? On a bagel!'

It begins to rain. The rainwater on Phobos is white. The reason the milk is white is that on the moons of Mars it always rains milk-real milk. There is a legend in the Planet Mars community that the milk-rain on Phobos really comes from the Cow That Jumped Over the Moon.

Stobey and Slutter take drinking cups from their lunch boxes and hold them up. The cups fill with milk.

'Hm,' says Slutter. 'Here we are, with Cream Cheese and Lox on Bagel, having cups of milk.'

Stobey and Slutter look at each other and giggle. The giggles turn to laughs. My, how they laugh. They explore Bagel Mountain for a while, then walk back to their spaceships. They say good-bye to each other, climb aboard, and switch on the ship's motors. The motors roar and the ships are ready to take off.

Slimy Lox gets off fine but goopy soft Cream Cheese sticks to the Bagel and is in trouble. Stobey presses real hard on the engine pedal. After a real hard try Cream Cheese smears along the surface, finally gets unstuck and squirts into space.

'Why was it so hard for Cream Cheese to get off the Bagel?' Stobey wonders.

She doesn't know, of course, that bagels all across our solar system have always had a mysterious and powerful attraction for cream cheese. For instance, on Planet Earth the single most important question throughout history has been, 'Of what possible use can a bagel be, without cream cheese?'

The two spaceships head for home.

(The same story can be written using hamburger and catsup on a bun with soda pop or any popular, traditional or restaurant combination. Try it with your grandchild's favorite snack.)

That started a series, the first of which was:

Stobey and Slutter Fly to Super-Rock Playground

Stobey's and Slutter's families have moved to the Outer Region of the Solar System and built homes on Jupiter's moon Callisto. Earthlings were overrunning Mars.

One morning Stobey calls Slutter on her space visi-phone.

'Slutter,' says Stobey, 'let's get together.'

'Right,' Slutter answers. 'Where's a good place to meet?'

'If we leave now in our new spaceships, Coconut and Banana,' says Stobey, 'we'll reach the space lanes' junction near the gate to Super-Rock Playground on Moon Ganymede. Will you meet me there?'

'Yes,' Slutter says. 'I'll leave now in Banana and meet you where the space lanes join. I'll be there in an hour, Stobey. See you.'

They switch off, dash for their spaceships and launch. Coconut and Banana are fast, but the distance each must fly is so great that it will take at least an hour to reach the junction.

Super-Rock is the children's playground in the outer region of our solar system, which includes all the planets and space colonies beyond the Asteroids. The playground has roller coasters, a merry-go-round, tunnels to explore, music bands, and many rides for children. It's really cool. Since it's such a special and favorite park, Super-Rock gets lots of visitors.

As Stobey and Slutter approach Super-Rock Playground, the space lanes leading into it become crowded with other spaceships and space buggies. There are big bus line spaceships, each loaded with hundreds of passengers, private spaceships with families, and lots of single-seat space buggies like Coconut and Banana. There are also hot rod space buggies that switch at high speed from one lane to another, driven by boys and girls who sport fancy haircuts, twisty earrings, and leather jackets.

Stobey and Slutter handle their single-seaters carefully to keep from having an accident. The junction to which they are headed is complicated. Hundreds of spacers are in coming in from the right and underneath to join up with hundreds of others from the left and overhead. Everyone is careful. That is, almost everyone. Stobey switches on her space radio.

'Stobey calling Slutter,' she says into her microphone. 'Come in, Slutter.'

Slutter is waiting for the call.

'Slutter here,' he replies. 'Where are you, Stobey?'

'I'm in the holding pattern at the junction,' Stobey says, 'and I'm flashing my green and yellow lights. Can you spot me?'

'Not yet. I've got my greens and yellows on, too,' Slutter answers. 'Let's watch for each other.'

A moment later, Stobey says, 'I see you in my finder; you're still some distance behind me. I'll cut out and line up ahead of you. When you catch up we'll head for the parking block. Let's park next to each other. OK?'

'That's fine. Let's do that.'

Without warning, Stobey feels a slam on the rear of her space-buggy. She looks in her rear-view mirror. It's a hot rodder and he's bumping the nose of his buggy against the back of hers.

'Slutter,' Stobey shouts. 'I'm having a problem with a hot rodder. He's bumping my tail. If he doesn't stop he'll damage my buggy.'

'I'm speeding up and closing,' Slutter replies. 'I'll check him out.'

Slutter rams power into Banana's motor and, a moment later, sees Coconut up ahead. The hot rodder's ship is pushing and bumping Coconut.

Slutter maneuvers Banana behind the hot rod. Lowering Banana's nose, he slips it under the rear bumper of the hot rod. He quickly raises Banana's nose and flips the hot rod away.

Slutter moves Banana up alongside Coconut. The hot rod, seeing the Coconut has a Banana for a buddy, veers off. Together, they're too much for him.

'Thank you, Slutter,' says Stobey. 'If you hadn't stopped that hot rod he might have cracked my Coconut. You sure saved me.'

'I'm glad I was here to help,' Slutter replies. 'If it was the other way round I'm sure you would have done the same for me. Come to think of it, Stobey, if that hot rod had bumped against my buggy, and you weren't here to help me, he might've peeled my Banana.'

Stobey and Slutter think that's funny. They laugh and they laugh as, flying along side by side, they move along the space lanes into the Super-Rock parking block.

They find parking spaces next to each other. When they step out from their space buggies they come together with smiles and a hug. Hand in hand, they head for the gate that leads into Super-Rock, the most spectacular children's park and playground in the entire outer region of the solar system.

Swinging from a Star

As Stobey and Slutter enter Super-Rock Playground they are greeted by a Hooten-Nanny. The Hooten-Nannies are a family of jugglers, trapeze artists and clowns who enjoy making people laugh. One job that they really enjoy is to meet visitors at the Super-Rock gate and show them the sights and rides. Stobey and Slutter are lucky; a Hooten-Nanny wants to show them around the park.

'Hi,' says the Hooten-Nanny as he twirls about, flips a double somersault, a triple spin and a rollover. 'I'm Chug-a-lug the Hooten-Nanny from over Europa way. Just call me Chug. I'm one of the fellows who work here, and I like to show visitors around our park. May I join you?'

Stobey and Slutter look at Chug. They never met a real Hooten-Nanny, but are not surprised at the way he looks. They've seen pictures of Hooten-Nannies in storybooks, television, and on several Websites of the Solar Wide Web (<http://sww> if you're interested).

Chug looks like a single length of very thin spaghetti, but stiff, like before it's boiled. Chug's head is long and thin too, and his arms and legs also look like strands of spaghetti. The clown's suit he wears glows with all of the universe's colors; it's made entirely of rainbow mist.

'We certainly would like you to join us,' Stobey and Slutter say together.

'What are you going to show us?' Stobey asks.

'And what are we going to do?' Slutter adds.

Chug bends forward so that his head is close to Stobey's.

'You'll see what I'll show you when you see it,' he whispers with a big grin and a wink. Turning to Slutter he says with the same grin and wink, 'You will know what we'll do when it happens.' Then, to both, 'Ar-r-re you ready?'

'Yes, we ar-r-re ready,' shout Stobey and Slutter together, jumping up and down with excitement.

'Then we're off.' Chug yells a shrill 'whoop' as he reaches down with his long arms and wraps one around Stobey and the other around Slutter. Lifting and hugging them close to his thin chest he springs upward with a mighty leap. Holding on to each other, they soar over the gate and above the road leading into the park. Looking down, Stobey and Slutter see the faces of many people staring up at them.

They hear shouts, 'What are they? Are they birds? Are they spaceships?'

And they hear, 'I know. I know. It's Chug-a-lug, the Hooten-Nanny, and he's flying his friends to see the sights and to take the special rides. Aren't they the lucky ones?'

They approach a mountain peak. With a flip and a flop they land on a tiny platform at the tip of a tall pole. They see the ground far below. Beside them, tied to a railing on the platform is a trapeze bar.

'For goodness sake,' exclaims Stobey, 'What's a trapeze bar doing here at the very top of a mountain?'

'This is my own special trapeze,' Chug replies. 'I use it to travel from one place to another. Very often,

when I'm feeling real good, I do somersaults as I go along. Shall we swing?'

'Now just a moment,' Slutter says, looking around and then far up into space above Ganymede. 'A trapeze bar swings through space, that I understand. But the lines that hold the bar need to be fastened to something at its other end. I don't see where the trapeze lines end. What are they fastened to up there in space, Chug?'

Chug grins and points up. Stobey and Slutter look again. The trapeze lines stretch up and up and disappear from sight. Far, far away, beyond where the lines seem to join and disappear they see a flickering light.

'My special trapeze,' Chug says softly, 'is hitched to a star.' Raising his voice, he shouts, 'Are you ready?'

'We ar-r-e ready!'

Chug unties the trapeze from the platform. He grasps the trapeze bar in the middle; Stobey takes a firm grip of the bar on his right and Slutter does the same on his left.

'Don't let go,' Chug shouts and with a powerful shove they swing out and away from the mountaintop. The trapeze gathers speed. Down below, the ground rushes past, much too fast to see the people that they know are watching them.

'Now! See me hang by my feet', Chug calls out.

He flips through a somersault and catches the trapeze bar with his long spaghetti-thin toes. Stobey decides to try. She takes a deep breath, twists, and in an instant she is somersaulting. Completing the twist, her feet reach for the trapeze bar.

The bar isn't there!

Stobey's heart almost stops. She feels herself falling. Out of nowhere, a hand grasps one of her ankles and she feels herself drawn in. Her hands find the bar. Chug holds her until her grip on the bar is firm and she is safe again.

'Hmmm,' Chug smiles, 'maybe we're better off staying together.'

Stobey gulps and nods. She glances at Slutter who nods in return.

'I think I'll put off doing a somersault or holding on with my toes,' Slutter says, 'at least until I practice.'

'I guess you're right,' Stobey says, 'I think I'll wait a while before I try that again.'

The trapeze reaches the end of its swing. Up ahead is another mountain top with a tiny platform at the peak. The platform is attached to a pole like the one they left. As their feet touch the platform they each grasp the railing.

They are on firm footing again. Chug ties the trapeze bar to the rail.

'Did you enjoy the ride?' Chug asks Stobey.

'Sure did.'

'The same goes for me,' adds Slutter.

'How will you describe this ride to your parents and to your friends?' Chug asks.

Stobey and Slutter whisper to each other, then, together, they gaze up and point to where the trapeze lines disappear into the far, far distance of space.

'We'll tell them all,' Stobey grins up at her tall friend, 'at Super-Rock Park we met Chug-a-lug, the Hooten-Nanny, and the three of us had a wonderful time swinging from a star.'

'I can't think of anything nicer to say,' Chug smiles. 'Let's do some more exploring and see what we can find.'

Chug-a-Lug the Hooten-Nanny reaches down, wraps one arm around Stobey and the other around Slutter, and draws them close. He leaps up and away and, laughing together, the three friends are off to another adventure.

Visitors from Planet Earth

With the trapeze adventure behind them, our three friends are on the path that leads to the Super-Rock Midway.

'The Midway,' says Chug, 'is the fanciest and flashiest Midway between Planet Mars and Planet Pluto far out on the Solar rim.'

'You're right,' says Stobey. 'This Midway really is the last word in midways and I'm looking forward to seeing it. How about you, Slutter?'

'Yep,' Slutter says, 'me too.'

Up ahead, they see the gate leading into the Midway. It's on the other side of the space-block where the bus line space ships are moored to the tops of tall towers. Spaceships smaller than busses land on the surface, so they're lined up in parking lots.

'Let's cut across the parking block,' says Chug, 'it'll shorten the walk to the gate.'

'Fine,' says Stobey.

They head across, cutting in and out among the rows of parked space ships and space buggies.

Half way across they suddenly they feel a deep, thrumming vibration from space. Looking up, they see a gigantic, pancake-shaped, interplanetary space liner moving in above the parking block. Interplanetary space liners are not like the little single-seaters, family wagons, or even the big bus line and ferry space ships that carry folks like Stobey and Slutter from their homes to Super-Rock. Space liners are much larger than the biggest ocean liners that sailed the seas of Planet Earth long ago, and you've seen in history books how enormous they were.

Stobey, Slutter and Chug watch as the huge space liner slows and stops in space just above the Super-Rock Playground. Colored lights flash and glow brightly all across its underside, along its rim, and through thousands of portholes.

'What's that space liner doing here?' Stobey asks, turning to stare at Chug.

'Gosh, I don't know,' Chug replies. 'I don't recall ever seeing a big spacer like that coming to Super-Rock. They always go to the big space ports in orbit around moons Io and Europa. I wonder what's going on.'

They watch the space liner, and after a short while see one of the huge panels along its side move aside. An orange-and-green-striped space boat drifts out and holds in place. The space boat is as big as a bus and is known as a 'flitter.' Flitters are used to ferry people and cargo back and forth between big spaceships, or among planets, satellites and other places where the big interplanetary ships can't land. As Stobey, Slutter and Chug watch, the tail of the flitter glows yellow and the space boat turns down toward the surface.

'Look, look,' Slutter yells. 'The flitter is heading this way.'

The flitter hovers just above the Super-Rock parking block. Stobey waves her arms.

'Over here, over here,' she yells. 'Here's a parking slot. Right over here.'

Slutter rushes to the empty parking slot and waves up at the flitter. The pilot must have seen him. He guides the flitter to the slot and lands gently.

Stobey and Chug rush up beside Slutter. Together, they watch the flitter's door.

'I wonder who'll be coming out,' Slutter says.

'...or what'll be coming out,' Stobey mumbles. 'There are many strange beings living in our Solar System.'

'Yes,' adds Chug, 'real strange.' His long, thin spaghetti-like head bobs up and down. His long, thin spaghetti-like body sways. 'Yes,' he repeats with a nod.

Stobey and Slutter look at Chug and then at each other. They smile. They know Chug looks different than they do. They also know that all people and things look a little different from each other, and looking and being different is natural and just fine. They turn back to stare at the flitter's portal.

The portal slips aside. It's dark inside.

A ladder slowly lowers from the portal and unfolds as it approaches the surface. They hear a clicking sound and the ladder locks into place. Stobey, Slutter and Chug are quivering with excitement. A space-suited figure moves into the doorway. It stands there, not moving.

Our three friends look at the space-suited figure, and they see a face through the clear plastic space helmet. The face's eyes are looking at them. Stobey, Slutter and Chug do not need space suits since they're where they live all the time. They're used to getting around just the way they are, but people who come off space liners, they know, aren't able to get around without their own kind of air and pressure. One of the jobs of a space suit is to hold the right kind and mix of air and pressure for the wearers. The space suits do look strange, though.

'Whatever it is, it's just standing there,' Stobey says.

'Sure is,' adds Slutter. 'I wonder whatever is in that space suit looks like.'

'Me, too, Chug mumbles.

The space-suited figure starts down the ladder. As it leaves the doorway another space-suited figure appears. That one, too, looks around and starts down the ladder.

Stobey, Slutter and Chug run to the bottom of the ladder.

'Hi,' Stobey says.

A voice comes out of a speaker panel on the strange figure's helmet. 'Hello,' it says, followed a moment later by a 'Hello' from the other space suit.

'Where are you from?' Stobey asks.

'Third planet from the Sun.'

'Planet Earth?'

'That's right,' from the other space suit.

'Well, then, call it that,' Stobey says. 'Who are you? Do people on Planet Earth have names?'

'Of course we have names. Every one on Planet Earth has a name. How could we tell each other apart, or write each other letters, or call each other on the telephone if we didn't each have our own name.'

'We also have names,' Stobey says. 'My name is Stobey and,' she points to Slutter, 'this is my friend, Slutter.'

Stobey points straight up at Chug's head towering above her and adds, 'This is our guide around Super-Rock Playground and he's our friend. His name is Chug-a-lug, and he's a Hooten-Nanny.'

'We're very happy to meet you,' says the voice from the first space suit.

'Now tell us your names,' Stobey says.

'Our names,' says the same voice, 'are Suzanne and Roger. I'm Suzanne.'

'Suzanne and Roger. What strange and interesting names.' Stobey repeats the names a few times, and so do Slutter and Chug. 'Suzanne and Roger. Suzanne and Roger. Hm..m..m, strange sounding names, really strange.'

'They're not strange where we come from,' says Roger.

'I suppose not,' says Stobey. 'Tell us, Suzanne and Roger, why has an interplanetary space liner come to Super-Rock Playground. Aren't the regular ports for space liners in orbits above Io and Europa?'

'Well, yes,' Suzanne says. 'We're on our way to Europa to visit our uncle who's in charge of a space colony. The colonists are also people from Planet Earth.'

'The Captain of our space liner told us the port at the European colony is temporarily filled with other space liners,' Roger adds, 'so he brought our liner here for a couple of hours to wait until a mooring slot

for us opens up there.'

'Right,' Suzanne adds. 'When we got here and saw this beautiful playground we asked the Captain if we could visit it for a while. As you see, he agreed, and here we are.'

'We're certainly glad you came,' Stobey says. 'We're heading for the Midway. Would you like to join us?'

'Oh, yes,' says Roger, 'we sure would.'

'Yes, we would like to join you,' says Suzanne, 'and we thank you for the invitation. But we must be back aboard the space liner in two hours. Will you be sure that we don't miss getting back here in the parking block in time to lift off?'

Chug steps forward. He draws himself up to his full height, raises one spaghetti-thin arm to point upward, and speaks with a deep voice.

'It shall be my honor and my pleasure,' he says, 'to show you all the wonders of the Great Super-Rock Midway, and then to bring you back here in time to return to your space liner. I, Chug-a-lug the Hooten-Nanny, will be your guide.'

He proudly points at the brilliant, many-colored lights of the Super-Rock Midway.

'We're off to the Midway with a fanfare, and in our finery and frippery,' his voice booms like a drum, 'to see a galaxy of games which give everyone gales of galloping giggles. If you wish, you can gulp gallons of grape juice, and gaze and even gawk at glittering gold goblets and gargantuan gemstones. You can also buy gewgaws, gimmicks, gizmos, and glamorous gifts to give to your friends.'

Chug starts across the parking block, taking long steps.

'Hold on, there, Chug,' Stobey calls after him. 'Slow down. Your long legs take such big steps we can't keep up with you.'

Chug turns and looks back. He waits until Stobey, Slutter, Suzanne and Roger catch up. They form a line across, Chug in the middle, Stobey and Suzanne on one side and Slutter and Roger on the other. The two children on each side of Chug link arms. Chug's arms are so long that they reach down to where his hands can be held by whoever is next to him. With Chug's booming voice describing what they will see, they head for the gate into the Midway of Super-Rock Playground.

Overhead, the great space liner from Planet Earth waits silently.

Sir Lumpalot and Kick-Pow

Our friends, Stobey and Slutter, Suzanne and Roger and, of course, Chug-a-lug, the Hooten-Nanny are all walking side-by-side across the spaceship parking block. They are close to the entrance to the Midway. The gate is just ahead. Lights are flashing. Children and grown-ups, of many sizes and shapes, are moving in all directions.

'Halt! Halt, I say. Stay right where you are!'

The order bursts up at them from right under their feet. Stobey jumps aside. Slutter leaps straight up. Suzanne and Roger stand still, shocked. Chug doesn't move, and says nothing. He looks down and points.

A hole forms in the ground where they were standing a moment before. At first they don't see the hole because it's as small as a pinhead. It spreads quickly until it's as big as the hole in the center of a doughnut. That's when they see it. The hole grows to the size of a basketball. It stops expanding for a couple of seconds as if to catch its breath; then with a shiver and a shake it's as big as a bulldozer tire. That's when it stops.

A clatter and a rumble wells up like hooves pounding hard-packed earth. The clatter grows louder and closer. The ground shakes. By this time Stobey and Slutter are holding on to each other. Suzanne and Roger stand close by, confused by what's happening. They feel themselves to be strangers, and don't know what to expect. And Chug? Well, he just stands there.

A cloud of dust suddenly puffs up out from the hole. It forms into a cloud and drifts away. Another cloud of dust rises in which floats a long smooth shaft. The shaft is smooth and rises up out of the hole. The other end is attached to a head. The head is that of a small white animal that looks like a horse.

Another cloud of dust. The animal leaps up out from the hole. It's a unicorn, and on its back is a saddle, and in the saddle is a knight in pure white armor, and in the knight's grip is a lance pointing straight at where our friends are standing.

The front of the knight's helmet is open. In the middle of his face is a pudgy nose, above the nose are fierce eyes, and under the nose a long, bristly, handlebar mustache that ends with three twirling loops on each side.

'Who are you?' he roars. 'What do you want here?'

Stobey steps forward until she is right under the unicorn's head. Looking up, she shakes her finger at the knight.

'Before we go any further,' she says, 'you point that lance somewhere else.'

The knight in white armor stares at Stobey for a five seconds. 'Umm.. ah...,' he says as he lowers the lance until it points at the ground. 'OK. Is that better?'

'Yes, that's better,' Stobey says. 'Now, I'm Stobey and...' pointing... 'this is my friend Slutter, and these are our new friends from Planet Earth, Suzanne and Roger.'

She points up at Chug. 'Do you know Chug-a-lug?'

'Um.. ah...,' the knight mumbles. 'I know Chug. We're old friends.'

'Ah, so,' Stobey said, 'and who are you?'

'Um ah me? Ah, yes. I'm Sir Lumpalot. This is my unicorn Kick-Pow.'

Kick-Pow nods and paws at the ground. He is pleased to be introduced.

'And where are you from, Sir Lumpalot?' asked Slutter.

Sir Lumpalot looks at Slutter and straightens in his saddle. 'I'm Sir Lumpalot, and I come from the Land of Lumps, of course,' he says. 'Where else would I be from?'

'And what do you do in the Land of the Lumps?' Stobey asks.

The knight turns fierce eyes to glare at Stobey.

'I am a knight,' he says, 'and I have a very responsible job. I keep order among all the Bumps, Clumps, Stumps, Grumps, and especially Chumps, that live in the Land of Lumps. That's why I'm named Sir Lumpalot.'

'What else do you do?' Stobey asks.

'Well, I also guard the Palace of the King,' Sir Lumpalot drew himself up proudly and harrumphed his mustache into another curl.

'And where would that be?' Slutter cut into the harrumphing.

'Where? Why, in the Royal Square, that's where.' Another harrumph.

'Tell them how you guard it,' Chug says.

'Well, twice a day I circle the Square.'

Stobey giggles, and so does Slutter. Suzanne and Roger are politely silent.

'I see. You circle the Square. Well, what do you do if you see someone who doesn't belong?' Stobey asks.

'Chase them around the nearest corner away from there, of course.'

'Isn't it strange for a grown knight and a unicorn to spend their time circling a Square?' Roger is polite with his question.

'That's my job,' says Sir Lumpalot.

'Well, if that's your job,' says Slutter, 'what are you doing here?'

'Oh, I got a message that all of you were heading this way,' Sir Lumpalot replies with a grin so wide it adds two more loops in his mustache and they curl up so tight that the tips disappear back into the helmet. 'Kick- Pow and I just thought we'd startle you, just for the fun of it. It worked, didn't it?'

Sir Lumpalot laughs and pats Kick-Pow's silky smooth neck. Kick-Pow snorts and paws the ground.

'Hmph. OK, Sir Lumpalot,' says Stobey, 'now that you're here, would you and Kick-Pow like to join us in our visit to the Midway?'

Sir Lumpalot gives a whoop. Kick-Pow bucks. A short one, so as not to jolt his rider.

'We sure would.'

'Then let's go!'

Through the gate they all troop.

The Midway is spread out before them. Bright and blinking lights, twisting and colored streamers, rainbow colored balls, all flashing, floating and bouncing hither and yon. Slutter dashes to a little stall and picks up three darts. One at a time, he aims them carefully at a red balloon on the far wall. He throws the darts. The third dart strikes and breaks the balloon. A robot pops up from behind the counter and hands Slutter a tiny toy space ship.

'What's this,' Slutter laughs. 'I don't need a toy spaceship. I have a real one, all my own.'

He puts the toy spaceship into his pocket for his baby brother, and joins his friends again. On they go.

They try different games of skill and take rides in models of pilot's seats on space racers. Time passes quickly.

As they turn a corner out of the gate from one ride, they hear a hollow booming sound followed immediately by a piercing screech. The sounds fill the air. Sir Lumpalot, who is in the lead, reins in Kick-Pow and halts. He raises his hand in warning. Everyone stops where they are. They stare ahead.

They see nothing but flashing lights, bouncing balls, and waving ribbons.

The booming gets louder.

'There, over there,' Sir Lumpalot shouts, pointing ahead.

'Where?' Chug-a-lug stares in the direction Sir Lumpalot is pointing.

'The strange sounds are coming from that house,' the knight replies.

They see a dark, gray, gloomy-looking house. It has many windows, all dark except for one, and that one shows green and blue lights flashing off and on. The heavy booming sound is coming from inside.

'What's in that house?' Stobey asks.

'I don't know,' says Chug. This time he isn't being sly. He really doesn't know.

'Do you, Sir Lumpalot?'

'No, I don't.' Sir Lumpalot's voice lowers to a whisper, a loud whisper so that they can all hear him. 'Neither does anyone else. It's the Strangers House.'

'Let's explore it,' says Stobey.

'Yes, let's do that now,' Slutter adds.

'Oh, no, not that house.' Chug waves his long arms about.

'Yes,' says Stobey, 'that house.'

'And what's more,' says Slutter, 'right now.'

'Stobey,' Suzanne says, 'You know we do have to be back at our space liner soon. Do you think we should explore the Stranger's House, too. Will there be time?'

'We can't disappoint our uncle on Europa,' says Roger. 'We mustn't delay departure of the space

liner.'

'Slutter and I must also leave for our homes soon,' says Stobey. 'Let's do a fast exploration and then head back to the spaceship parking block.'

Stobey points to Sir Lumpalot, then to Chug-a-lug.

'We'll form a line,' she says. 'Sir Lumpalot, you lead the way. I'll follow. Suzanne and Roger, you walk behind me, and Slutter, you watch over our friends from Planet Earth. Chug, you bring up the rear. We must all stay together.'

A shadow crosses one of the windows. A creaking sound comes from the house, like that of rusty hinges, followed by still another boom and a screech. A thin wisp of smoke goes down, I mean 'down' the chimney. The exploration of the Stranger's House is starting out mysteriously indeed.

Into the Stranger's House

As our friends approach the house, they hear more creaking noises from inside. The weird screech is heard again. The wisp of smoke that went down the chimney shoots up out again with a whoosh. The smoke twists into a spiral above the house, straightens, darts away and disappears over a low hill.

'What's going on,' Stobey demands, looking at Chug-a-lug.

'I don't know, Stobey,' Chug replies.

'Well,' Slutter says, 'we're here and we may as well check this place out. I think we should go ahead.' He turns to Suzanne and Roger. 'What do you think?' he asks.

Suzanne shrugs. Roger nods.

'OK with us,' Suzanne says, 'we're game. Let's go, as long as we get back to our spaceship in time.'

Stobey opens the door leading into the house, pokes her head in and looks about. She sees a large room with lots of heavy furniture scattered about. The furniture is covered with white sheets, and the floor and corners of the room are filled with space dust.

Chug leans in over Stobey and his head swivels in all directions, examining the dusty room.

'Kind of weird looking, isn't it?' he says.

The words are hardly out of his mouth when the spine-chilling screech cuts across the room.

Chug jumps with alarm. 'What's that,' he shrieks. He leaps so high his head strikes the top of the doorway and he let out another howl. Rubbing the top of his spaghetti-thin head he scowls and glowers at the top of the doorway.

'What's happening? What's happening?' Sir Lumpalot yells from behind. Slutter, Suzanne and Roger crowd forward to see better.

'I can't tell yet,' Stobey calls back over her shoulder, pointing. 'The sound came from that corner. Let's see what's there.'

Stobey steps carefully over the sill, and is followed close behind by Chug and the others. They tighten into a knot and, peering in all directions, tiptoe toward the middle of the huge, shadowy dust-laden room.

Without warning, another screech. Our friends grab each other. They look around, then quickly up and down. They can't see anything that might be causing the strange noise.

Slutter points. There, in the floor, near one of the walls, is a trap door.

'There's a cellar under this house,' he says, 'and that's where the booming and the screeching must be coming from. Do you think we should go down?'

Stobey thinks for a moment. 'Well,' she answers, 'it's the only way to find out who, or what, is making that noise. Also, what about the shadows that crossed the window, and what about that crazy smoke that went down and back up out of the chimney, and then twisted and curled and raced away? I'd like to find out what's going on.'

Slutter walks to the trap door and lifts it. A staircase stretches down into darkness. Stobey stands

beside Slutter and looks; nothing but darkness.

'Let's go,' Stobey starts down the narrow stairway.

Slutter is close behind her, followed by Chug, Suzanne and Roger, and at the end Sir Lumpalot on Kick-Pow. Being a unicorn, Kick-Pow has no trouble at all going up and down stairways. He does have to be careful, though, so that his horn doesn't scrape the walls or bump into the overhead.

The stairway takes one turn and then another. The turns explain why Stobey and Slutter couldn't see much from the top. At the bottom is a small square space lighted by a tiny lamp. Leading off from the space is an opening to a narrow passageway.

Stobey doesn't wait. She enters the narrow passageway, followed by the others. They advance only a short distance and, again, the weird screech bursts out, this time from up ahead and much louder. A booming, rasping noise follows the screech. It sounds like heavy chains being dragged across rocks.

'Be careful,' Slutter warns from behind Stobey.

'Yes,' Chug says, 'let's all be careful.'

'Light up ahead,' Stobey announces.

The light is far off, but as they get close it brightens. The passageway by now is well lit. Up ahead the passageway bends.

They turn the bend. They're in a large cavern. The floor is covered with dust and stones, and in the center is what appears to be an enormous black boulder.

Suddenly, from above, erupts the same screech they heard before, wild and shrill. Our friends leap back away as their eyes dart up.

There, standing on top of the rock, looking down at them is an eye, round and staring. Around the eye are spikes, long and sharp, and directly above the eye is a mouth, wide and open, and from out of the mouth, bursts another screech. And another screech. The screeches become words that hiss and whistle and puff and roar.

'Who are you? What are you doing here? What do you want?' The screeching fills the room with echoes that bounce from one wall to another and back again.

Stobey, leaning her head back to look at the enormous eye. She places her hands on her hips and says, 'Now, look here, whatever and whoever you are, you just quit that screeching, hissing, whistling, puffing and roaring and talk to us properly and politely, and we'll do the same. We're visitors here, and I'll introduce myself and my friends. Then you tell us who you are and we'll have a nice chat. OK?'

'Well, OK.' The eye blinks a couple of times and speaks in a gentle hiss; the whistle, puff and roar are gone.

Stobey introduces herself and her friends. 'Now it's your turn,' she says.

'My name is Bingbang Babbaloo,' the eye says, 'and I am the guardian of this Great Rock.'

'We saw strange-looking smoke go down and then come back up the chimney,' says Slutter. 'What was that all about?'

'Oh, that's my robo-assistant, Bizz Bazz. He goes on errands for me and uses the chimney as his way in and out of the house. I sent him for a couple of hamburgers a little while ago. I hope he doesn't forget the French Fries and the catsup. I love French Fries and catsup, don't you?'

'Oh, I love French Fries and catsup, too.' Chug grins.

'Me, too,' from Sir Lumpalot. Kick-Pow paws the ground and tosses his head in agreement. It's close to his mealtime.

'Let's get back to my questions, Bingbang Babbaloo,' says Stobey. 'What is this Great Rock and why do you guard it?'

'What is this Great Rock?' Bingbang voice is almost back to a screech. 'Why do I guard it? The Great Rock holds the treasure.'

'What treasure? I don't see treasure.'

'Of course you don't, the treasure is inside. Would you like to see it?'

'Yes, I would,' says Stobey and everyone with her nods.

Bingbang blinks three times. The huge rock shakes violently and the cavern fills with the sound of heavy dragging chains. A crack appears in the rock. The crack widens, lengthens, and curves along the top and forms into a door. The door opens and they look into a lighted vault.

On the floor, in the center of the vault is an enormous chest, and filling the chest and hanging over its edges are hundreds of loops of bracelets and pearls. Alongside the chest and scattered about are casks and buckets of brilliant diamonds, rubies and emeralds. Along the walls are rows of gold and silver bars and mounds of gold nuggets, and still more boxes overflowing with precious gems.

'My goodness, Bingbang Babbaloo,' exclaims Stobey, 'Where did you get all of this treasure?'

'Would you really like to know?' Bingbang blinks.

Everyone nods again.

'Good. Sit, and I will tell you of my adventure on a strange planet that circles a distant star.'

Bingbang Babbaloo Battles Burpers

Why does Bingbang Babbaloo guard the treasure in the Great Rock under the Stranger's House in Super Rock Playground? Where did the treasure come from? Why are the treasure and Bingbang Babbaloo in this old house in the Super-Rock Playground? Everyone wants to know.

Stobey and Slutter, Chug-a-lug and Sir Lumpalot, Suzanne and Roger, and of course, Kick-Pow, the Unicorn, gather before Bingbang, whose strange body rests on top of the Great Rock in which the treasure is stored. Bingbang's single, spike-rimmed eye blinks slowly down at them as he speaks in a soft hiss.

'I have traveled to this place from a distant star,' he begins, 'and my journey has been full of adventures and dangers. Many times I had no food and I was often so tired I could barely see. But I had a job to do.'

'Where were you going?' asks Stobey.

'Yes,' adds Slutter, 'and what was your job?'

Bingbang's single eye glares at Stobey and Slutter. 'Now, listen here, you two.' His voice rises to an exasperated screech, changes to a wheeze, and winds up as a whistle. 'If you want to hear this story you'll just have to be quiet and just listen, instead of interrupting. Mind your manners and your questions will be answered. OK?'

'Well, OK,' says Stobey.

'Hmph,' says Slutter.

Bingbang's voice returns to a low hiss, but its sound fills the cavern.

'My voyage begins long ago and far away on Planet Boomboom, which is my home. In the green sky above Planet Boomboom is our Sun, Blooper. That's how we assign names where I come from. So, you see, I am Bingbang Babbaloo from Boomboom near Blooper. Got it?'

No one answers. They're curious to hear more.

'Ah, yes, well, to get on with it,' Bingbang continues, 'one breezy afternoon on Boomboom I am browsing among the books in my basement. A messenger arrives with a letter from Boogie-woogie Boomer, King of Boomboom.'

'Bingbang Babbaloo,' the letter says, 'I, King Boogie-woogie Boomer of Boomboom, command you to leave immediately for Planet Boppo which is near the Sun Bippo. Boppo is the home of the evil Burpers who stole my treasure of gold, diamonds and jewels. When you get to Boppo, I command you to recover my treasures from the Burpers, and return it to me here on Boomboom.'

'That, Stobey and Slutter, should answer some of your questions. I was going from the Sun Blooper to the Sun Bippo, from the Planet Boomboom to the Planet Boppo. I, Bingbang Babbaloo was to do battle with the bad Burpers for a batch of King Boogie-woogie Boomer's baubles. Now, do you get it?' They all

nod slowly, and mumble , 'Hmm ahh. Yep. Got it, I think. Hmm.'

'I run to my spaceship, Boomerang, and blast off for Boppo. It's a bumpy voyage. On the way I pass suns and planets, many with strange names on my maps, instead of the sensible ones we have where I come from.

'After many months I see Bippo up ahead. Bippo is a funny looking sun with purple stripes and round green spots. I search the area and there, off to one side, is the planet Boppo. It's also funny looking: green stripes and purple spots, just the opposite colors of its sun.

'So here I am at last, ready to land my Boomerang among a lot of Boppoian Burpers near Bippo to do battle for a batch of baubles for my Boombooaranian King Boogie-woogie Boomer.'

'Now just a minute, Bingbang Babbaloo.' Stobey jumps up from where she's sitting and shakes her finger at the Eye. 'Now just a minute,' she repeats. 'I want to hear your story, and I'm sure my friends also want to hear it, but I would appreciate it very much if you told the story without using so many words that begin with B. It's confusing.'

'Well,' says Bingbang, 'all right, but that's the way we talk at home. Anyhow, back to my story. I scout the planet of the Burpers from far above, and see a castle on a hill. I land my ship in a forest clearing nearby and sneak around and over rocks and along gullies toward the castle that I saw from the sky. Finally, up close, I see that the drawbridge is down. A truck without a driver is the side of the road, that's careless of them, I must say. I climb into the truck, switch on the motor, and drive across the drawbridge.'

Bingbang's huge round eye blinks slowly.

He continues, 'I stop the truck in an alley and wait until night. In the darkness I drive the truck out of the alley and into another and then still another and another, searching for the place where the treasure is hidden. Soon it will be daylight, but no luck. I know that in the morning light I'll be seen and captured. I have very little time.

'I turn a corner and up ahead I see the outline of a large blockhouse. I drive closer and see bars across its windows and doors.

'Aha, I think. This must be the place. I sneak to one of the doors and peek through the bars. Nothing. I slip around to the windows and peek through. Again, nothing. I circle around to another side of the blockhouse and to another, looking through the bars of doorways and windows. Finally, through one of the windows I see my King's stolen chest of diamonds, jewels, gold and silver.

'I look around carefully. No guards. The Burpers must think that the blockhouse is safe in their castle-fortress. They didn't stop to think that I, Bingbang Babbaloo, would come to rescue my King's treasure.

'I drive the truck close to the window behind which the stolen treasure is stored. Drawing my heavy blaster I rake the beam across the doorway. The door dissolves. I enter the blockhouse and load the treasure into the truck. With all the treasure on board, I slip behind the wheel, turn the motor on and race along one narrow, twisty alley after another and soon am at the drawbridge. I'm across the drawbridge and head for my space ship.

'Behind me I hear the noise of sirens and whistles. The alarm. The Burpers are after me. I slam my foot on to the speed pedal. The truck engine races, faster and faster. I must get to my space ship in time. The sirens and whistles are louder. They're close behind me; I mean, lots of them, one Burper after another.

'I drive the truck around tight turns in the road. The enemy is closing in. Luckily, I have an emergency escape plan. It's time to put my plan into action.

'Bingbang Babbaloo to Boomerang,' I call through my radio transmitter. 'Come in, Boomerang, old buddy.'

'Boomerang is in my plan for escape. My space ship Boomerang is also a robot that can follow my orders even when I'm a great distance from it.

'Yes, master,' Boomerang's metallic voice sounds in my ear.

'Zero in on me,' I order, 'and hover just above this truck.'

'Will do.'

'A moment later Boomerang is directly above the truck.

'Lift this truck on the ship's crane,' I order, 'and draw it into the ship's hold.'

'Just as the Burpers are ready to cast a chain around my rear bumper, I feel the truck being lifted from the road. Seconds later, I and the truck and the King's treasure are safely inside my ship. I blast away from Boppo.

'The Boppoian Burpers blast away at Boomerang. My ship dodges one way and then the other. Bam! Bam! Boomerang is caught in a barrage. I barrel roll the ship into space to get away. The barrage follows, but I'm not beaten yet. I give Boomerang all the power it can take.

'The Burpers take after me in their space fighters, firing all their beamers. I keep dodging.

'I release a blockbuster bomb. The Boppoian Burpers see it and blast themselves in another direction to get away from the bomb. This gives me the time I need to escape.

'I do get away, but my ship is damaged. I will not be able to make the long flight home.

'After many weeks of limping along, and wandering a long distance from the flight paths shown on my maps, I find myself here at Super-Rock, only part of my way home. I have brought my ship with its treasure here to this cavern. Since my arrival it's been known as the Stranger's House.

'Now I am waiting.'

'Waiting? Waiting for what?' asks Stobey.

'I am waiting for rescue,' Bingbang hisses softly. 'I have sent a message to my king, telling him where I am. He is sending a ship for me. The loud booming and the other sounds you heard when you came near the Stranger's House were the messages between my rescuers and me. They should be here at any moment.'

Bingbang pauses, and they see his eye blinking in concentration. 'Aha,' he says, 'I hear them.'

They listen. A hum fills the air. It gets louder and louder and the cavern walls shake from the deep vibrations.

Without warning, there is a sudden whoosh, and the roof of the cavern above the huge black rock lifts away. Above is a waffle-shaped spaceship with thousands of flashing lights all across its underside and along its edges. It is much larger than the space liner on which Suzanne and Roger were traveling.

A wide opening appears in the spaceship's underside and a long cable with many nets and hooks lower from it through the opening above the black rock. The hooks and nets wrap around the rock in which the treasure is stored. The cables tighten. Slowly, the rock breaks away from the surface and rises.

Bingbang Babbaloo, standing on the rock, rises with it. Bizz Bazz floats beside him. Bingbang's round, spikey eye blinks.

'Good-bye, good-bye,' he says. I wish you well. Perhaps we will meet again some day.'

'Good-bye, Bingbang Babbaloo,' Stobey cups her hands near her mouth so that her voice carries. 'I hope we do meet again some day.'

Stobey sees Bingbang Babbaloo's eye blink at her. She knows he heard.

The black rock disappears into the spaceship. With a deep roar, the spaceship blasts away, heading for planet Boomboom near the sun. Blooper with the treasure for King Boogie-woogie Boomer.

Our friends leave the Stranger's House and head for the parking block. Arriving, they see that the space liner is signaling Suzanne and Roger to return. The two Earthlings hug Stobey and Slutter, and Chug-a-lug and Sir Lumpalot. They rub Kick-pow's nose and board the flitter.

The flitter rises in a long curve toward the space liner and disappears through an open panel. The

panel closes and the huge ship's powerful motors glow and hum. The spacer rises up and away.

Stobey and Slutter hug Chug-a-lug and Sir Lumpalot and also rub Kick-pow's nose. It is time for them to return home. They board Coconut and Banana and blast into space. Chug-a-lug, Sir Lumpalot and Kick-Pow watch the two tiny spaceships until they disappear into the background of stars.

'Hope they come back soon,' says Chug-a-lug, the Hooten-Nanny, as he, Sir Lumpalot the Knight and Kick-Pow the Unicorn head back through the gate into Super-Rock Playground.

(Grandpa's get away with a lot when it comes to imaginative stories.)

PART FIVE LORE, MYTHS AND MEMOIRS

Lore adapts to altered circumstances and lifestyles, and to cultures and environments other than the times and places where it had its roots. The familiar may be comfortable, but youngsters also listen eagerly to new twists in a myth, another version of a familiar legend, the results of experiments, and of trials as well as the joys in the human experience.

In storytelling, a culture's traditions, mythology and values offer opportunities to insert a sense of history into the tale, and add context to interactions among the family's constituents and the continuity to its generations. Excessively repeated, they might appear as frayed and corny platitudes. Yet, within the majority of families, a culture's mythology, traditions and values retain their relevancy and often, their majesty.

Tradition passes history to a new generation on what happened to the family over the years, and, to the extent possible, the reasons. Grandparents' stories and lore convey facts and interpretations about customs, events and personalities and how they became part of the family's structure. Tradition supports the family's sense of generational continuity.

Social and cultural awareness can provide sanctuary for education, law enforcement, science, sports, health care, religion, and more. They encourage the evolution of concepts, principles and systems that civilizations need to make life livable and enjoyable. Awareness includes what is wrong with the way things are, as well as what is right.

Values are what it's about: the bottom line. Values, however, are a mixed bag, and passing them along through stories, lore and memoirs is a matter of memory, selection, circumstances, and emphasis. Values might include: stimulating a sense of self-esteem in others; consideration for another's sensitivities; respect for life; repairing Planet Earth; knowing the differences between pity, sympathy, compassion, and empathy; striving to be honest and fair; and respect for institutions and laws but being willing to act within the law to change those no longer suitable for the common good. Grandparents (and parents) often prefer to stress personal proclivities and biases in passing along family values. Values add substance to awareness and tradition.

If, at first, you have qualms about striking out with your own memoir or family history, try giving your version of a well-known myth, legend or folk story. They already have a well-defined plot, characters, and settings. You can replace and rephrase parts with how you would like the story to appear. Use the stories and essays in this book or the public library as models or points of departure for your storytelling letters and experiments.

Stories to the World

One way to get into storytelling is by giving your own version of a well-known folk tale, a popular myth, or even one of Aesop's fables. The plots, characters, and structures of these stories have been handed along from one generation to the next for centuries, and have already passed the test of time. As soon as you start your story you join a historical procession and launch yourself into the new and wondrous world of imagination.

Storytellers are occasionally asked how the story just told to them, came to be. Here are a few paragraphs from my version of an old West African folk tale about the source of all stories and how they came to be. The folk tale relates one of the adventures of Anansi, the Spider-man, a mythical trickster among the Ashanti, the Wolofs, and other peoples of Ghana and West Africa.

Anansi's fame has spread throughout the world, and generally depicts him as a conniver and full of devilry. In the well-known story Spider and the Box of Stories, Nyami, the Lord of the Sky, keeps a box beside him in which are all the world's stories. Spider asks Nyami for the box so that he can release the stories. Nyami agrees to give him the box if he will first bring a python, a leopard, a hornet, and a creature that none can see. Spider does so by first misleading his victims with falsehoods and then capturing them with trickery and pain.

Nyami, nevertheless true to his word, gives Spider the box of stories and Spider releases them to the world. The myth, told in this fashion, depicts how a noble gift from the Lord of the Sky enters the world through dishonesty and the abuse of creatures who are also under Nyami's care. In *Stories To The World* I tried to replace deception and entrapment with respect for life. *** Alamander, whose name was arbitrarily shortened from Salamander by my grandson during a story conference, has a parrot Aringabella; my grandson merely added an 'a' to each end of 'ring a bell.' The problem is the same as in the Spider story: long, long ago the people of the world had no stories.

After successfully testing Alamander, the Lord of the Sky turns the box of stories over to him. Alamander, with the box on his back climbs down to the Earth's surface along a rope ladder. He drags the box to the middle of a meadow, and removes the heavy padlock that holds the lid in place. Alamander, with Aringabella gripping his shoulder firmly and helpfully flapping his wings, lifts the lid and steps back to watch all of the world's stories gain their freedom to roam the world forever. This is what happened:

There was moment of deep silence. Suddenly, the heavy lid flew up and over, and crashed to the ground. From out of the box's darkness gusted a powerful wind that whirled about and away in a cloud of dust.

In an instant there rose from out of the box swarms and tangles of flapping wings, waving arms, running legs, grasping claws, writhing tentacles, and a horde of strange wriggling shapes. Their number was beyond counting. And from this twisting mass came sounds of laughing and crying, whining and humming, rustling and chattering, shouting and whispering, and snarling and hissing and howling, and even sounds for which, even now, there are no ways to describe.

Up and away, flying and running, strutting and crawling, staggering and marching and plodding and toddling, they cascaded over the sides of the box. Some took to the air, others moved toward the forest where they disappeared into trees, shrubs and flowers, and into the burrows of tiny animals and the caves of larger beasts. They dove into the river and the sea, and dug themselves into the ground or slithered under rocks. A few raced each other across the meadow and slipped into the homes and shops of the nearby village. They took to the air and the sea for distant places. Soon they were everywhere.

What did they look like? They looked like everything and anything: trolls and elves, trees and clouds, birds and people, horses and barns, airplanes and boats and spaceships and stars in the sky, and all the things that are or ever were, and also things that are not and never could be. Stories look like anything that ever happened and which might yet happen in years and centuries to come. And stories are whatever people might wish for, and things of which they are afraid.

Soon the stories were all gone from the box in which they had been kept locked until someone came along who really wanted them freed. Now the stories could go wherever they wished, and to be for all time among the peoples of the world.

When people saw the stories, they took them in and gave them the food and shelter that stories need to be strong. In return the stories gave pleasure and knowledge and, at times, sadness, to the peoples of the world. Stories try to give those who listen carefully an understanding of how the Lord of the Sky means for the world to be.

Sometimes, the stories from Nyami's box did not change, and at other times, they were changed about by storytellers to give them other meanings. Sometimes this was good; at other times, it was not good, but it's how stories are meant to be. However they are changed, all stories are gifts from the Lord of the Sky, who has many names.

What happened to Alamander and Aringabella?

Alamander grew from boy to man, and, in time, he married and had a family. With the wise advice of his friend, Aringabella, he became a respected elder among the people of his village.

Often, in the evening, when the day's work was done and with his parrot perched securely on his shoulder, Alamander would lead his family to a quiet clearing along the riverbank where they would sit facing the river. They studied the world around them: flowers and trees, grass and rocks, and fallen leaves pushed along the ground by soft breezes. They looked out at the river and saw fish breaking the

surface, and they listened to the hum of insects, the songs of birds, and the squeaking of bats. Raising their eyes, they gazed at the stars in the black velvet dome above, and they spoke their thoughts of how all these things came to be.

And as they marveled, Alamander would tell again how he and Aringabella had helped to bring stories to the world, and of the wonder of the place from which the box of stories had come.

"The people of Planet Earth,' he would say at the end, 'must deserve this great gift from the Lord of the Sky."

Memoir: C'mon, Man, It's Only a Safety Pin!

How might teenagers of the 21st century and beyond relate to and communicate with grandparents and the elderly? Based on a real encounter, this story tells what happened during my chance meeting with a young adult. The give-and-take had to be cleaned up a bit for this telling, and the dialogue rounded out and organized for continuity and cohesiveness. Somewhat allegorical, the story demonstrates the cross-generation communications that can develop when even widely separated age groups are willing to listen to each other. Many of us have had comparable experiences; they deserve being entered into our lore. *** The rain sheets swirled in from the south, bent, and lurched aimless as drunken ghosts across the college campus. Winds lashed the high crowns of the eucalyptus, and dipped to whine along the corridors and passageways that cut through the patchwork of modernistic academic structures.

Back and legs lashed by fierce gusts, disoriented to the direction of my destination, I took refuge under the dome of a kiosk. Backing around to the side opposite the driving rain, I doffed my cap to let the water drip; waiting was no problem. I scanned the dozens of leaflets clinging to the kiosk's curved wall, overlapping each other like fish scales: notices of student events long past and yet to be, and places and things from urgently needed to available for the taking.

'Hey, ol' man.'

'Yo.' I glanced back. He was in the borderland between the rain and the shelter, leaning against a patch of soggy leaflets. About seventeen in years, six in height, and as skinny as a drenched cat. Tangled blond hair, defeated by the rain, plastered his scalp.

His black T-shirt was wet, as were his frayed and torn jeans and once- white running shoes. At his feet lay a deflated haversack caked with whatever it had been dragged through, probably since elementary school.

'Whatcha doin' out on a day like this.'

His flat voice matched the bored, couldn't care less put-on that went with his years. Squatting, he drew a soil-brown cloth from the haversack and toweled his head and neck.

'Library,' I said. 'Where's it at?'

He motioned with the cloth. 'Behind that one with the big windows. I'm headin' that way, too.' He looked up at the sky. 'Gonna let up in a coupla minutes. What're you gonna do in the library?'

'Check the latest Writer's Market and LMP.' I looked closer at him and repeated, 'LMP. Literary Market Place.'

'What'll they do for you?'

'Point me in the right direction.'

'What for?'

'Peddle an article I wrote.'

'Oh. Writer?'

'Off'n on. Job. Retired now, but keep my hand in.'

'Hey, man, I like writin'.' He looked at me with interest. 'What's it take?'

'Writin'? Takes writin', and rewritin'.'

'C'mon, man. You're tryin' to sell one. Right?'

'Yeah.'

'So you've been there. Writin' for the real world; doin' somthin' you want to. What's it all about; like what are ya tryin' t' sell?'

'Industrial stuff,' I said, dismissing it all with a shrug and a wave-off. 'How to organize industrial tools to do a job, and then how to bring 'em all together with materials, parts, and nuts and bolts to come up with the finished product.'

'That's technical writin', huh?'

'Yep. Well, sort of.'

'Is technical writin' hard to learn?'

'People like you and me been doin' it since cave-dwellers first scratched pictures of rock-throwers on their walls. Finest kind training aid for their kids.'

I pointed to the printed and hand-scribed notes and graffiti in the patches of still exposed concrete.

'Content may have changed, but the idea is still to get a message across. What about you? Ever tried that kind of writing?'

'Technical stuff?' His shoulders rose and fell. 'Not much. Student, y'know. I'm still gettin' assignments to write about my last trip to Disneyland. I do use trade manuals to tune the motor on my bike, and the book has lists and drawings of tools and step-by-step instructions on how to do the job. Use 'em all the time, but never thought about where they came from. You put that stuff together?'

'Made my livin' at it for a while before I retired. But, like I said, I'm a firehouse horse who keeps chasin' fires even after being put out to pasture. In my blood, I guess.'

He laughed.

'Tools in a repair manual,' he said, 'and all the different parts and instructions. How d'ya do it? Like, how'd you describe, for example, a tool?'

He scanned the sky as he spoke. The heavy overcast was lightening, and the wandering rain-ghosts had retreated to make way for drizzle. Rivulets snaked across the concrete quad from one puddle to another, eventually over-brimming into a furrow that widened and deepened into a trench entering a conduit to a ditch or storm sewer somewhere off the campus.

'Name a few tools,' I said.

He grinned. 'Pliers. Wrench. Screwdriver. OK?'

'OK,' I answered. 'More.'

His eyes contemplated the drizzle, came back to stare at the wet walls of the kiosk, settled on his haversack, and stayed. I followed his glance. A 4-inch long, candy-striped, enamel coated safety pin fastened down the flap of its side pocket.

'Safety pin,' he chuckled. 'Tool, right?'

'Could be. How would you get ready to describe it?'

He stared at me, his face gone blank. 'How 'to get ready' to describe a safety pin? What's this 'get ready' bit? It's just a safety pin. You're kiddin'.'

'The heck I am,' I said. 'You just called it a 'tool'. If you're going to describe it, know enough about it to find the words for the job. Words are also tools, whether they describe other tools, or tornadoes, toys, teeth, trees, or tractors.'

'Start with thinking about the readers; will they be in an outfit that makes specialized equipment to fabricate safety pins; will it be a safety pin huckster contacting customers by phone, personal contact, or letter, or how about some kid's mom up-country in an underdeveloped country who never even heard about Velcro flaps on diapers, if she ever heard of diapers at all. Just assume the woman lives in a village where no one ever heard of safety pins until a K-Mart opened up alongside the town rice paddy. What I'm gettin' at is: who's the information for? How much do they really need to know in order to do what they want with the thing?'

The idea grabbed him and I let him lead. Backs against the kiosk wall, staring out at the drizzle but

not seeing it, we analyzed a safety pin and how to lay the groundwork to describe it. He unfastened the pin from his haversack, and using it as an exhibit, we did a parts breakdown, recalled what we could about the range of popular sizes; we estimated raw materials requirements per thousand units; debated how to cut the pin retainer clip from flat stock and form it around the wire firmly so that a child couldn't separate one from the other; touched on features for machine tools to fabricate safety pins; then jumped to the economics of designing robotic machine tools to mass produce and corner the safety pin market.

We delved into designing a pin with enough stiffness in the wire so that the pointed end would not bend out of the clip head and keep the tip from accidentally disengaging; we laughed over deburring the parts so that Mom's fingers and the baby's fanny wouldn't get scratched, and quickly agreed on the need to coat the pin with a rust inhibitor to protect it from the corrosive effects of dank cloths in warm places. We explored packaging, marketing and replacement factors.

By now his hair was almost dry and he finger-combed it spikey.

'Hey, ol' man,' he said, 'this is a good rap, but it's only a safety pin.'

'Don't knock it,' I replied. 'Safety pins, in one form or another, have been industrial and household tools for centuries and will be for many more. Anyhow, we're using it as an example, the same principles apply whether it's a safety pin, a computer, TV, or space ship. Getting back to your part of the job, when you've got it all together, and understand it and the customer's needs, then you're close to starting the writin' job.'

'Based on who wants to know, you might need to spell out what the parts are made from, their dimensions, the diameter of the spring loop, and the wire's bending limits. You might need to describe the integrated clip head and the pin shaft and how they were attached.'

He stared at me, and his eyes widened in wonder at the boundless vistas I had just opened. He was far beyond safety pins.

'If you're interested in technical writing,' I continued, 'keep in mind that collecting data and understanding it precedes the mechanics of writing.' I paused. 'And when you do write, whatever you're writing about—a safety pin or a space rocket, do it with such precision that what you come up with can form the image you want in the mind of someone who has been both blind since birth and incapable of feeling anything with his or her hands. That's the test.'

The look of discovery was replaced by skepticism. 'Aw, c'mon, man, that can't be the real world for technical writers,' he said. 'People who use tools learn by doing, or they follow a book. They see what they're working' on and feel things with their hands.'

'Let's think about that,' I said. 'Millions of people who see poorly, or not at all, or who have other sensory problems, use precision tools all the time. Many of them use tech data recorded on audio systems or in Braille. The entire field of communications to bypass sensory limitations is just beginning to open up; it'll be part of your world. Data in dozens of arrangements, for design, training aids, or operating instructions are needed by folks who, very often, haven't used the equipment before or who, for some other reason, need specs right there, alongside, all the time. In this world of thousands of languages and dialects, and physical and mental limitations beyond counting, even basic tools, like a safety pin, need to be understood all along the line from designer to user. Understanding means communications; think about it.'

We shared silence for a while.

'Hey, man, I like that,' he said softly.

We glanced at the sky. The clouds were breaking up. As we abandoned our shelter under the dome, he shook his head. 'All this from a safety pin,' he said. The look of wonder was back.

'A diaper pin?'

Raising my arm, I pumped my fist at the sky. 'Today, the diaper pin, tomorrow the world.'

We laughed. At the entrance to the library we shook hands and went our ways. I never saw him again, but I sometimes wonder what he chose for his life's work.

The 1988 Edition of the Encyclopedia Americana defines 'logistics' as: "... the movement and maintenance of military forces. Along with tactics, strategy, and intelligence, logistics is one of the four main elements of military science. Logistics encompasses all of the planning and operational functions associated with military supply, movement, and services. These include the design, procurement, and maintenance of materiel; the movement, evacuation, and hospitalization of military personnel; the transportation and storage of military supplies and equipment; and the design and construction, maintenance, and operation of military facilities and installations."

A copy of these memoirs has been furnished to the Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, and to the Office of History, Air Force Materiel Command, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

Parachute Rigger, World War Two, Hawaiian Air Depot,
Hickam Field, Hawaii 1941-1948

Introduction

In early 1995, the students at a middle school in a Northeastern city studied United States involvement in WW2. They initiated an e-mail project to invite memoirs from older Americans who had experienced that era in the Armed Forces and on the home front. The students wanted to learn about WW2 directly from the people who had served in the nation's wartime military and Merchant Marine, and from civilians who had produced, serviced and transported weapons, equipment, foodstuffs and other things for the war effort from where they were made to where they were used. They wanted to hear from those who had cared for the wounded and had helped in other ways.

Many older adults in the Internet community who read the students' invitation contributed their recollections of the war years. Their stories, in turn, brought questions from the students to which the elders responded. The Q&As, at times, became lively exchanges of ideas. At the conclusion, the students' teacher reported to the electronic community that the project was a success: the students learned history from those who had lived it. The storytellers, many long retired, fascinated their audiences with facts and personal reminiscences which might not otherwise have surfaced. Together with the students, the elders had constructed a bridge from the 1940s to the 1990s and, in doing so, had contributed to the historical records of an important era in American history. Further, the process had strengthened lines and clarity of communications and understanding across generations.

Memoir

I wrote about my WW2 work as a parachute rigger. To set the stage, I described the parachute's purpose, e.g., to lower a weight, be it a human being or an object (cargo) at a safe rate of descent from altitude to the ground. In time of war, the controlled descent might be that of an aircrew member who had to abandon an aircraft because it could no longer remain safely airborne.

In another context, during WW2, more than one hundred thousand airborne troops parachuted from transport aircraft with their weapons and gear as part of military operations. At least equal in numbers, cargo parachutes lowered food, equipment, ammunition and other essential supplies to the fighting forces and to isolated civilian communities. Parachutes also have a wide range of uses in peacetime, as examples, sports parachuting, 'fire jumpers' fighting forest fires, and rescue operations in terrain or other circumstances that preclude less hazardous access.

Parachutes must work the first time; there are no second chances.

In September 1941, I was a civilian parachute rigger for the Air Service Command at Patterson Field, near Dayton, Ohio. My job was to repair and pack-for-service personnel and cargo parachutes for United States Army Air Corps aircrews, Army parachute troops in training, and for U.S. and friendly foreign nations' special operations in which the U. S. was involved around the world.

The months from September through November of 1941 were busy times for our shop. An intense conflict raged across Europe and on many fronts in Asia and Africa. The United States Armed Forces accelerated their training programs, and Americans were also active in the war zones of other nations. The parachute shop, as in most other industrial shops at Patterson Field and many other air bases throughout the United States, worked a round-the-clock seven-day week.

Damaged man-carrying and cargo parachutes were brought to our shop in large quantities from

United States training bases and overseas theaters of operations. Often, the parachute harnesses, which are designed to wrap around the jumpers to lower them safely, were shredded, canopies and shroud lines torn or severely abraded, and canopy containers (packs) and emergency survival accessories scorched or missing. I was part of a crew that repaired and packed all types of parachutes, and drop-tested a representative selection that had received major repair and packed for operational use.

The drop test consisted of attaching a service-packed parachute to a 120- pound weight or canvas-covered dummy, and loading the weights or dummies into a C-47 (Dakota) airplane. A 30-foot lanyard, with snap- hooks at both ends connected the parachute's ripcord grip to the airplane inside the door. The door was lashed open before takeoff. Each of the two men on the test crew wore a parachute and was also secured to the airplane frame by heavy belts as a precaution against falling out.

The pilot took off and circled the field at an altitude under one thousand feet. Approaching the drop zone, the co-pilot flashed a warning light above the door where the parachute handlers were stationed. At the next signal, the handlers, one on each side, heaved the dummy out. The lanyard, reaching full extension, pulled free the rip cord's pack closing pins, the pack flaps were instantly drawn back by strong bungee cords, and a small spring-loaded pilot chute ejected, opened, and caught the air stream, drawing the main canopy out to the full length of its shroud lines. The canopy skirt caught air, opened, inflated the canopy fully, and the parachute and its 'weight' descended. The ground crew tracked the parachute visually to estimate where it would land.

Ground crew work was not dull. I remember how we spread out along an aircraft's line of flight as it neared the drop zone, observed the chute ejection and canopy opening, and the dummy swinging in an arc underneath. There were times during low altitude drops when ground crew had to move fast to get out of the way. As soon as we thought that we knew where the parachute would land, we'd run toward it and, as soon as we got to where the parachute landed, jump on and pin down the dummy, haul in one (preferably two) of the webbing straps (risers), spill air from the canopy, and get it all together with the least possible damage to the parachute-and ourselves.

There were times, even on a relatively calm day, when a gust would pass across the field and re-inflate the canopy before we got to it. A partially inflated canopy in a gentle breeze can drag a 120-pound dummy along the ground faster than ground handlers can run. Also, a canopy (made of natural silk in those days) that drags the ground usually collects snags.

I'll always remember chasing a descending parachute that touched down in a sudden gust that dragged, rolled, twisted, and bounced the dummy along a grassy field we were using for the drop zone. I was closest and gave chase. Finally, with a lunge, I landed on the dummy, wrapped both legs around it, and grasped and hauled back one of the risers. I managed to spill enough air to deflate the canopy. Controlling a dummy that is being tossed around by a sudden gust is akin to riding a lively pony.

Back at the shop after the tests, we inspected every part of a repaired parachute closely to see how well it had withstood the test. Some years previously, apprentice parachute riggers were not certified until they had jump-tested a parachute that they, themselves, had inspected, repaired and packed. The requirement for certification of riggers by 'jumping their chutes' was suspended in 1941 because of enormously increased shop workloads shortly before the U.S. formally joined its allies in the war. *** On Sunday, December 7, 1941, I was working the night shift in the Parachute Shop. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had occurred that morning and was being reported on the radio in continuous news flashes. About an hour after my work shift began, the shop supervisor instructed all parachute riggers to go immediately to the aircraft maintenance main hangar nearby. Several hundred men from aircraft repair, sheet metal, and instrument repair shops, and other shops on the base were already there when I arrived. They were milling about; I joined the crowd and wondered why we had been assembled.

A military officer climbed to the work platform at the top of an aircraft maintenance stand. Drawing everyone's attention, he announced that the Army Air Corps needed skilled technicians and supervisors immediately at Hickam Field in Hawaii. Whoever wanted to go, he said, should raise his arm and his name and badge number would be entered on a list.

I happened to be single, footloose and fancy-free at the time, and my arm got caught in the updraft. We were directed to stand by, and the others instructed to return to their shops. Those of us who stayed formed a line, our identities were verified against our badge numbers and photographs, and our job titles entered on a list. Each was given an instruction sheet and ordered to comply.

The next morning, following instructions, I reported to the dispensary for vaccinations and immunization shots and on to the Personnel Office to sign papers that came at me from all directions. I was informed that I had one week to get my affairs in order; after that I would be on standby for

departure.

A week later, along with several hundred other volunteer workers, I boarded a train on a siding adjacent a base supply warehouse. The train, with all windows covered by blackout curtains, departed Patterson Field, Ohio in the dead of night, and arrived three days later at Moffett Field near Mountain View, California. Disembarked, we lined up for bedrolls, and were pointed toward rows of tents in a muddy field adjacent a dirigible hangar. An instruction sheet, tacked to the tent's center pole, told us where the mess halls were located, and the meals' schedule by tent number.

Additional trains arrived in the days that followed. Hundreds of civilian workers joined us in the tents waiting for the next leg of our journey. We soon became acquainted; we were from all across the country: New York and Pennsylvania, Ohio and Georgia, Alabama and Texas, Utah and California. The Army Air Corps bases where we signed up were Griffis and Olmstead, Patterson and Robbins, Brookley and Kelly and Hill and McClellan. We were part of a vanguard moving out with little or no advance notice. Except for a carry-on bag with a change of clothing and a few personal items, our luggage had gone directly into the ship's hold.

Days passed. The 'alert' came one night about 2 AM, shouted along the tent lines, 'This is it, you guys. Movin' out. One hour.'

In a torrential downpour, we slogged through ankle-deep mud and climbed into the backs of canvas covered trucks. Flaps down, escorted by an armed military escort in Jeeps, all the trucks were blacked out except for dim lights gleaming through slits in the headlights. We formed up as a miles-long convoy rolling north along US101 from Moffett Field, and arrived shortly before dawn at Fort Mason, adjacent Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. The trucks filled the wharf in double and triple lines from end to end. A gangway led up to the deck of a ship alongside. We learned later that the vessel was the U.S. Grant, a World War I troop transport.

Herded below deck, we jammed into compartments where the narrow bunks were five high along aisles barely wide enough for passing. A 'Now, here this...!' over the loudspeaker restricted all passengers to their compartments, and to passageways only when necessary until we were out of the harbor. We were to have our life preservers with us at all times.

Hours later, the ship's vibration, a rolling about sensation in my center of gravity, and creaking along the bulkheads, told me we were under way. Scuttlebutt was that we were in a convoy escorted by destroyers. Enemy submarines were suspected off the coast. Rumors abounded.

We took turns going on deck by compartment number. The convoy of ten ships zigzagged frequently to minimize the success of an enemy air or submarine attack. Finally, on the fifth or so day out from San Francisco, land appeared on the horizon and, shortly afterward, we saw Diamond Head. Our ship left the convoy and entered Honolulu harbor.

We disembarked under heavy military guard at the Aloha Tower pier and boarded the Toonerville Trolley, as we got to know the train on Oahu's narrow gauge railway. An hour later, we were at Hickam.

The devastation was appalling. Burned-out hulks of bombed aircraft were scattered about on parking aprons and in hangars, and piles of debris lay along roadways. The roofs of military barracks hung down along the outside of the structures; they had exploded up and outward over the walls.

As a senior technician, I was assigned to the recovery and repair of damaged parachutes, life rafts, inflatable life preservers, oxygen masks, and the escape-and-evasion kits that air crews relied on when they bailed out over enemy territory. All of the equipment that came to our shop was closely inspected and repaired if possible. As soon as parachutes and survival gear were fixed and ready for service, they were returned to the airplane from which they came, shipped to air bases in the forward areas, or into backup supply.

Many of us joined Hickam Field's armed civilians, officially titled the Hawaiian Air Depot Volunteer Corps. We were a group of employees who, during non-duty hours, trained to handle and fire a rifle, pistol, and aircraft machine gun. We patrolled base storage areas at night where high security was needed, armed with '03 Enfield rifles, also aircraft maintenance hangars, warehouses, bombsight repair shops, and an engine repair line underground at Wheeler Field, near Wahiawa in the Oahu highlands.

As armed civilians, we were each given an identification card to carry in our wallets. The card stated, in fine print, that if captured by the enemy while carrying a weapon, we were entitled to treatment as 'prisoners of war.' The Army Air Corps military officer who commanded our unit said that, since we did not wear military uniforms, nor carry formal military identification tags, the card would certify us as 'combatants.' The statement on the card was supposed to keep us from being shot as spies in the event

Hawaii was invaded by the enemy.

During the war years, I repaired and packed thousands of personnel and cargo parachutes, and serviced many other types of emergency survival gear.

After the war, my job was changed. I investigated mistakes that had been made during manufacture or repair in all types of equipment. My job was to examine what was wrong, acquire exhibits, and interview technicians and administrators who had knowledge on how and why an item of equipment had failed or was otherwise deficient. After compiling the information, I wrote reports that described the problem and its possible causes so that specialists and engineers who were located thousands of miles distant might better understand the problem and how to correct it.

I worked at Hickam Field until April, 1948, and then returned to the air base where I had signed up when the war began. By then, the installation had expanded enormously, and was named Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. *** Any questions?

The students e-mailed their questions to me, and I replied, also by e-mail.
An example:

Do riggers jump the 'chutes they pack?

A. Before WW2, the answer would be 'yes,' however, during the war the requirement was suspended because of the time involved. It is not unusual for a jumped parachute to incur minor damage in descent or upon landing, which then required time and materials to repair. The expense could not be justified under the new priorities.

Q. How did you get from fixing parachutes to writing reports about mistakes and defects?

A. My change in jobs came about because of an incident when I worked on parachutes and other emergency survival equipment. In 1942, large numbers of damaged and deteriorated parachutes were shipped from mainland U.S. bases to Hickam Field and other Air Corps bases in the Pacific. For example, we received parachutes that were ripped or had severely mildewed canopies; their were badly frayed suspension lines, rusted metal connectors, and the cotton webbing straps that secured the aircrew member were so rotten that they came apart when handled. Other types of survival gear that came to us from the mainland also had defects which made them useless in an emergency: life rafts and life preservers did not inflate as they should, and escape-and-evasion kits had missing components that would have been vital to a downed aircrew member. In such circumstances, the assembly was unsafe and, at times, beyond repair.

I complained to my supervisor about the quality of the parachutes and survival gear that we were getting from the mainland, and he passed my observations along to his supervisor. He told me to put my complaints in writing, which I did, describing the defects or damage in detail, often including photographs or other exhibits. The poor quality of life-saving gear that had been sent to us, I wrote, added to the risk of an emergency bailout from a disabled airplane and escape-and-evasion in hostile territories.

At work one day, I was called to my supervisor's office.

'Just got a phone call from the front office,' he said. 'You're to report immediately to Headquarters, Seventh Air Force. The soldier in the Jeep outside is waiting for you. He'll drive you there. Move.'

Sitting alongside the driver, I wondered what it was all about. The thought that I had made an error in my work made me nervous. Was I being called on the carpet because of an injury, or worse, that had resulted from an improperly packed parachute?

At Seventh Air Force headquarters, I was met at the door by a Colonel, who cleared me past the security guards. I followed him into an office that had a sign on the door that read 'Major General White, Commander, Seventh Air Force'. Several men in uniform were standing near a desk at the far side of the room. A uniformed officer was seated behind the desk. In the middle of the room lay several packed parachutes were in a heap on the floor.

When the officer behind the desk noticed me he stood, came round, and walked to and crouched next to the parachutes. He motioned me down beside him. On each of his shoulder tabs he wore a Major General's two stars.

'OK, son,' he said, 'show me the problem.'

My reports had received attention.

I stared at the parachutes. Did any among them include the damage I had reported? I checked an inspection log in a pocket attached to one of the parachutes. Directives required that the date of last inspection and packing be entered by the technician who had done the work. The log showed that the parachute had been recently inspected and packed at a stateside Air Corps base.

I stood, bent forward over the parachute, and grasped one of its 'risers.' The life of the jumper would depend on the strength of the webbing. I jerked the riser straight up as hard as I could I shook it repeatedly against the twenty-five pound weight of the packed parachute. The yanks and shakes I gave the parachute were merely a fraction of the shocks that it would need to absorb during emergency use in supporting the weight of a human being.

Several cords, from which the webbing was woven, separated. The parachute was at the very beginning of its service life in the Pacific Area, wherein mildew, dampness, rot and other hazards to the strength of natural fibers was highly prevalent. Here was another dangerously weakened emergency parachute, packed and tagged 'serviceable'.

The General stared at the shredded webbing, then at me, nodding, 'thanks.' The Colonel, who had escorted me in, motioned to me and pointed at the door.

As I left, I heard the General say, 'I want a personal on this to Hap Arnold.' General Arnold was the Commander of the Army Air Corps worldwide during WW2, and reported to the President of the United States.

I returned to my job. The quality of parachutes and other survival gear arriving at Hickam from mainland bases improved.

Serious manufacturing and servicing mistakes were also found in other types of equipment used by the Army Air Corps. When the fighting part of the war was over the Armed Forces, in general, looked back on the 'how' and 'why' of its methods including what could be done to improve the quality of equipment. I was one of many technicians assigned to collect as much physical evidence and other forms of information as possible about what was wrong with military equipment and procedures and to prepare reports that would help engineers, administrators and contractors to correct the problems. Several years after I retired I wrote a pamphlet for the Small Business Administration titled 'Fixing Production Mistakes' of which about 300,000 copies were distributed.

Preventing and fixing mistakes is an ongoing and time-consuming task in both government and industry.

Memoir: Parachute Logistics, Korean War, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, 1949-1950

Preface

This memoir concerns a decision I made at the outbreak of the Korean War for procurement of aircrew emergency bailout parachutes for the United States Air Force (USAF). Context, chronology, and USAF aircraft types operating in the Korean Theater at the time are to the best of my recollections and references available from public libraries and the Internet. 'AFMC' (Air Force Materiel Command), as used in this memoir, identifies the USAF command responsible for acquisition and logistics management of USAF materiel and supplies and applies to the same organization under its prior designations. Opinions expressed herein are those of the writer and not necessarily those of military or civilian personnel of the United States Air Force or the Department of Defense.

Note: The technical design and operation of military man-carrying parachutes has advanced enormously since WW2 and the Korean War, as have parachute servicing, packing and maintenance methodologies. The Korean War in general began with the weapons and equipment of WW2. Where significant shortages of vital equipment existed or were otherwise considered certain to occur, procurements were initiated, taking into account acquisition 'lead time' and the pipeline to the ultimate user.

Decision

Rather than procure 50,000 man-carrying (emergency bailout) parachutes as complete assemblies, e.g., in which the canopy's suspension lines are permanently connected at time of manufacture to the harness and through the harness to the canopy container (pack), as in the past, the AFMC procurement initiated in 1950 was by major components (canopy, harness, and canopy container (pack)). The components were subsequently assembled into one of three 'standard' types of complete parachutes, as

needed, by certified technicians in- house at AFMC supply and maintenance depots to meet priority needs in Korea and for related support activities.

Context

In 1949, the Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson cut back radically the Armed Forces' programs for weapons and support systems. The Korean War, in which the Soviet Union and Communist China openly supported and militarily joined North Korea against the United Nations, was launched the following year.

In the early '50s, Hqs AFMC had Command jurisdiction of 8 major industrial depots and at least an equal number of sub-depots and special activities throughout the continental U S and in foreign countries (Europe, Philippines, Japan, Middle East, North Africa, etc.)

For several years following the end of WW2 and creation of the autonomous Air Force the logistical missions, organizations, and personnel policies for active duty military and civil service personnel experienced important changes in their management, location, and performance of functions. The changes were reflected in chain of command, consolidation and/or wholesale reassignment of materiel property classes, Hqs components and field organizations, transferring or eliminating low priority workloads and assuming new missions and industrial workloads. Concurrently, the worldwide Cold War and its effects steadily increased in scope and intensity throughout Europe, Africa, and the Far East. Extensive and ongoing reductions-in-force among military and civil service personnel accompanied a nationwide conversion from war to civilian economies.

In 1950, shortly before US military action in Korea (see June 30, 1950 in Time Line), I was assigned to supervise several supply technicians. The primary function of my group was to determine USAF worldwide requirements and distribution for emergency survival equipment which included parachutes, aircrew emergency life preservers, emergency survival kits and their components, and other aircrew personal emergency gear for USAF-worldwide.

Parachutes then in the possession of USAF field commands and in back-up supply warehouses throughout the world had been procured for WW2, which had ended 5 years previously. An unknown quantity of parachutes in warehouse storage at USAF installations had been declared excess to requirements or were close to their maximum authorized 'years in service since dates of manufacture' (the date of manufacture was stamped on the canopy). At the 'maximum' age of 7 years, personnel parachutes were, by USAF regulation, to be removed from further service for aircrew emergency bailout, although they could be used for cargo drops.

Computing quantities of serviceable parachutes and spare parts to be on hand Computing quantities of serviceable parachutes and spare parts to be on hand for the USAF active and programmed aircraft inventory was made by type of parachute, e.g., seat, back or chest, as applicable to aircraft type. Parachute type depended on crewmember or passenger stations; space available in cockpit and cabin; access to and through emergency exits; and the aircrew member's weight, e.g., aircrew or passengers above a certain total weight (body weight plus flight clothing, emergency kit, flotation gear plus the parachute) were entitled to a parachute having a larger diameter canopy.) Based on aircraft type and aircrew stations (or special circumstances) the harness of a 'quick attachable chest' chute (QAC) might also be worn in flight and the pack hooked to it before bailout.

Requirements computations for parachutes took into account quantities in service by type (back, seat, chest), in the pipeline, and in back-up warehouse storage (serviceable and repairable). Information on quantity and condition of parachutes in storage was not reliable in the years immediately following the end of WW2.

Translating a requirement into acquisition called for justifying funds, ensuring that procurement and manufacturing specifications and tech data were current, and initiating and monitoring acquisition documents. New production parachutes from a commercial source received an acceptance inspection before being shipped to a USAF regional or property class depot or directly to the base supply activity where the requirement existed. There, the parachutes was scheduled to the base parachute shop (part of the Maintenance function) where it received an Air Force directed technical inspection, aired, pre-pack re-inspection, packed for service, post-pack inspection a supervisor or certified inspector and returned to 'Supply' for further processing to complete the requisitioning transaction.

USAF parachutes procured from a commercial contractor (manufacturer) are normally shipped unpacked (that is, with the canopy rolled up loosely in the canopy container (pack) and the 4 webbing harness risers permanently connected to the canopy suspension lines by 4 stainless steel links; six suspension (shroud) lines tied and permanently stitched to each link. When suspension lines and harness webbing are so stitched, undoing the stitches weakens reliability at vital points; damaged

suspension lines and harnesses must be replaced.

The servicing and packing log, which is marked with the same USAF serial number as the parachute pack and canopy, is signed by the rigger and inserted in a pocket on the pack assembly During WW2 and on into the '50s USAF certified military and civil service parachute riggers prepared parachutes for service.

Time Line Actions

The following events on the Korean War time line had logistics implications.

— 1948 April 8 - US troops ordered withdrawn from Korea on orders from President Harry S. Truman. — 1949 June 29 - Last US troops withdrawn from South Korea. — 1950 June 30 - President Truman orders US ground forces into Korea and authorizes the bombing of North Korea by the US Air Force. US troops are notified of their deployment to South Korea.

I recall that the morning following President Truman's order to the Armed Forces to initiate military action in Korea the military chief of the Hqs AFMC Equipment Division, Directorate of Supply, strode along the 'supervisors' row in the office where I worked. He was accompanied by my Branch Chief who was responsible for specified categories of military equipment and supplies, including those assigned to me. Pointing to each supervisor (or desk if it was unattended at the moment) the Division Chief briefly consulted with the Branch Chief, then read off a dollar amount from a spreadsheet he held in his hand. The dollar amount for my area of responsibility was \$25 million, as a starter.

Immediately upon the Division Chief's departure, the Branch Chief assembled his subordinate supervisors and directed that the \$-amounts cited were mandatory totals for Purchase Requests (PRs) from each to be his office at the start of business the following day. He would review them and, upon his approval, have them hand-carried to the Division office. The PRs were to be for most urgently needed equipment and supplies to support current and 'programmed' USAF operations in Korea.

Priorities

My highest priorities for USAF in Korea were aircrew parachutes, aircraft emergency life preservers, aircrew emergency bailout survival kits (attached to parachute harnesses), oxygen masks, and components ('components,' for instance, took into account that inflatable life preservers are not much help to an aircrew member floating in the sea if the CO2 inflation cartridges had not been checked and installed or had been discharged for an unauthorized purpose. Life vest checklists directed that inflatable life vests would be examined by the wearer or a technician before donning to ensure that the neoprene inner bladders, mouth inflation tube connections, and inflation CO2 cartridges and levers were intact. It was not unusual to find that the CO2 cartridges were missing or the cartridge seals pierced and the cartridge empty.

Insofar as parachutes were concerned, 'components' included replacements for damaged ripcords (pins bent, cable kinked), pilot chutes, harnesses, canopy containers (packs), attached emergency kits, etc.

As US-UNCommnd forces in Korea intensified combat operations, the urgent need for parachutes, aircraft life preservers and other survival and escape-and-evasion gear increased. The United Nations Command included the United Kingdom, Australia, South Africa, Belgium, Greece, Canada and Thailand and other nations.

USAF aircraft in the Korean Theater included the P-51, F-80, F-86, B- 29, KC-50, C-46, C-47, C-54, C-82, C-118, C-119 and C-121.

The F-51 (Mustang) role in Korea was ground attack. The F-80 (Shooting Star) was the first operational American jet fighter and a major weapon system of the Korean War. The F-80 recorded the first USAF aerial victories in June 1950. The F-80's high accident rate in the early years of the war was attributed to pilots familiar with propeller-driven aircraft transitioning to the faster and more powerful jets. The F-80 was used for ground support after it was replaced by the F-86 in air superiority tactics. In effect, the USAF was experiencing a major transition from relatively slow propeller-driven to much higher speed jet aircraft - in the middle of an intense air war. The transformation involved upgrade training for jet aircraft air and ground crews, line and support shops technicians were in practically OJT (on the job training), revamping test and maintenance facilities, acquiring and shipping maintenance new tools and equipment, skills, procedures, tech data, etc. Among these drastic and far-reaching changes, parachute compatibility with aircraft was one among thousands.

The F-86 jet had entered service in 1949, about one year before the start of the Korean War. Hundreds of F-86s and other aircraft, as well as aircraft support and personal equipment were provided

to allied nations under the Mutual Defense Assistance Program (MDAP).

The total additional quantity required for USAF's immediate needs in Korea and for other developing or programmed USAF operations worldwide was 50,000 parachutes and maintenance spares. The U S was well along in its conversion and retooling to a civilian economy that would concentrate on meeting the pent up needs of the populace. A one- shot relatively short-duration production program for a distant 'police action' did not represent a sound investment to industry.

Considering the time required by prime contractors to reactivate (actually to recreate) product lines, install manufacturing equipment plus acquisition of materials, parachute hardware, manufacturing tools and skills; acquire components through outsource or in-house-manufacture, and lead time to integrate production and assembly, and ship complete parachutes, etc., was much too long. It got down to how many of each type parachute (seat, back or chest) was most urgently needed, and how could we get the right types and number of parachutes to where they had to be. What was the mix of parachute types to be procured commercially, checked through the USAF internal quality assurance process, and shipped (packed or unpacked based on circumstances) to meet Korean Theater needs in a combat environment and rapid changes in the Theater's types of aircraft?

A 'complete' parachute, as procured during WW2 consisted of all of its components assembled and permanently connected to each other, except for the pilot parachute, ripcord, and 6 bungee/hook assemblies, all of which were installed by the rigger during the pack-for-service process. When the shroud lines, canopy and pilot 'chute are folded into the 'pack' (container) and the flaps brought up from the sides and over to enclose the canopy, the ripcord pins inserted through holes in the cones are brought up through grommets in the opposing flaps.

The bungee (elastic) cords are hooked to eyes along the packs frame so that they snap the flaps back when the ripcord is pulled to clear the way for the pilot 'chute to eject and draw the main canopy out to full extension. The ripcord cable is run through a sleeve of which one end ferrule is fastened to the harness webbing and the other end to the pack side flap in line with the canopy release cones. When the ripcord is pulled, the direction of its withdrawal is from the canopy pack across the wearer's chest.

Based on my experience in parachute maintenance in the Pacific during WW2 and consultations on this procurement action with Hqs AFMC maintenance professionals, Wright Air Development Center parachute engineers and AeroMedical Laboratory survival specialists, I concluded the best approach would be for several contractors to provide USAF with canopies, harnesses and packs, separately. Small items such as ripcords, pilot chutes, bungees, etc., could be procured independently from qualified sources. The AFMC depot and/or operating wing's Supply function and Maintenance certified parachute riggers would take it from there and connect the canopies to the right harnesses and packs for the job, pack for service, and get the parachutes to where they were needed.

I initiated the Purchase Requests, got coordination on technical accuracy of procurement data from the parachute engineers and Maintenance technical services. To my knowledge contracts were awarded.

Not long afterward, I learned that several major contractors were unhappy with acquisition by major components. I was was criticized by supervision for what I did and notified (informally) that an 'action' might be taken. As it turned out, I was 'transferred' to the Hq AFMC Directorate of Maintenance to analyze deficiencies reported from the field on aircrew (personal) emergency equipment, and to write maintenance and inspections manuals and technical orders for that type of equipment.

About a year or so after my transfer from Supply the individual who took my job in the Supply Directorate told me, in the presence of my former unit's employees, that my decision had been 'right.' I didn't ask for details.

Memoir: Logistics Planning, The Cold War, Nouasseur Air Base, Morocco 1953-1956

Preface: The 'Cold War' between the U S and the former USSR began in the mid-1940s and extended over the following half-century until the Soviet Union dissolved in the early 1990s. The Cold War's cost to the United States exceeded \$8 trillion. More than 110,000 American military lives were lost on foreign soil in the major military conflicts of that era: Korea in the early 1950s and Viet Nam from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s. Military personnel and civilians of all nations involved that were killed or wounded on both sides in those two wars and in other clashes between the US/NATO countries and the USSR have been estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands.

Introduction: >From 1953 to 1956 I was a U S Air Force civilian employee at Nouasseur Air Base, about 20 miles southwest of Casablanca in what was then French Morocco. My job was in the Logistics

Plans Office of the Nouasseur Air Depot.

The Nouasseur Air Depot was being constructed and staffed to support one of three major USAF/NATO logistics centers (Air Materiel Forces European Areas North, Central, and South) in the European-Med-North African-Middle Eastern Theater in the event of a war with the USSR. Each AMF and its 'depot' would serve a primary geographic area. Generally, when AMFEA was fully implemented its mission would range from acquisition to distribution of materiel and supplies, repair and maintenance of aircraft and equipment, and support to its constituents by way of U S Military Assistance Programs and other arrangements.

In addition to the Nouasseur Air Depot (AMFEA South), the Burtonwood Air Depot (AMFEA North), near Manchester UK, would support air forces in the UK and European Northern Tier countries. The Chateaux Air Depot (AMFEA Central) in Chateaux, France, about half way between Paris and Marseilles, would support the Central Tier, which extended beyond the Northern Tier to the Mediterranean coast (overlapping somewhat with those of the Nouasseur Air Depot in Spain, Portugal, Greece, and Turkey). Nouasseur (Casablanca) had the Southern Tier, which included North Africa on into the Middle East, countries along and in the Med and areas that were not within the Northern and Central Tiers.

As a Logistics Planner at Nouasseur, one of my projects was to prepare an element of U S Air Force Europe (USAFE) logistics plans to support the U S Strategic Air Command (SAC). The plan would organize, staff, equip, transport, test and evaluate, and (in the event of war) activate and deploy Mobile Maintenance Teams consisting of U S civil service volunteers. The teams would provide on-site emergency repairs sufficient to continue flights of US/NATO combat-damaged or otherwise disabled aircraft compelled to land in the Middle East, on Med islands, or in North Africa on return flights from battle zones.

Strategic Air Command bombers and their direct support aircraft in the active and — at that time — programmed inventory during the early-1950s included the B-47 Stratojet, a six-engine 4,000 mile range medium bomber which entered service in 1950; the B-52 Stratofortress, an eight-engine 8,000+ mile range heavy bomber scheduled to enter operations about 1955, and the C-97 Stratofreighter cargo and tanker versions with four piston-driven engines which had been in SAC fleet operations since about 1950, also late models B-50 and earlier B-29s from WW2.

Context

During the period covered by this memoir, the probability of a worldwide nuclear conflagration, sparked by a Cold War incident between US/NATO and the USSR, was considered to be high. The memories of WW2 were fresh in the minds of everyone. The U S confrontation with the USSR that brought on the Berlin Airlift, and its threat to world peace were of the gravest portent. The Korean 'police action,' another product of confrontations between USSR/Communist China and U S/NATO, was winding down. 'Viet Nam' was on the horizon.

During much of the half-century post-WW2 Cold War era the US depended mainly on its own economic, military, industrial and human resources to defend its own far-flung interests. The international competition for country and regional security resources to rebuild a devastated Europe, and administer the lands of the former central powers, created a massive arms race that affected the lives and destinies of people everywhere.

In the late-40s/early-50s the US-USSR conflict of interests was at a critical stage. Intercontinental nuclear-armed ballistic missiles were far beyond drawing boards; their operational reach, capabilities, and effects against civilian as well as military targets had been carefully estimated and understood.

The US doubled the number of its Air Force groups to ninety-five, and placed great importance on the Strategic Air Command (SAC). The number of SAC wings increased from 21 in 1950 to 37 in 1952. The growth of SAC air power arrayed US military capabilities and strategies for massive retaliation and Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) by NATO should the USSR launch a pre-emptive attack in Europe.

At least for the next several years, NATO and US planners admitted, however, that neither massive retaliation nor MAD, by themselves, would stop a Soviet first strike and an invasion into Eastern and Central Europe and the Middle East. The USSR could count on huge reserves of its still young, combat-seasoned men under arms, pre-positioned war materiel still in good condition for combat, and relatively short lines of transport and communications.

Operational ICBMs were still several years in the future. The B-52 bomber was still in the early stages of production and deployment. Strategic warfare against construction and operation of Soviet oil drilling, refining, storage, and pipeline facilities in the southwest USSR (Caspian Sea area) were

expected to slow Soviet military momentum. For this and other reasons, the US expanded and modernized its existing facilities to conduct air operations over the USSR's Eastern and Southwestern regions.

NATO and the US built or otherwise secured ground, seaport, and air bases and/or implemented joint-use agreements with governments in the Mediterranean area in the event of a US/NATO-USSR conflict and, specifically relevant to this memoir, in Morocco, Libya, Turkey, and the Central and Eastern Mediterranean generally.

Morocco

In the early 1950s, SAC was the major tenant on military airfields in Morocco: Ben Guerir and Sidi Slimane Air Bases in central Morocco, and Nouasseur Air Base in the desert about 25 kilometers south of the Morocco's dominant port Casablanca. Morocco had been a French protectorate since 1912, and thousands of French citizens and other Europeans had migrated to French and Spanish Morocco over the years and taken up residency. Large numbers of Moroccan, French and other European nationals were employed by the USAF at its bases and the US Navy's tenancy in Port Lyauty, and at other military installations where the U S and/or NATO had been granted French/Moroccan permission to do so.

Throughout the French occupation of Morocco a number of Moroccan nationalist groups formed in opposition to French domination, and engaged increasingly in nationalist political and armed resistance, including occasional bombings and other acts of violence. Sultan Mohammed V sided with the nationalists and was deposed in 1953. This further angered the Moroccan populace. In-country violence increased.

The Sultan returned from exile in 1955 and Morocco gained its independence some years later. Many French and Spanish citizens returned to their countries of origin. French military forces, business enterprises, and employment for the indigenous population in Morocco became uncertain, and so did American military presence on Moroccan territory.

In the years that followed, the Libyan government also changed rulers, with the results that American use of Wheelus Field, for any purpose, was revoked. Nevertheless, context and circumstances in North Africa aside, USAF planning for support to SAC operations under general war conditions, and for a variety of military contingencies, continued; in its way, North Africa all along the Med, would likely experience a *deja vu* of its WW2 occupations and their consequences. Caught up in a nuclear exchange, probably worse.

In WW2, oil refineries, and storage and transport nets, such as those in the Romanian Ploesti complex, were important but extremely costly targets. For instance, in one WW2 mission, of 178 B-24s dispatched to bomb Ploesti, 52 were lost, and all but 35 aircraft suffered damage, one limping home after 14 hours and holed in 365 places. Most of these Allied bombing missions originated in and returned to airfields in North Africa; many of the old landing strips, fuel storage, and maintenance shops previously used by German and Italian military occupiers and then by the Allies, were in poor condition, but they were there.

Caspian Oil Refineries

In the early 1950s, a US/NATO war with the Soviet Union would likely include strategic air attacks against Soviet oil wells, refineries and other industrial plants, storage facilities, and transport nets. If so, USSR facilities in the southwest USSR (the Caspian Sea area) would have been among high priority targets.

That being so, planning for US/NATO aircraft to return from bombing missions over the southwest USSR included routes over-flying Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Crete, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Israel, Egypt, and other countries throughout the Middle East, across the length of the Med, and along its northern and southern coasts.

The Gap

It was expected that among returning aircraft there would be those which had incurred serious damage sufficient to compel landing the aircraft short of its destination. Battle-damaged, or non-operational in flight for other reasons, aircrews might need help to repair their aircraft for a one-time flight further East or otherwise on their way. The 'helpers' had to be as close as possible to where they were needed.

One option, to be implemented immediately upon USAF, SAC, or NATO notice, was to deploy 'rapid area maintenance teams' comprised of U S civil service employees, along with their tool kits and air-

transportable mobile power generators and other essential equipment, to designated locations along the SAC aircraft return routes. Battle-damaged aircraft would be quickly fixed and serviced sufficiently to take off and keep going west, if not all the way, then at least to another location where another quick-fix and service could be rendered. Repairs would be accomplished through use of anything from on-site fabricated bits-and-pieces to parts and assemblies cannibalized from wrecked aircraft.

Tasks

My assignment was to prepare the plan, inspect potential repair sites, work out and integrate the details, and draft a Logistics Plan supplement to the USAFE and SAC overall logistics support plans to close the gap. The draft plan would include policy and procedural guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP); a list of hands-on maintenance and supervisory skills relevant to aircraft in the current SAC inventory, and provide for continuing compatibility of data, tools and procedures with replacement or programmed weapons and support systems. The plan would identify committed US civil service technicians and staff by skill, name and location currently on duty at an AMFEA depot, identify U S personnel policies which would need adjustment to the anticipated circumstances and initiate administrative actions to initiate the changes.

>From there, I went on to determine manpower resources by anticipated skills requirements, identify and set in motion urgent-immediate procedures to acquire (by standard practices or otherwise) relevant and current manuals and tech data, general and special hand tools, etc. More, to plan orientation and training for the program, upgrade skills for maintenance team workers, crew chiefs, and site and regional supervisors.

To design a team member notification system, and a procedure for ongoing liaison with Hqs USAFE (Lindsey Air Base, Weisbaden, Germany) to acquire opportune air transportation from selected pick-up points for the Mobile Maintenance Teams and drop-off at forward area emergency work sites. Put it all together, get staff and command approval in principle at Nouasseur, take the draft to Weisbaden and get staff preliminary sign-off by Hqs Air Material Force European Area and Hqs United States Air Force Europe (USAFE). Following that, to get the coordination of the Directors of Maintenance and the Commanders at Burtonwood Air Depot UK and Chateaux Air Depot France (Burtonwood and Chateaux depots' manpower, tools, and other resources were to be committed to the program, hence their being in the loop for sign-off.)

With that done, I would integrate and send the package off to Hq SAC, Offutt AFB, Oklahoma and give them a crack at it.

Along the way, I got with SAC and other intelligence types and checked the lay of the land from Morocco east to Turkey.

Deployment

The three Directors of Maintenance at Nouasseur (Morocco), Chateaux (France) and Burtonwood (UK) would assemble personnel committed to the Program, and using the previously authorized priorities request Base Commanders for opportune airlift to move skills, tools, supplies, tech data, etc., to the Program's initial assembly point in a specified hangar at Wheelus Field, Libya.

At Wheelus, the program manager (a Nouasseur Air Depot military officer and staff) would shuffle and combine the physically present skills, tools, etc., so that teams and their kits were formed, organized, equipped, and ready to move according to requirements and priorities to where they would be needed. Get the teams to their assigned stations by air, sea or land transport, each Civil Service employee equipped with personal gear adequate for survival under the anticipated conditions.

That, generally, was how it was supposed to work, but we knew better. The reality we saw was that as soon as the nuclear threshold was crossed, which was highly probable, a US/NATO-USSR general war wouldn't last much more than a couple of days. — Several weeks after I coordinated the draft plan, my supervisor at Nousseur sent the final version to Hqs SAC. They replied that it was the best that could be expected under the circumstances. Not long afterward, I transferred back to the States where I got a job at McClellan AFB near Sacramento.

The plan was one of several that I drafted while at Nouasseur and at other places in those early days of the Cold War. Many personal anecdotes, from the deeply sad and poignant to the trivial and absurd, have been written about WW2, Korea, Viet Nam, and the other confrontations between the U S and the Soviets. The Cold War, in as many of its facets as possible, needs to be written about, including memoirs such as this, and they should be entered into the nation's lore so that students may view their many perspectives.

I spent almost two years in researching and drafting the details of this SAC support plan. Would it

have worked if and when the need arose? Were there plans for other options? I don't know. Forward area emergency maintenance (Rapid Area Maintenance - RAM) teams, much more advanced in concept and application, were used in Viet Nam.

Memoir: Suicide Prevention, The Viet Nam War, McClellan Air Force Base, California, 1969-1973

Preface: There is a general viewpoint among experts in suicide and suicide prevention that official statistics on the number of suicides and suicide attempts in any identified population are like the tips of icebergs. They do not reveal to a casual reader the reality of how many individuals in that population killed themselves intentionally and, separately, how many tried to kill themselves, failed, and might try again. Authoritative estimates occasionally appear in both professional and popular media that there are about eight suicides in fact for each that is certified as a suicide for the official record, and about fifteen unsuccessful attempts at suicide for each that is classified as such, again for the official count.

According to figures compiled by the Centers of Disease Control (CDC), suicide rates are rising steadily for teenagers while declining or holding steady in other age groups. Between 1980 and 1993, the suicide rate rose 120 percent for 10 to 14-year olds, and almost 30 percent for 15 to 19-year olds. In part, this rise can be attributed to the increasing availability of firearms, but, in addition, (according to the American Association of Suicidology) 'there are more depressed kids.' And while the actual number of suicides remain quite small - in 1993 there were 315 students in the age group 10 to 14-year old and 1,884 students in the age group 15 to 19-year old who committed suicide. A 1993 study of 16,000 high school students conducted by the CDC found that an astonishing 1 in 12 said that he or she had attempted suicide the previous year.

Camouflage is not unusual: suicide preparations may be arranged so that the act will appear as an accident. An ailing individual might suddenly stop taking life-saving medication; or family members, friends, or 'significant others' might goad or exert harsh psychological pressures on an emotionally distraught person so that suicide becomes the only escape. Ironically, 'suicide statistics' do not examine the impact of a suicide on the victim's family and friends, nor do they note the traumatic and often permanent effects of the failed attempt on the victim. Further, they ignore the financial burden of subsequent home or institutional and health care for both victim and family as well as paying for precautions against further attempts.

Context

Before I retired from the federal civil service in 1974 I was the civilian deputy to the Inspector General (IG) at McClellan Air Force Base, a large military installation near Sacramento, California. I was and am a civilian and a non-professional lay person in all mental health disciplines. I attribute my involvement in 'suicide prevention' to circumstances of the 'Viet Nam' period. At that time, many military mental health professionals and other caregivers were on duty at medical and mental health facilities in Southeast Asia, at way stations along routes for military personnel returning to the U S, and at medical and other facilities in the U. S. where Armed Forces wounded received care. One result was a general shortage of mental health specialists and staff at military installations in the continental U. S. Existing staff, including untrained civilian employees, were often assigned 'additional duties' to fill gaps.

In 1969, the McClellan Air Force Base senior Commander instructed me to represent him on the Sacramento County Mental Health Council. At the time, the Council was considering the establishment of a county Suicide Prevention Service (SPS). The SPS was approved, and I became involved as a volunteer worker. As the SPS functions and workload became clear, I joined its paraprofessional training to certification and when the Service became operational I took my turn on the 'hotline,' especially those related to my McClellan responsibilities. I extended my duties to include SPS liaison with several other military bases in the Sacramento area. At that time, central California and Nevada had military installations where military personnel of all Services were stationed for training and operations, or who were in transit to or from Southeast Asia. In effect, the Sacramento-San Francisco corridor in the late 1960s-early 1970s was filled with military personnel on their way to and from Viet Nam and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. From the outset, as word spread about Sacramento County's SPS hotline, increasing numbers of calls came in from potential and selected draftees and active duty members of the Armed Forces and their families.

One of my Inspector General's office responsibilities was to organize and operate McClellan AFB's support to the Air Force Inspector General Complaints System. The basic principle of the System holds that, as a last resort within their organization, military and civilian personnel and members of military families have the right to address a grievance or appeal to the installation's Inspector General. The installation Inspector General represents the installation's senior Commander in these matters. An

appeal to the IG may be for information and explanations concerning status and duties, to describe perceived unreasonable conditions under which the appellant works, to report on inadequate support to themselves or their dependents or, for other reasons to seek relief from what the grievant considers an intolerable and unjustifiable situation.

The IG, or deputy IG, acting for the senior Commander, hears complaints and appeals and conducts such inquiries and investigations that may be required to resolve the matters. In the context of this memoir, when hearing (or reading) a complaint, there were occasions when a complainant hinted at suicide as the only remaining option should he or she not be given what they considered a reasonable resolution of the problem they presented.

A significant number of phone calls was also being received by the County Suicide Prevention Service 'hotline' from active duty military, military veterans and retired military of all Services, and from members of their families. Many, if not most, such calls (to the SPS) required information or actions from a military or other government entity.

The SPS policy was to not disclose a caller's identity: Protecting a hotline caller's identity is (or was at the time) generally practiced by most crisis intervention centers unless the situation was an imminent life-death crisis.

Organized, volunteer-staffed, telephone suicide prevention 'hotline' services were beginning to appear in the larger cities throughout the U. S. in the late '60s; less than a hundred were in operation across the U S at the time. In order that I might better understand the 'suicide' phenomenon and to accomplish my duties in support of the USAF IG Complaints System, I became a regular volunteer at the SPS, attended their ongoing paraprofessional upgrade training, and worked a shift on the hotline. I served with the SPS Speakers Bureau, Executive Board and other committees and gave talks about the community program at staff, non-commissioned officers', military dependents', and civilian community meetings.

Job-related, I compiled an information kit on suicide myths, and the signs that would generally indicate that a friend or family member might be thinking of suicide. I sent copies of whatever literature I acquired from the SPS and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) to my counterparts at other military bases. The USAF Inspector General printed an article about the information kits in the USAF TIG BRIEF (The Inspector General Brief) an IG administrative newsletter distributed to USAF facilities worldwide and to the Hqs of the other Services. The TIG Brief newsletter was also distributed in Viet Nam. The item resulted in more than 150 requests from Southeast Asia for the information packet, which we forwarded.

During talks I gave to military and general audiences I was occasionally asked for examples of what 'hotline' exchanges with military callers were like. Two of the 3 summaries that follow were related to the Viet Nam conflict. The third is a problem all too common, regardless of the times; it happened and continues to happen as often in the civilian world as it does in the military. I've screened my recollections so as to honor my commitments to confidentiality. The narration reflects a tiny sample of the effects of stress that can surface in military life and is not intended to represent major emotional, behavioral, or physical indicators toward suicide ideation. My regular work shift at the SPS brought me as much of a military-civilian mix of callers as the other hotline workers, so I've seen both sides.

The contacts were all by telephone, and in two of the three cases led to a number of quick follow-on calls to several parties on and off the base. Each caller had the potential for violence, either to self or another. If intervention, at a high point in the interaction failed, the situation might well have deteriorated, possibly with tragic results.

Draftee

While on the job in the McClellan IG office, a phone call came in from the SPS Director who told me he needed my help right then. A young Army draftee was on the SPS hotline and he was threatening to commit suicide. He was supposed to be on his way to Viet Nam but he had gone AWOL instead. He was far from home and felt lost and confused. He said he had one question before deciding whether to kill himself: 'What'll they do to me if I turn myself in?' He wouldn't identify himself or say where he was.

The SPS Director said that he didn't have the answer. He told the soldier he had a contact at a nearby military base that could check it out. Holding him on one line he called me on another and gave me the facts. I immediately called the Staff Judge Advocate - who was part of my on- base network - and had him phone the SPS Director immediately to review the ramifications of military justice as it might apply. The SPS Director passed the information to the soldier and then talked to him for about an hour. The guidance provided by the Staff Judge Advocate gave the soldier options that might reduce potential charges he faced, not ruling out desertion. We never found out what the soldier decided; he never

called back.

This call, and how it was handled, demonstrated teamwork between a community suicide prevention resource and military and civil service administrators on a military base. Comparable groundbreaking was going on in other military-civilian communities and contexts.

Family Problem

The Base Chaplain called me at home late one Sunday night and said he'd had a phone call from a hotline worker at the community SPS. The SPS worker had asked for his help in a call that had come in from an airman's wife. She had phoned the SPS from her home off-base and threatened to kill her husband and then commit suicide.

The caller to the SPS had impulsively terminated the call to the SPS after a few minutes, but in her responses to questions at the outset of the interview, had given her phone number to the crisis worker. After she hung up, the crisis worker judged the woman was more than moderately lethal, and also that she might listen to a military Chaplain. That brought on the call to the Base Chaplain.

After getting the specifics from the crisis worker, the Chaplain phoned the woman and talked to her for about 10 minutes before she hung up on him too. His conclusion, also, was that she was highly lethal for both homicide and suicide. He phoned the Base Security Police and then the Director of Personnel. The Chaplain was leaving that day for Viet Nam; the Director of Personnel suggested he call me.

The Chaplain asked me to follow up. I called the woman. The conversation was heavy, and lasted for more than 2 hours. The problem was in marital relations, finances, and spouse abuse. We finally got around to talking about on-base resources that might ease the load she was carrying: the Staff Judge Advocate, Family Services and Medics. Just listening, and then talking about potential on-base resources helped to lower the pressure. She finally agreed to wait until morning, now only a couple of hours distant, so that the resources we had discussed could be consulted.

First thing that morning, I got the base Family Services people into the act. They moved in fast, took control, got the airman's wife around to talk to the right people, and did a lot themselves. I checked back later. Family Services had her under their wing. She wasn't talking about murder-suicide any more. It was going to be one day at a time for her for a while. She now had somewhere on-base where she felt she could turn, and people in whom she had some confidence.

Why hadn't the woman tried Family Services on her own? I don't know. She chose the civilian community's suicide intervention resource. She had other options, and she might have tried them too. What's my point? Another instance in which military and civilian resources collaborated and made the system work.

Returnee

At about 11 PM one night, I was working my shift at the SPS hotline desk. A call came in from the switchboard supervisor at the city's telephone company. The supervisor said she had a man on-line and he was in a fury. She couldn't handle him. Would I take him? I told her to let me have him, and he was on.

It took a while to get him down to where he could speak coherently. He was an enlisted man in from Viet Nam, making his way to the East Coast. His problem wasn't suicide, it was homicide. He was in a barroom, he said, drinking and minding his own business. Shortly before his call, another patron had ridiculed his uniform and his Service. He had a weapon in his bag and had an almost overwhelming urge to use it.

A stranger in town, passing through, he felt he'd better divert and talk to someone. Searching for some means to vent his rage other than assault, he had, on impulse, picked up the barroom phone and dialed the operator. He must have come down real heavy on her and her supervisor; he found himself of a sudden switched to a hotline worker at the local SPS.

We talked for more than three hours. At the outset he was openly hostile, demanded to know who I was, and how the hell I had been loaded on to him. When I told him, he said he didn't know what 'suicide prevention' was about and wanted no part of it. But he didn't hang up, and we never hung up on anyone.

In our give-and-take, when he realized he was talking to someone who had more than a passing knowledge of the military, who could respond in his jargon and relate to his lifestyle and to his feelings, his hostility eased off. Other feelings began to surface.

He admitted that he had been deeply shaken and enraged by his experiences during border crossings into Cambodia, and he still carried the same, almost overwhelming, anger. Without my bringing it up, he confided that he'd had intense thoughts about self-injury, even suicide, and that the feelings had been strongest before taking off on missions. The rage, and the thoughts of suicide, were still with him and, looking back at them in calmer moments, he said that he was alarmed by their intensity. After a while, he admitted, reluctantly, that he might need help. He said he would think about seeking it out when he got to his permanent station.

At the close, he was much calmer. He phoned back a few hours later and told the hotline worker on duty that he was at the bus depot, and would soon leave for the east. He said to pass the word to me that he was OK.

Collaboration

Eventually, it became evident to me from my IG and SPS experiences, that much could be accomplished through a carefully designed system for collaboration between military bases (or other federal agencies) in any given geographic area and the crisis intervention/suicide prevention (ci/sp) resources of adjacent civilian communities. The potential for good was enormous, not only for and within the military community, but national as well. I learned in time that I was not alone; many others, professionals and lay, were thinking and active along similar lines.

I was convinced that the time was long past for both military and civilian managers and supervisors, in both the public and private sectors to acquire basic indoctrination in ci/sp as it pertained to the people that they commanded or supervised. I wrote numerous letters on the issue, recommending specific actions, and continued doing so after I retired in 1974. My appeals went to the Federal Executive, Congress, and the media. I stressed the urgent need for proactive command (or agency)-wide training and motivational programs to confront the suicide phenomenon, and get organized to reduce suicide attempts and deliberate self-destructive behavior among military personnel, members of their families, and DoD and other Departments' employees.

The essence of my appeal was, first, for a set of formal objectives for the federal military and civil services to move them toward collaboration with community resources that were engaged in grass roots suicide prevention; in essence, collaboration and teamwork between the federal government, as an employer of people, and the communities in which their people lived and worked. If the concept could get a foot in the door at the federal level, then state and county governments might hitch a ride on the system, and ultimately, so would private sector employers. It made no difference which level took the initiative, cross feed and human nature would eventually get the others interested. The suicide trend, the way I read the Public Health Service's statistics of the early and mid-70s, was heading up.

Many government and private sector employers already had in-house programs for stress management. They also had employees who, although lay persons, had been trained and qualified to give emergency CPR and other forms of first aid at the work site. So why not someone in the shop or office who was basically trained in suicide prevention and crisis intervention? As with other on-site emergency services, this person, who would have been trained and qualified to recognize discernible and professionally recognized signs that might precede a suicide attempt, would consult with a supervisor, and exercise his/her judgment in getting the person-in-distress ASAP to professional help.

Community suicide prevention programs (certified SP Centers, informal hotlines, Community Mental Health Centers, etc.) had by that time become a fact of life: they existed, and were part of the system, organized or ad hoc. Proactive 'suicide prevention,' would generate its own force for being: it would not get canceled like an aircraft, ship, or construction program, to the contrary. With oversight by reasonable and conscientious leaders, managers, and supporters, suicide prevention would become ingrained, omnipresent, and a way of life in which everyone would play a vital role. Naive? Maybe, maybe not.

What is vital to sustain 'suicide prevention' is to spread the idea, and make it 'everybody's business.' Making the idea acceptable as 'everybody's business' would be 'everybody's job.' The 'everybody' would include parents and teachers and counselors of children and youth, police officers and rescue workers on the street, and supervisors, staff, and union officials in the workplace. It would be where people played, in their neighborhoods, and go along with each age group to where they would spend their retirement years.

For the elderly (among whom depression and suicide rates are very high) crisis intervention resources, and suicide prevention and risk-reduction depends on leaders and staff of health care institutions, administrators and staff in retirement residence and convalescent communities, senior centers, AARP chapters, and anywhere the elderly gather. The reality would also depend on the elderly themselves, individually and collectively, e.g., to get past the long history they inherited of bigotry,

superstition, and ignorance when it comes to mental health, suicide, and helping survivors of suicide. Emphasis on adult education, support group discussions, and motivational training can help to reduce such barriers among middle year's adults (parents of school age children) as well as the elderly.

An article I wrote in 1984 Suicide Prevention Must Be Everybody's Business was published in the January 14, 1985 issue of the Army, Navy and Air Force Times. It advocated an organized suicide prevention program within the military which would include training and involvement of all active duty military, not confined to those in the medical and mental health fields. I posed the questions:

'a. Does your base have a program whereby supervisors and co-workers who might be confronted with suicidal people are trained to recognize the warning signs and refer potential suicides to professionals?

'b. Are any base personnel, especially security police, social actions or family support workers, trained in crisis intervention techniques? Are any of them volunteer workers in the local community's suicide prevention program?

'c. Does your base have any sort of arrangement with local suicide prevention centers or hotlines so that a civilian crisis worker can contact the base for information or assistance? Do civilian volunteers know exactly whom to call for help when a military person or dependent threatens suicide?

'd. Do your base officials routinely check with local crisis clinics to find out the number and types of distress calls being received from military people? Is this information analyzed to determine trends or patterns?

'e. Do your base mental health workers give talks to active duty and dependents' groups on this subject? Are civilian experts in suicide prevention brought on base to explain their services?'

The following month (February 22, 1985), the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff issued a Memorandum for Major Commands and Staff Agencies which stated in part, 'The Department of the Army has developed a Suicide Prevention Strategy designed to help commanders deal with this problem. Commanders must use this plan and complement it with initiatives tailored to specific needs.' Over the following months the Army issued implementing Departmental, major command, and subordinate level Regulations, programs, and guides.

Later that same year (1985), I secured copies of studies, plans, directives, motivational guides and other documents published by NIMH, the American Association of Suicidology (AAS), and the Army on their in-house suicide prevention programs and which they provided to me in response to my appeals. I published in book form the material that I received, and marketed it on a not-for-profit basis to cover my printing and related costs. My initial report, printed on Feb 26, 1971 (during Viet Nam) was 'Summary and Commentary on the Institute in Suicidology in Los Angeles January 23-27 1971' and had limited distribution within the Air Force, and the next compilation was in June 1985, 'Military-Civilian Teamwork in Suicide Prevention.' A subsequent update was published in 1988 'Suicide Prevention Programs in the Department of Defense', and the last update, in 1994, returned to the original title 'Military-Civilian Teamwork in Suicide Prevention.'

My intent, in collecting and disseminating to the general public the suicide prevention programs and practices of the Armed Forces, NIMH, and other contributors was to join the many lay persons like myself who had become involved. Wide distribution might also promote cross feed and disclose conflicting policies and procedures. The process, itself, I felt, would encourage collaboration among professionals, paraprofessionals, and administrators and directors of suicide prevention entities in neighboring civilian communities. Further, I hoped that publicizing the Armed Forces' plans and procedures for suicide prevention and crisis intervention would encourage other government entities to explore their need for comparable programs, and that potentially beneficial methodologies might spin off to the private sector.

My continuing interest in proactive and organized suicide prevention efforts in the Armed Forces led me to write to then Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, and to Senator Sam Nunn and Congressman Ronald Dellums in their responsibilities as Senate and House chairmen, respectively, of committees charged with the oversight of military affairs. A copy of my letter to and the response from the Office of the Secretary of Defense is attached.

Programs

A monumental medical and social advance was made in suicide prevention by the original U S Army Suicide Prevention Plan, (Feb 1985) prepared by the Directorate of Human Resources, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel. The Plan called on each U S Army base to develop and publish an installation Suicide Prevention Plan. The plan was to provide for active duty units, Army families, the

Army Community, and civilian employees of the Army. Among its many initiatives were several concerned with collaboration with civilian communities and other public and private sector mental health and crisis intervention resources.

The Navy issued its program in 1987, and the Air Force issued formal policy guidance in 1997 on implementing their suicide prevention program. Since the USAF 1997-policy statement follows my dated copies of the Army and Navy programs by about a decade, I assume that it conforms to more recent DoD medical policies on the subject and perhaps even reviewed and commented upon by the other Services. The following is from the USAF Policy Letter Digest December 1997 (Source: World Wide Web, search title: 'Air Force Policy Letter Digest').

QUOTE:

Building Healthy Communities - Intervention and Prevention

The global mission of the Air Force requires airmen who are fit, healthy and ready to deploy on a moment's notice.

To build healthy lifestyles and do it in the most cost-effective manner, the Air Force is investing in capabilities that promote prevention and intervention. Put Prevention into Practice (PIIP) is a strategy developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which the Air Force has implemented to organize and guide the preventive medicine efforts of medical providers.

The first step in PIIP is the health enrollment assessment review (HEAR), which is conducted with each patient as he or she enrolls... and (which is) then is updated annually. Data from the HEAR helps to identify the health status and prevention needs of patients. This data ... is used by major commands and the Air Staff to assure that resources are available to care for the populations assigned.

The second element of PIIP is the preventive health assessment (PHA), which in 1996 replaced the periodic physical examination program for all active-duty members. The PHA is a four-stage process that includes a prevention-oriented clinical screening, occupational examination, screening of military-unique medical requirements and counseling. The PHA will help ensure the highest rates of mission and mobility readiness by providing feedback to commanders on the health of their troops.

Air Force leadership is concerned about the ability of its members to cope with increasing levels of stress in the face of significant increases in operations tempo and force downsizing. As a result, the Air Force established an integrated product team (IPT) to evaluate suicides among active-duty members and to develop strategies for suicide prevention and intervention.

The IPT identified numerous factors as leading causes of suicide service wide. Chief among them were relationship difficulties, members facing adverse actions viewed as 'career ending,' financial difficulties, substance abuse and the perception that seeking help would have a negative impact on the individual's career. After evaluating this information, the team called in consultants from both the Air Force and public sector to develop a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention.

Since the inception of the suicide prevention IPT, the suicide rate for active-duty members has decreased by more than 35 percent. This has been strong senior leadership, awareness training for all Air Force members, training at all levels of professional military education, and the development of critical incident stress management teams at every installation. The bottom line in successful suicide prevention is self-aid and buddy care. Everyone must lead the culture shift in the way prevention services are delivered and remove the stigma of seeking help.

The Air Force established policies providing limited confidentiality protection to service members experiencing personal problems and greatly expanded the proactive role of mental health service providers. Various helping agencies in the Air Force - such as family services, chaplains, mental health services, substance abuse and health and wellness centers - now work together to provide comprehensive prevention services that enhance both individual and organizational resilience. In fact, a civilian consultant hired by DoD to evaluate the military services' suicide prevention programs praised the Air Force's program as one that is 'as advanced and enlightened as any I have heard of.'

Commanders, first sergeants, first-line supervisors and co-workers must be aware of danger signs and encourage members to seek help. Leaders should become familiar with Air Force Instruction (AFI) 44-154, 'Suicide Prevention Education and Community Training,' and AFI 44- 153, 'Critical Incident Stress Management.'

Base helping agencies are now working closely together under an integrated delivery system, or IDS. The IDS is designed to link base helping agencies to address risk factors, reduce stress and improve the coping skills and general well- being of individuals and families in the Air Force community. Wing

commanders received guidance on implementing this system for their units earlier this year. Commanders at all levels can now work closely with the various agencies to offer a more comprehensive range of prevention services, increase the protective factors and decrease the behavioral risk factors in the community.

As base agencies join ranks, potential problems can be identified earlier and efforts taken more quickly to prevent tragic trends.

AIR FORCE INSTRUCTION 44 -154 1 MARCH 1997

(text)

SUICIDE PREVENTION EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY TRAINING

This instruction implements AFD 44 -1, Medical Operations, concerning suicide prevention education and community training. It establishes requirements and procedures for the conduct of general suicide prevention education and community training. This instruction applies to all active duty Air Force, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve, as well as Air Force civilian employees, except for Title 32 U. S. C National Guard Technicians (IAW Technician Personnel Regulation 100 (172)).

1. Community Training Requirements.

1.1. The Secretary of the Air Force will ensure that all Air Force personnel, to include active duty, guard and reserve, as well as civilian employees receive training in general suicide prevention education at least on an annual basis including awareness of basic suicide risk factors and referral procedures for potentially at risk personnel. Training programs will be designed to destigmatize help seeking behavior among Air Force personnel and not destigmatize the act or attempt of suicide itself.

1.2. The Air Force Surgeon General will be the primary Air Force OPR for this training, and will ensure that this training is conducted as detailed throughout each MAJCOM, as well as in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve.

1.3. Each MAJCOM will ensure that all squadron commanders receive training in basic suicide risk factor identification and referral procedures for at risk personnel as part of the new squadron commanders course. Additionally, each MAJCOM will ensure that the following training is conducted at each base, with base mental health serving as the primary OPR for this training.

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY

UNQUOTE

Mental health experts have come to accept paraprofessional-level suicide intervention and prevention workers as among those in the forefront of primary resources. The view is that their intervention might reduce the lethality of a person contemplating suicide, and even influence someone who has actually initiated an act of suicide. In this regard, some years ago, Dr. Calvin Frederick, a past President of the American Association of Suicidology wrote (quoting):

(Dealing with suicidal behavior, that is, suicide prevention) differs from more classical diagnostic and treatment procedures in the following respects:

1) suicidal behavior covers a broad range of disturbances and personalities and is, therefore, not a unitary concept;

2) it possesses a unique life or death quality;

3) intervention does not utilize traditional therapy methods;

4) the problem is multidimensional and multidisciplinary, often involving social and cultural attitudes, the law, medical intervention, and innovative psychological approaches;

5) the use of indigenous volunteers as stable and sensitive crisis workers is greater than that found in most aspects of therapeutic endeavor. (unquote)

The following is quoted from the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) Healthy People 2000 Report-Citizens Chart the Course, a separate volume of Healthy People 2000 that records the testimony and

suggestions of citizens interviewed by the Public Health Service in the development of year 2000 national health objectives. The quote is from the section: Violent and Abusive Behavior, page 137): 'Meyer (Mike) Moldeven of Del Mar, California, says that volunteer training is an important component of successful suicide intervention for all ages: 'A community's suicide intervention and prevention resources - of which the suicide prevention center, crisis center, and hotline are elements - depend to an enormous degree on local paraprofessionals and trained volunteers.' In the workplace, employers already provide programs for stress management, as well as cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first-aid training. Thus , 'why not a lay worker on the job site who is trained to function in an emergency suicide situation?' asks Moldeven. 'The United States [Armed Forces] have established formal suicide prevention programs, and the groundwork laid can be used to tailor comparable programs for other employers.'

The largest single federal department, formally recognizing suicide as a critical challenge to the good and welfare of their personnel, took a great leap forward by institutionalizing suicide prevention. With the foresight and efforts of advocates and caring managers, comparable initiatives, both formal and informal, can be expected from other government entities. When top-management directed - and supported - suicide intervention and prevention policies do take root throughout the federal system, as they inevitably will, they will merge or interact with adjacent Regional, State and community programs. The United States Armed Forces' everybody's business approach to crisis intervention and suicide prevention for their military and civilian populations has great potential for the public good.

Public and private sector employers and schools benefit from their awareness of policies, resources, and standard operating procedures for suicide intervention and prevention practiced by institutions and other employers in their area. Where such cross feed and mutuality does not prevail, employer-community initiatives can explore them and apply the results for the common good. Such efforts contribute to the well being of employees and their families; parents, teachers, counselors and students, encourage and improve industrial and community safety, and generally enhance esteem and mutual respect among employers and the community of which they are a part.

In order that ci/sp policies, practices, and training can move forward, information that will help the ultimate recipient of crisis intervention services needs to be disseminated to all levels and throughout all functions of the military and civilian communities: the line and the staff and their families; the civil services, academic and business communities, the domain of the elderly, and the general public. Readily accessible in public, institutional, and corporate libraries, adapted to and ingrained into the system, the procedures and delineation of who-does-what in crisis intervention/suicide prevention will help to coordinate and improve plans, methods, and collaboration across the board. It would be a true win-win.

The news media and the Internet can alert employers that do not as yet have their own programs, and keep them informed of opportunities to participate.

Suicide prevention is everybody's business.

Atch (Copy of letter from)

Meyer Moldeven

April 26, 1993

To:

Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Honorable Secretary:

[The opening paragraph in the original letter cited a number of suicides in a military organization. Identifying the activities involved is not relevant to the focus of this copy and has been omitted.]

There is one aspect of organizing around (suicide intervention and prevention)-all-services-that deserves review at command level and, if a covering policy or management system exists, that it be publicized throughout the services and in civilian communities adjacent military installations.

Normally, a military person with an intolerable personal problem tries to get relief from within the system of which he or she is part, e.g., a buddy, family support services, chain-of-command, personnel staff, the IG, etc.. Many personal problems are not job related, but because of the victim's inability to

cope, spill over and affect "job." When the person is in a suicidal crisis, realizes that help is urgently needed, and wants such help, he or she will not hesitate to contact whomever can provide it, if not from within the system then from outside.

Unless the military administrative system has changed on this point, a suicidal military person, or a suicidal member of his or her family who seeks help from within the system, believes that a record of the contact will be made. The "record" transforms to stigma and a potential threat to present job and future career. "Records," more often than not, compel the person in a suicidal crisis to look elsewhere. Elsewhere includes the adjacent civilian community's crisis intervention resources, specifically, the suicide prevention telephone hotline where callers need not provide identification - they're as safe from being identified as anywhere they can be under their circumstances. The hotline worker does what can be accomplished quickly to keep the caller from slipping deeper into crisis and acting out a threat to suicide. They listen, offer nonjudgmental feedback, and together with the caller, explore options.

Almost invariably, when a civilian community crisis worker (telephone hotline or face-to-face) needs information on options unique to military life to help a suicidal military member or someone in his or her immediate family, the source is the nearest base's health care, personnel, or other administrative functions. Very often, when contacts with base officials occur and the worker has the name of a suicidal caller, confidentiality is literally vital; being tagged in the base's records as someone who phoned an off-base crisis center carries almost certain exposure to military authority, and might well add the final straw.

If it's accepted that the military base and its adjacent civilian community should cooperate in suicide intervention, then the civilian and military agencies need mutually accepted procedures to do the job. If a community's crisis resource has one set of procedures for cooperation from the Navy, another for the Marine Corps, and still others for the Army and the Air Force, confusion mounts and collaboration suffers. This is especially true when the situation is tight and there isn't much time to keep a suicide threat from becoming an act. To the telephone hotline worker in a suicide prevention center it makes no difference whatsoever if the person on the other end of the line is a soldier, sailor, airman, marine - or civilian. On the other side of the scale, however, is the we-take-care-of-our-own turf, and that, to the suicidal person, is meaningless.

I hoped that, by now, military bases would have been further along in collaborating with adjacent civilian suicide prevention resources and that such teamwork would be reflected in base and community media. How else would a military person or a member of his or her family on the edge of a life-death decision for themselves know where to go or whom to phone, especially where their privacy and confidentiality would be respected - if they decided to take a chance to continue living? Is a city telephone directory listing for the local crisis center enough?

Agreements, procedures and contact points for military-civilian teamwork in suicide prevention deserve to begin on a county, metropolitan, or other regional basis, rather than in single-base to community understandings, especially where the area has bases representing different services. When all the services in an area have maximum understanding among themselves about collaborating with community suicide intervention resources, it will optimize the support that they and their people as individuals can ask for from that resource, and the help that the hotline worker can offer to them. In effect, when a civilian suicide hotline has been appealed to for help by a military member/family member, the crisis worker will have clearly written, mutually agreed upon procedures for communications and actions with each base in the area. All concerned will have been trained, tested, and know to the greatest degree possible who is going to do what. With present computer networking capabilities the resources indices in such guides can be readily maintained current and widely disseminated throughout a region and on and among military installations.

The opinions in this letter are my own, and are based on my experiences as a civilian IG-analyst and suicide prevention hotline volunteer in the late '60s/early 70s (and hassling the bureaucracy on this issue into the mid-80s.) I am not now associated with any mental health profession or military organization-strictly a private citizen. It may be that what I've suggested already exists or, conversely, that it isn't justified; I don't know, but I would be remiss not to present my views for your consideration.

Respectfully,

s/Moldeven

Reply (Copy)

(From) Office of the Secretary of Defense
Washington D. C. 20301

(Force Management and Personnel)

1 June 1993

(To) Mr. Meyer Moldeven

Dear Mr. Moldeven:

Thank you for your letter of April 26, 1993 to Mr. Les Aspin, regarding suicide prevention programs in the Department of Defense.

Your letter prompted a review of policy in the Department of Defense on suicide prevention. The Department of Defense does not address suicide prevention in its directive on Health Promotion. That directive was published March 11, 1986, and is in need of revision. The Department is reviewing and revising that directive and a suicide prevention section will be added. We will address in the development of that section the issues you raised in your letter to Mr. Aspin.

Thank you for your interest and continued concern in this important mental health area.

S/Nicolai Timenes, Jr.
Principal Director
(Military Manpower and Personnel Policy)

[added, hand-written: 'Thanks!']

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