

A COLLECTION OF
LIFE STORIES |
Tom & Libbie
Glembocki



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How did you get your first job?



Tom:

My first real job was as an usher in the Paramount theater, Plainfield NJ, a few miles from my parents home. My cousin Jack was working there and told me they needed another person. The task was to collect tickets, sweep popcorn off the carpet in the lobby and escort people to a seat using a flashlight. The Paramount was a beautiful old art theater that showed offbeat “art” movies by foreign producers such as Fellini. They were hard to understand and often subtitled, but by seeing them many times over a 2 to 6 week run they would start to make sense. Unconsciously this probably instilled in me a love for the offbeat and weird story-lines that account for my tastes in music as well as visual and performance art today.

Libbie:

My first job was a summer job with the Makefield Recreation department. My sister, Sue, had worked for the Recreation department several years before me and I thought I wanted to be like Sue. At 16 years old, I was a “teacher” for kindergarten and first graders. The sessions were open to children of all families in the area and on rainy days they all showed up! I can remember one day my partner and I had over 50 kids to teach. We had arts and crafts, outdoor sports, snacks, play time, and special trips to Washington’s Crossing park and the Philadelphia Zoo. That was a lot of responsibility for a teenager but I loved it. I decided then that I wanted to be a teacher. My paycheck for the summer was \$135.00 and I thought I was rich!



What is one of your favorite children's stories?



Tom:

I'm sure my parents read to me when I was young but I can't remember any of the stories or what a favorite story would be from back then.

When our Son Joe was a child one of my favorite children's stories was a small book published by Prentice-Hall titled Drummer Hoff. Drummer Hoff was adapted from a folk verse in a Mother Goose book: Nursery Rhymes Old and New.

It was a short children's book that was also accompanied by a cassette tape. The story has great alliteration and cadence. It describes a cannon and how each of seven soldiers brings parts of the weapon to the story. Each time a piece is added, "Drummer Hoff Fires it Off". The cassette tape adds to the story since in the beginning it is a peaceful day and we can hear birds singing and tweeting. Then the various principals begin

assembling the cannon by adding a piece at a time. Of course, for every piece brought to the cannon by a soldier, Drummer Hoff fires it off. The end is a big explosion of psychedelic color covering the page. At the end of the book we see the cannon overgrown by vines and flowers with birds nesting in the flowers. On the cassette we hear once again the peaceful sounds of birds singing and tweeting.

The last stanza with all the pieces brought together by the 7 soldiers goes like this:

General Border gave the order
Major Scott brought the shot
Captain Bammer brought the rammer
Sargent Chowder brought the powder
Corporal Farrel brought the barrel
Private Parriage brought the carriage
But Drummer Hoff fired it off!

This little composition is an entertaining piece of poetry that can bring a smile to anyone's face, both young and old.

Libbie:

When I was young I lived in a small three bedroom house in Joliet, Il. Bill, Mary and I shared a bedroom and Mom would read to us every night. My favorite book was Robert Louis Stevenson's A Child's Garden of Verses. I loved listening to the poems in this book because they were so full of imagery. My favorite was:

The Swing

How would you like to go up in a swing,
Up in the air so blue?
Oh, I do think it's the pleasantest thing
Ever a child can do.

Up in the air, over the wall
Till I can see so wide,
Rivers and trees and cattle and all
Over the countryside.

Till I look down on the garden green,
Down on the roofs so brown,
Up in the air I go flying again,
Up in the air and down.

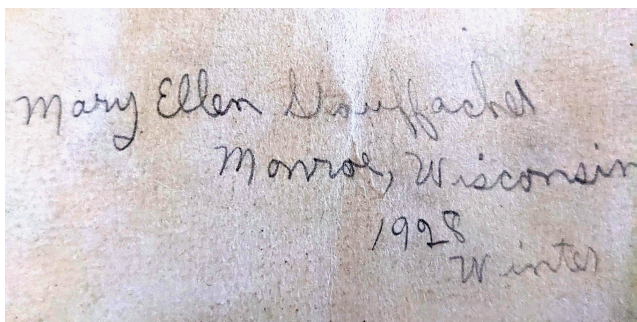
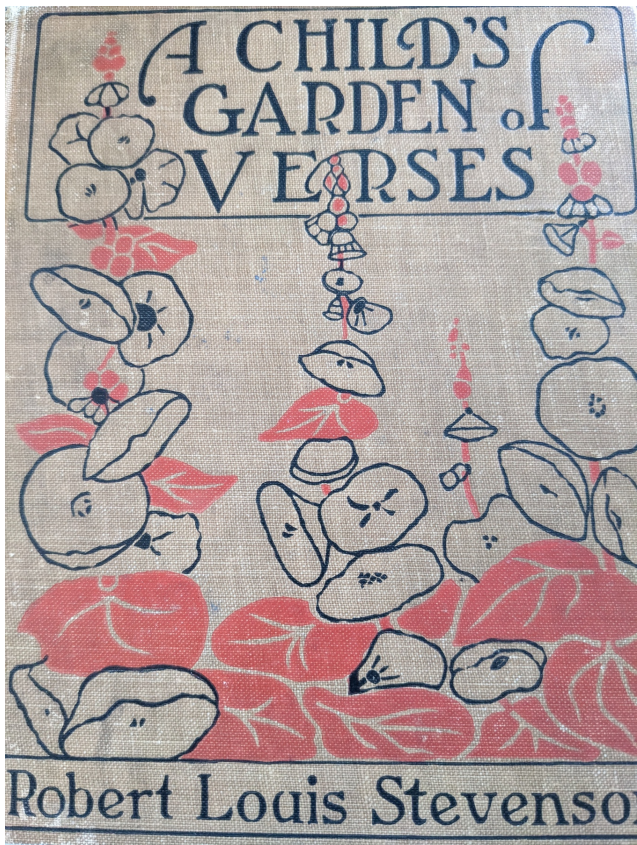
Mom would also wake us up in the morning with this:
Time to Rise

A little birdie with a yellow bill
Hopped up on my window sill.
Cocked his shiny eye and said,
'Ain't you 'shamed you sleepy-head?'

One of my favorite treasures from that time is Mom's book, A
Child's Garden of Verses and it is inscribed:

Mary Ellen Stauffacher Monroe, Wisconsin 1928.

Clearly one of Mom's early treasures, too!



What were your grandparents like?



Tom:

When my grandfather, Francis Cybulski, retired from his job as a Car Inspector on the New York Central Railroad in 1955, he and my grandmother, Stefania Cybulski, moved from an apartment in NY City into our suburban home in NJ. My parents owned a 2 story single family home. My Father converted the second floor into an apartment complete with kitchen, bedrooms and a living room. I was 9 years old and benefited from this arrangement. As the first Grandchild, I was treated like royalty. My sisters even coined the name, “King Tom”. I certainly did not object. My Grandfather turned into a gardener in retirement since he now had our backyard to try growing things. He obtained raw peanuts from a NY City street peanut roaster and planted them. Surprisingly they grew and produced a crop! My Grandmother would roast the peanuts on a cookie sheet in the oven. Another

one of his offbeat crops was a green Sorrel like leaf that grows wild in Eastern Europe. It is a prime ingredient in a Polish comfort food, a cream based soup called Szczawiowa (pronounced shchtah-vee-YOH-vah). This stuff grew quite well all along the fence where Grandpa planted it.

A monthly highlight for me were the Sunday trips to visit Grandpa's Sister Helen Kecmer in Flushing, NY. I always went along and loved the trip because it involved taking a train to the Hudson River Ferry terminal in Jersey City. Then we hopped onto a Ferry crossing the Hudson to Manhattan where the Ferry docked in my favorite part of the city - Radio Row. Back in the 1950s this area of Manhattan was crammed with electronics parts stores selling both new and used electronics parts. Stores would have sidewalk tables piled high with electronics assemblies. I loved this stuff because Scouting, Science class and a monthly magazine called Popular Electronics taught me how to build some cool stuff with parts easily obtainable from the used assemblies. Sadly Radio Row was razed to make way for the ill fated World Trade Center. Grandpa was not so interested in parts stores since his main focus was getting to his Sister's home for Sunday dinner at noon. The meal was always a baked Ham with Sweet Potatoes, Red Cabbage and fresh baked rolls and Pie for dessert.

My Grandmother stayed home and baked and baked and baked. She always had a fresh baked loaf of Polish bread known as Babka on the table. There is no recipe for this rich bread – she would mix together a dozen or so eggs, a few pounds of butter and flour until it looked right. After kneading and forming into a loaf it was washed with more egg and baked. Grandma would form the leftover dough into rolls she called “boids” which was her pronunciation of the word “bird”. These too would be egg washed and baked with the Babka. If you Google Babka recipe, King Arthur flour company admits there is no recipe. According to them “It’s such a tradition, and so well-loved, that there are probably as many Babka recipes as there are Polish bakers.”

My adventures with Grandpa ended on Aug 5, 1960 when I went outside to the backyard garden and found Grandpa on the ground calling for help. At 13 years old I ran into the house and called the Rescue Squad for an ambulance. He had a heart-attack and passed away a few hours later.

Libbie:

Grandma and Grandpa Stauffacher were both strong, independent characters. They eloped and were married just after Grandma graduated from Plattville College. Their marriage was not approved of because Grandma was Catholic and Grandpa Protestant. In 1914 they secretly met on a train, got married and honeymooned at the Grand Canyon.

Grandpa was a dairy farmer who was known for his prize winning Holstein herd and his talent in breeding outstanding dairy cows. When we visited the farm I can remember Grandpa proudly showing the bull. We were told to stay away from him although we could be in the barn at milking time and we could feed the calves.

Grandma was a farmer's wife but never a farmer. She was a city girl on a farm. She ran the home with skill raising four children. I remember Grandma was always in the kitchen. As children, we would come in from the morning milking and Grandma would be there ready to cook bacon and eggs for us. The smell of bacon still brings me back to memories of the farm. Grandma would make huge meals for both lunch and dinner including homemade pie and we would all eat together around the dining room table.

Grandma had a social life off the farm. In the 50's she was a radio host at radio station WEKZ Monroe. Her program was 'Good Morning with Mabel'. Grandma loved to show us off to her town friends when we visited. We would have to clean up the farm dirt and go to the country club on Friday night for fish fry.

Grandma and Grandpa's marriage was an example of a perfect partnership to us all. They were married for 58 years, had four children, and 17 grandchildren. The farm was known by all as

“Grandpa’s Farm” on Stauffacher Road in Monroe, Wisconsin.



Tom’s grandparents Stefanie and Francis Cybulski
50th Wedding Anniversary Nov 9, 1958

What was your Mom like when you were a child?



Tom:

My Mother was a city girl through and through. I have seen photos of her and her cousins and they were always dressed in the latest city fashions of the day. This was in the 1930s and 1940s, well before I was born. Mom was very smart and did well in school. She graduated as the class Valedictorian. Thank goodness her genes passed down to my siblings and I. I'm not sure if it was academics or our ability to game the system and do well at test taking but me and my sisters always did well in school. I give full credit to Mom who insisted that education took priority over anything else. I can remember being tutored by her in anything that I was having difficulty with from Math to History or English Composition. She insisted on perfect Spelling and perfect sentence structure. Her memory was phenomenal, a trait I seemed to have inherited. This was handy for

remembering dates and events in History.

With kids, Mom moved out to the suburbs just like every other post World War II family. I don't think she ever was happy in the suburbs. She always talked about moving back to the city but I don't think she was able to see that her city had changed. With "white flight" came an influx of less economically advantaged immigrants to her old neighborhood. I was happy with our suburban living. There were creeks and ponds to be explored, snakes and other critters to be unwillingly captured and life influences such as Boy Scouts to fill in practical skills such as fire making, nature appreciation and exploration of our natural surroundings. None of this agreed with Mom. She screamed when I brought home a pail full of snakes that I had painstakingly spent all afternoon rounding up at our local pond. They were harmless but the plan was to feed a mouse I had captured to the pail of snakes and watch the show. She didn't know about the mouse but I'm sure it would be even less well received than the snakes. Mom was a city girl.

Family was very important to Mom. All her friends were Family. Other than immediate neighbors I don't ever remember her having any other friends. Our house was hospitality central. Whenever a Family member visited they were always invited for lunch or dinner. There were times when a Family member would be visiting and Mom would whip out a Pot Roast and a Ham. It

never occurred to me that other people did not eat like this. In our house it was the standard when Aunts, Uncles or Cousins visited, which was often.

Holidays, Birthdays and Anniversaries were legendary in our house. Mom kept a list of birthdays and anniversaries of every person in our family - Aunts, Uncles, Cousins. She was always ready to send out a Birthday or Anniversary card. I think she kept Hallmark in business for many years. When we were growing up we had extensive Birthday parties at our house with Cousins. Everyone had a party hat, party favor and home baked multi layer birthday cake with ice cream. I have digitized some of my Dad's 8mm movies showing some of these celebrations. When Joe was growing up we could always expect a box of goodies for Easter, Halloween and Christmas. It was common to receive a 10 pound box of jelly beans, peeps, chocolate eggs and other Easter goodies in the mail. Sometimes the candy was supplemented by twinkies and Hostess cupcakes. Similar boxes of treats arrived in the mail each Christmas and Halloween.

As our Cousins grew up, weddings were inevitable. Polish weddings always involved a large party with food, open bar and live band. Mom was a pretty good Polka Dancer and she and Dad were always on the Dance floor. I have never seen them do any other kind of dance except Polka. One of the 8 mm movies I digitized also has a brief clip of Mom and Dad Polka Dancing at

their 25th Anniversary Party.

In later years Mom was content to sit in her chair in the Living Room and watch TV, read or watch the neighborhood out her window. After her diagnosis of Pancreatic Cancer rather than sit in her chair she had a Hospital Bed set up in the Living Room where all the remaining relatives and nearby neighbors were able to stop in to visit for a while. It's hard to believe but I think these were her happiest days. On March 12, 2008 Mom died in Libbie's arms while on that Hospital bed reciting the Lord's Prayer.

Libbie:

My Mom was the glue that shaped our family and held us together. Mom met Dad at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She graduated with a degree in art education but instead of following that career path she and Dad were married a month after her graduation. One year later Sue was born and shortly after that Dad joined the Navy officer's training. Mom, like many other young mothers at that time had to learn to maintain the home as a single parent. During this time she and Aunt Dorothy lived in Monroe, Wisconsin with Grandma and Grandpa Stauffacher close by for support.

When the war ended, Dad came home and our family grew, Bill was born in 1946, I was born in 1947, Mary 1950, and Holly 1953. Mom had her hands full raising us kids!! She was great at

managing our everyday needs. We were close enough to school that we could walk home for lunch every day and she would have our lunch ready. Dad would come home from work and dinner would be ready. Mom was always there to help with homework and read to us at night. It never occurred to me that to manage our crew of seven was a full time job!

Not only did Mom maintain the household with skill, she sewed all our dresses (and some years, coats for Easter). Mom had the sewing machine and ironing board in her bedroom and she always had more than one project in the works. The interesting thing to me was, even with all this work, she found time for herself...an afternoon nap, a time out with friends playing bridge or an art class. Mom loved music, art and poetry.

When Sue went off to college, Mom and Dad faced the reality of the cost of higher education for five children. Mom started taking college courses to obtain teacher certification and she worked as a substitute teacher. I was a teenager at the time which made me capable of taking on some responsibilities. Mom would leave a note on the counter instructing me to watch out for Mary and Holly and “pork chops in refrigerator...start making supper if I’m late” I learned a lot during this time but I do remember getting exasperated and telling her, “You are the Mother!” I think of that now and can’t believe how privileged I was and how ungrateful.

Mom was always there for Dad and for us as kids. When we went on in our lives Mom would write letters to us every week and she loved to hear about how her grand children were doing. When her grands went off to college she kept track of their progress and made cookies for exam time.

Ok, so what was the question?? What was your Mother like? Mom was a great home manager, she loved music and art, but most of all she loved her family. She was the glue that kept us together.

What was your Dad like when you were a child?



Tom:

Dad was born in NY City but grew up on a farm in Hopewell, NJ. Details are sketchy but his Mother died when he was only 16. He and his younger sister were placed in an orphanage in Hopewell which didn't last long. Dad and his 14 year old sister ran away from the orphanage and ended up in NY City. He spent the rest of his teenage years in the Polish Community living in an apartment next door to the Polish Church, St Adalberts. It was through the church and its Social activities that he met my Mother. They were engaged when he was drafted into the Army. World War II sent him to the South Pacific to New Guinea and the Philippines. On leave in 1943 he married my Mother. The reception was hastily put together by my Grandfather at the Plaza Hotel in the Bronx. I have an interesting telegram from my Dad to his older Sister. "Getting married Saturday, can I borrow

your car?” Mom and Dad honeymooned at Niagara Falls before he returned to the South Pacific for 2 more years.

Dad was mechanically talented. There was nothing he couldn't do. He did carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, metal working and even wood carving. He also worked hard at 2 jobs. 5 days of the week he worked on the Pennsylvania Railroad at first as an electrician and then as Electrical Supervisor. His second job was at Clark Engineering which installed commercial HVAC systems in businesses such as banks and department stores. He spent one of his two days off at Clark as well as some evenings.

Dad had crazy hours. He commuted to his job on the Railroad in Long Island which involved a 2 hour commute each way. Consequently we only saw him for a few hours each evening and days off were limited. This is an admirable work ethic which I can never imagine doing. Surprisingly he found time to work on our 75+ year old home which needed everything. He did extensive remodeling knocking down walls, adding bedrooms and rebuilding a kitchen. The attic was converted into two bedrooms giving me my own bedroom suite. He even made the kitchen cabinets on a table saw in the garage. They were made out of Birch wood. Family pictures from the 50s show the extent of the rotted wood on the porch and soffits. Mom and Dad eventually moved into a brand new home a short distance away after struggling with repairs to the old house for almost 20 years.

Dad was a leader. He marched to his own tune, never caring what others were doing or what they thought. He made his own way. During World War II he was drafted into the Army as a private, the lowest rank in the service. When he was discharged at the end of World War II his discharge papers indicated he commanded a heavy truck brigade of 35 men and a quartermaster stores warehouse with 25 men. He was also very personable and easily made friends with anyone he met. He kept in touch for many years with former Army buddies and people he worked with or met along the way.

When Dad retired we went to a very nice retirement dinner in NY City where the dress code seemed to be coat and tie for the gentlemen. We got to meet many of his work buddies as well as friends. Many of them we already knew over the years. During retirement Dad took up wood working. He built dollhouses for his granddaughters. Grandson Joe received a train station and Libbie received her own Dollhouse which we still treasure in our dining Room. He hand carved wood siding, wood shingles and even window sashes. His final years were battling various cancers that were likely caused by environmental conditions on the Railroad according to his cancer doctor. During one of his times in the hospital he wrote a letter to his grandchildren titled "Wisdom". The letter actually is a nice summary of the way he led his life.

Wisdom

If you think you are beaten, you are.

If you think you dare not, you don't.

If you like to win but think you can't, it's almost a cinch you won't

If you think you will lose, you lost.

For out in the world we find success

Begins with a Mans or Womans will

It's all in the state of mind

Life's battles don't always go to the stronger or faster Man or Woman

It's the one who thinks he or she can.



Dad (Adolph Glembocki) had a flower and vegetable garden outside his office in the Railroad yard of Sunnyside Yards, NYC

Libbie:

My Dad, George Cortelyou Condon, was born August 13, 1917 in Brodhead, Wisconsin. He and his twin, Gerald Cortelyou Condon were best friends growing up and roommates in college. Dad and Uncle Gerry were fraternal twins and as different as night and day. My Dad was always the serious one that did everything by the books.

Dad met Mom at the University of Wisconsin. He graduated before Mom and took a job as an accountant with US Steel in Joliet, Illinois. They were married after Mom graduated, two years later. Sue was born one year later and Dad joined the Navy officers training. He was stationed in New Caledonia during the war. The base he was assigned to was a staging area before young officers were sent to forward positions in the war. Dad did not like being idle, waiting for an assignment, so he complained to authorities and was given a desk job working for the General. His job was keeping records of all the boats at the base and their level of usability. When others were sent to forward Dad had a secure job on the base.

When he returned home from the war, he went back to his job at US Steel. Not long after that our family grew with Bill, Mary, Holly and Me. Dad was always a hard working family man with strong ethics and religion. He worked long days and often Saturdays. Dad rode the city bus to work every day in Cleveland, Ohio. I remember riding my bike to the bus stop to meet him and we would have a fun ride home double. Around this time he was sent on business trips. When he'd fly home we would be excited to see what special treat he had for each of us in his suitcase.

Dad was a stickler for ethics and accountability. We had bank accounts at a very early age and we learned to save our birthday money. If I was given money to buy something at the corner

store I was required to know to the penny where the money was spent and have the right change. I remember him balancing their joint checkbook and he would expect the same accountability from Mom. In his last year of life he was still balancing his own checkbook and doing his taxes.

Dad made sure we all were in church every Sunday. Getting all of us out the door was often a challenge. Sunday afternoons were set aside as family time. Dad would take us on a Sunday drive to a park, the countryside or to the airport to see planes taking off. These drives would often end with a stop to get an ice cream cone.

When I was in fifth and sixth grade I went to cotillion. I dressed in a pretty party dress and white gloves and we learned manners and dance. I have good memories of Daddy dancing with me to Lawrence Welk music when I came home. Later in life when they were living at Sakonnet Bay Senior home Dad would turn on music while waiting for Mom to get ready for dinner and he would dance a few steps with me. I loved that!

What were your favorite toys as a child?



Tom:

Interestingly, my Family took many 8mm videos and still pics using a Kodak Brownie camera. Christmas and Birthdays were always the time for the camera to come out. I reviewed all of these photos and videos and did not find my favorite toy. I found many multiplayer “action” games as well as board games in the images of Christmas or birthdays past but did not find my favorites. In my preteen years I had 2 memorable favorites. The first was a Crystal Radio Kit which was a Birthday present one year. The kit consisted of some wire, a headphone, a Galena Crystal and needle like probe commonly called a Cats whisker. The wire was used to wind a tuning coil which was hooked to the Galena Crystal. The Crystal was mounted in a metal holder with a terminal on it for hooking up the wire. The “Cats whisker” needle then touched the crystal while hooked to the headphone.

Magically, the loudest AM radio station could be tuned in and heard on the headphone. The challenge was to find the best spot for the needle to touch the rough surface of the Crystal to get the best reception. I was fascinated by the fact that this combo could be used to listen to radio stations. Of course the radio station content was not important, it was the fact that I could create a rudimentary solid state diode detector with a simple crystal and sharp pointed object. Over the ensuing years I continued to improve my homemade radio design and learn about electronics in the process which eventually led to a career in Electronics Engineering.

My second favorite toy of all time was an Erector Set. My parents presented me with an AC Gilbert Erector set for my 10th birthday in 1956. It came in a large red steel chest with a hinged lid that opened to reveal many construction girders, wheels, pulleys, gears and an electric motor. Also included were various length screws and nuts to hold the parts together in order to build imaginative working creations. I remember that the fun was to spend hours assembling girders and beams, then hooking it to the motor with wheels, pulleys and rubber band drive belts. Once the device was all built and working, the fun waned away. As part of my reminiscence for this piece I looked up the Erector Set Company. The original was invented by AC Gilbert in 1913. Erector sets continued to be produced by the Gilbert Company

until Mr Gilbert died in 1961 and the company filed for bankruptcy in 1967. The trademark lives on with plastic toys being built by marvel and others but the original metal beamed structural steel toy is only available on eBay at pretty steep price.

Libbie:

I remember looking forward to the Christmas catalogs from JC Penny's and Sears Roebucks in November. We would study them and make lists of all the wonderful toys for Santa to bring at Christmas. I always wanted the expensive farm or zoo sets with buildings, fences and dozens of animal figures. Santa never brought those to me. Our presents always included one toy, clothes, under ware, socks, PJ's and board games that the whole family could play. When I was 5 years old I did get a baking set and I made my first pie. It was an apple pie that was baked in the big oven (not Easy bake). I made that pie for my Mom who was in the hospital after Holly was born on Christmas day.

Even though I was an outdoor girl growing up, I do remember two dolls. I had a small, 8" Ginny doll which was the fashion doll of the day (before Barbie). Ginny was special because she had a wardrobe of clothes for every occasion. The last doll I had when I was 12 was Poor Pitiful Pearl. She was a homely doll that came in a tattered, old dress and a headscarf. She also had a pink party dress and shoes that you could dress her up in to make her

“pretty”. I took her to St Francis Hospital when I got my tonsils out that year and I can remember the fuss the Nuns made over her. Many came to see my doll and blessed her. I was not Catholic and did not understand the prayers and attention given to my Pitiful Pearl doll.

Where did you go on vacations as a child?



Tom:

This is a very easy topic for me to write about. Merriam-Webster defines a vacation as “a period spent away from home or business in travel or recreation”. While growing up my Family never took a vacation. None, nada, zero vacations. We had day trips to visit relatives mostly for a Holiday, Birthday or Anniversary occasion. There were also day trips to visit my Dad’s sister who lived on a farm where he grew up, in Hopewell, NJ. The farm trips were the most fun since we usually went to pick strawberries, peaches, plums or cherries but the real fun was running around in the fields, climbing trees in the woods or exploring the chicken coop. Later on in my adult years my parents still did not take vacations. They mostly stayed near home and visited relatives. When I went to college in Florida, my parents visited on their first known vacation. It was a train trip

to Miami. This was the furthest my Mother had ever been away from home. Dad of course served in the South Pacific during WWII but all of their lives and during the years of our family growing up, vacations were not on the menu.

Libbie:

Vacations were a big part of our summers growing up. Most every year we took two trips with our family. We would spend at least ten days every summer in Wisconsin splitting the time between my Condon Grandparents in in Brodhead, Wisconsin and my Stauffacher Grandparents at Grandpa's farm in Monroe, Wi. These trips were big events. Mom would make sure we all had new play clothes and newly sewn sundresses for the trip. Dad spent plenty of time loading suitcases on the plywood and metal framed car rack and securing it all with a tarp and straps. There was no room inside for luggage with seven of us!! The car had no radio or air conditioning so the ride was long and hot! Dad would start out before dawn to get a few hours driving under his belt before we all woke up. Mom had breakfast and lunch packed which we ate at roadside picnic areas. Once we were all awake bright eyed and bushy tailed we would entertain ourselves by playing games like, I see something, finding the alphabet or finding states on license plates. When we lived in Joliet, IL and Rocky River, Ohio Dad could drive the whole trip in one day but when we moved to Yardley, PA we would stop half way and stay

in a roadside motel. Seven in one room!! I cant even imagine what that was like for Mom and Dad!!

We would always visit Grandma and Grandpa Condon in Brodhead first. They lived in a grand house in town. The house had 5 upstairs bedrooms and two full baths and Grandma and Grandpa had an office, bedroom and full bath on the first floor. There were two staircases to the second floor! I thought it was a mansion. We would all have to comb our hair and straighten up before getting there and we were always “schooled” on our best behavior before arriving. After a day or two on the road we were really a motley crew! We would come in through the side door at the kitchen and there was always a joyous round of hugs and hellos as we invaded their peaceful quiet home.

Grandpa always gave us each a dollar to spend downtown and the Five and Dime store. Mary and I would buy coloring books and paper dolls which kept us busy for a good bit of time. Grandma always had the cookie jar filled with homemade sugar cookies and she made doughnuts for breakfast which was a treat! She also made great big meals which we ate in the dining room. Grandma made pies for dessert and there always was a plate of cheese to go with the pie. Grandpa owned two dairy farms and co-owned two stock yards (Condon and Son) with my uncle Don. Grandpa would take us out for a drive in the country, to show us the stockyards and the farms, and also to show us off to all his

friends. During our visit we would always have a picnic by the race (river) and all our aunts, uncles and cousins would come. I have 15 Condon cousins and 7 of them lived in Brodhead.

Our visit in Brodhead was always fun but The best part of the vacation was the second half...at the farm. Dad would pack up the car and the car rack and we were off on the 19 mile drive to Grandpa's farm. Southern Wisconsin is full of rolling hills and we would be on the edge of our seats seeing who would first spot the farm as we came over that last hill! Grandpa's Farm was a special place!! My Mom grew up with her sisters and brother on this farm and when we visited we were free to run and play! I could write a whole book about all the fun we had at the farm but instead I'll give a few memories. The smell of Grandma cooking bacon. The sound of the rooster crowing before sunrise. The barn at milking time. The bull. The calves. Feeding the pigs and sheep. Seeing the baby piglets. Playing with the kittens in the haymow. Playing in the forbidden corn crib. Visiting the pony farm next door. "Helping" Grandpa bale hay and fill the hay mow. Hearing the Chicago Cubs games on the radio. Playing gin rummy with Grandpa. And having to get cleaned up to go to the country club fish fry. I loved the freedom we had when we were at the farm and did not mind getting a bit dirty!

When our time at the farm was over we would all pack into the car and drive off up the hill. we would wave wildly from the

windows and toot the horn as a farewell. Back on the road again we would be back to our road games, naps and one of the best parts of the trip both coming and going was the time we sang songs with family harmony. Many of the songs we sang back then have been passed down to the next generations of Condon singers. Great memories!

Oh my!! I've spent a lot of time on the first of the two vacations we had every year. I'd better make it shorter for our second vacation trip of the summer. Mom and Dad were best friends with Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Bert and we would go on a week trip to interesting places with their family. Destinations included Golden, Colorado, Mt Rushmore, a lake in Northern Wisconsin, Michigan and Rehoboth Beach, DE. We would always stay in a cabin/rental with four adults and ten kids! Our week would include exploring the area, swimming, boating, hiking, singing and playing with our Johnson cousins. These trips were always a special break in our home routine.

What was your first date like with your spouse?



Libbie:

Tom and I met in early February, 1971. I belonged to Triple Cities Ski Club in Vestal, NY. Every Tuesday night in the winter the club ran a bus 40 miles to Greek Peak in Cortland, NY. After a fun night of skiing in freezing temperatures, my friends and I stopped in the lodge bar to warm up. Neither my friend nor I liked beer...or needed a cold drink, so we shared a drink between us. Tom and his friend just happened to be in that bar that night and to share the beer my friend and I had to pass the glass back and forth in front of these two guys in the crowded bar. We must have had friendly chat of some sort.

Fast forward a week or two, and Tom called me and said “do you remember me? I was at Greek Peak and we met in the bar”. Well I did remember that night and the crowd in the bar but not much

more about this stranger asking me out on the phone. Luckily, Tom selected a “safe” place for our first date. The ski club was taking a Saturday trip to an event called Winterfest at Inter mont Ski Mountain. This date was close to a blind date but because my friends in the club would be there I said yes to his invitation. My backup plan was to bail and join the protection of friends on the bus if I needed to. Needless to say, I didn’t bail and we had fun on this first date and are still having fun 52 years later.

What I do remember about our first date is, We had a fun ski run on a lesser used “trail” that ended at the bottom at a road and Stop sign. We apparently had gone off course and ended up out of the ski area. We had to take off our skis and hike back up the mountain. This hike gave us lots of time to talk, have fun and get to know each other. I guess there is something special about the road less traveled!!!

Tom:

In the Winter of 1971 in the snow belt of upstate New York I would go skiing with a friend on Tuesday nights at our local ski resort, Greek Peak in Cortland, NY. Every Tuesday evening there was a special admission price for IBM employees, \$4 for night skiing beginning at 6 PM which included a 45 minute lesson. This would be \$28 in 2023 dollars, a bargain in any year. On one particular Tuesday night in February the Triple Cities Ski Club was also at the resort. After a night of skiing in below zero

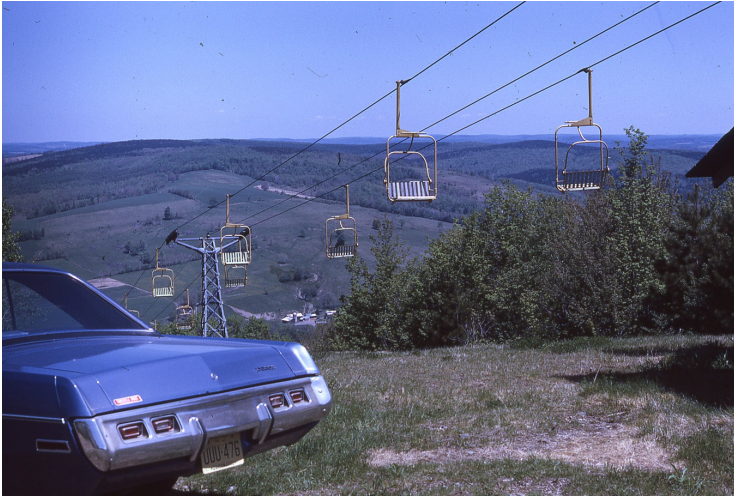
temperatures everyone gathered in the lodge to warm up and socialize. The lodge was shoulder to shoulder young people. Fortunately for me there were two pretty girls passing a beer back and forth in front of my friend and I. Libbie was one of the girls. We chatted briefly before she had to get on her bus home. I obtained her contact information from a few others I knew in her ski club and gave her a call. We arranged to have a date on a following Saturday when the ski club was having a day of tubing and sledding at a different ski resort, Intermont in Solon, NY. Intermont is a unique resort because the lodge and parking lot are at the top of the mountain. The exit off I-81 is on the mountain top which means when you get off the Interstate you arrive at the top of the resort.

I picked up Libbie from her Apartment and we drove to Intermont for an afternoon of tubing on the bunny slope and for some traditional snow skiing on mountain trails. A memorable moment was a delightful trail we found through the woods. We skied for quite a ways and marveled at how quiet and beautiful it was. There was only us on pristine snow in the woods with no one else around. The fun ended when we found ourselves at a Stop sign. Uh Oh! We had inadvertently wandered off the resort property and onto County Roads. It was a fun time as we hiked back uphill through the woods to get back to the resort and chair lifts. After that crazy date I called this beautiful woman again

and arranged for a more traditional dinner date at a restaurant called “The Vault” which was located in a former bank building complete with dining in the bank’s vault. Thus began a more than 50 year journey of love, fun, travel and adventure.



Libbie hiking on the ski trail



My 1971 Dodge Dart at Intermont Ski Bowl, Solon NY in the Summer

How far back can you trace your family ancestry?



Libbie:

I am very fortunate to have good documentation of many branches of my family ancestry. For the sake of time and space I will try to keep it short.

My Grandpa, Ralph Stauffacher, Is second generation American. His Grandparents, Anton and Ana Stauffacher came to the US with a group of 140 emigrants to Wisconsin to establish a new home. They initially sent two scouts on March 8, 1845 to find a home for them in the new world. The group then traveled together leaving Glarus, Switzerland on April 19, 1845 with hopes that their scouts would be able to find land for their new home. Without the help of modern day communication; They arrived in Baltimore, traveled to Saint Louis and then on up to Wisconsin and on August 15, 1845 the group assembled and began their new

life in the town they built and named New Glarus, Wisconsin. The entire journey of 6775 miles took 114 days. 108 of the Pilgrims endured the journey. There is a monument at the Swiss United Church of Christ in New Glarus honoring my Stauffacher ancestors.

My Grandma Mabel Stauffacher, was Daughter of John and Sarah Ward. John and Sarah were both born in Wisconsin but John's parents were born in County Roscommon, Ireland. Sarah Timmons Ward's parents also came from Roscommon, Ireland. They came to America in the 1830's to escape the potato famine.

I have a book, The Condon Clan, written in 1983 by Arnold Condon, my Dad's cousin. This book includes the genealogy of my Grandpa MJ Condon's heritage that is traced back to castles in Ireland. My Ancestor, Thomas Condon, came from Cork, Ireland in 1757. He was a loyalist to the British crown in the revolutionary war so after the war he and his family emigrated to Prince William, New Brunswick, Canada. then over generations the Condon family moved to Ontario and then to Wisconsin.

I also have a large book, The Cortelyou Genealogy by John van Zandt Cortelyou [1942] which traces my grandma Phebe Emily Cortelyou Condon's heritage back to the early settlement of New York. In 1652 Jacque Cortelyou came with pilgrims from Amsterdam and established a colony they called New Utrecht

now known as New York. I have marked pages in this book so that if anyone is interested they can trace our part of this epic story. Over the 300 years documented in this book there are many stories over the generations! One interesting story is about the Cortelyou house built in 1699 which was used as headquarters for the Hessians during the battle of Long Island in the revolutionary war. This house is called the Old Stone House and it is a historical structure in Washington Park in Brooklyn, NY

I want to add one more relative to this story she is my great grandma, Libbie Crouch. She married Ernest Stauffacher on September 18, 1890. Her maternal lineage can be traced to Malachi Loveland from Connecticut who fought for independence from the crown in the battle of Long Island.

Just for the record, I keep the books mentioned above and all other geneology documents on the book shelf in my bedroom.

Tom:

How Far back can you trace your Family ancestry? The short answer is about 6,000 years when my great ancestor Adam's mate Eve had a propensity for Apples. But the real answer is I knew my Maternal Grandparents, Francis and Stefanie Cybulski. Thanks to them with assistance from my Mother I have oral histories of the paths they took to immigrate to the United States around the turn of the Twentieth Century.

Less information was known about my Paternal Grandparents, Joseph and Emily Glembocki. I never knew them since Emily passed away a few decades before I was born and Joseph passed away when I was 3 years old.

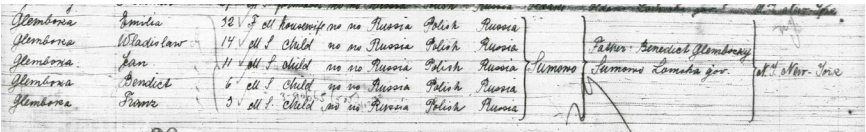
The year was 1984 and Libbie and I took a trip to downtown Washington, DC. Our goal was the National Archives, an imposing marble and granite structure on Constitution Ave. The Rotunda of the National Archives Building displays the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence. We made our way to the National Archives research library where we learned how to Soundex encode "Glembocki". Using the Soundex code we calculated plus the fact that we could limit our search immigrants arriving through Ellis Island, NY we were able to find the room, cabinet and drawer of microfilm reels that had the name Glembocki photographically recorded on them somewhere. Libbie and I painstakingly loaded each reel into an available microfiche reader and browsed through thousands of ship passenger records. This was back in the days before Google and when personal desktop computers were still in their nascent stage.

Luck was with us that day when after several hours of bleary eyed searching I spotted the names of Emily Glembocki and 4 of her children. Wow! She was on a boat that left from Libau, Russia on July 10, 1912 (Libau is now part of Latvia). Emily was 32 and

her children were Wladislaw, 14, John, 11, Benedict 6 and Frank 5.

The National Archives has several microfiche printers. We were able to print the page for 25 cents per copy. My Dad was pretty excited when I gave him one of the copies. He quickly shared it with his remaining 2 siblings. They were not aware of the dates of Emily’s immigration.

Getting back to the question of far back can you trace your Family ancestry, the answer is a little over a Century. The great news is that being an immigrant family, everyone remained close. My ancestral history doesn’t go back far but it is wide meaning I knew each of our relatives and the details of their lives.



The portion of the 1912 Manifest of Passengers arriving at Ellis Island listing Emily Glembocki and family

Do you have any family food traditions ?



Tom:

The Polish have many food traditions, mostly centered around the holidays. When I was growing up my family followed many of the Polish food traditions. Just like we as Americans are used to having Turkey on Thanksgiving, a Polish Easter would always have a Ham with Red Cabbage and of course Easter yeast bread known as Babka. On the side were Polish Sausage known by its English name Kielbasa. The word itself is believed to have been derived from the Turkish “koi basa” which means hand pressed. There were also cooked beets and a red horseradish garnish for the Ham. Many people may be familiar with white horseradish which typically is served with Prime Rib in a restaurant, but Red Horseradish is slightly different. It still has the kick of the more typical white horseradish but Red Horseradish is preserved in beet juice instead of vinegar. Hard boiled and colored Easter eggs

were also on the table. Our Family typically did the easy egg coloring which dips an egg in various food colorings until the desired color is obtained but my Uncle Ed's wife Gussie Cybulski did elaborate Easter egg designs. I believe she was Ukrainian but the Polish and the Ukrainians have similar Easter egg patterns that were quite striking. We always received a few decorated eggs from her until she passed away when I was 10 years old.

A not necessarily Polish tradition our Family observed on Easter morning was Crumb Cake for dessert after breakfast. Of course this also wasn't necessarily an Easter tradition either. It would happen throughout the year. What's breakfast without Crumb Cake for dessert?

Christmas dinner was similar to Easter but there was the tradition of an unleavened wafer called Oplatki. The sharing of Oplatki is a Polish tradition that goes back hundreds of years, This typically would take place when relatives were visiting over the holidays which in our family was all the time. Each person received a wafer. Everyone would then go around the room greeting every member in attendance, breaking off a piece of their wafer and they subsequently would break off a piece of your wafer. There would be an exchange of greetings and a kiss on the cheek male to female or a handshake male to male. After each greeting concluded, we would eat the collected wafer piece.

The sharing of this unleavened bread with another person is sharing all that is good with life. It's a time to tell each other, 'I love you, I care about you.' (even when there are cousins you really didn't want to see).



Polish Easter Egg

Libbie:

Most of our family food traditions were aligned with Holidays; turkey at Thanksgiving, roast pork or beef for Christmas, and ham for Easter. My Dad did have a Condon family tradition that we also had growing up, that was popcorn for Sunday night supper. Mom always served a big dinner at noon on Sundays so the night "meal" was Popcorn. Dad said that when he was young they would have Sunday popcorn with milk and he and his brothers and sisters would eat popcorn with milk...like cereal. In my memory of this tradition we never soaked our popcorn (yuck) but there was always a square of a Hershey's bar in the bottom of the bowl. We would eat our popcorn as we watched as a family, Wonderful World of Disney on TV.

Somehow this popcorn on Sundays was transformed into a new Sunday tradition for our Glembocki family. for almost fifty years I have been making pizza on Sunday nights. Disney was replaced for many years to 60 Minutes on TV and now...hmm...YouTube TV.

The biggest food tradition that I can remember is dessert or sweets as reward. As children we would always ask “what’s for dessert tr-eet tonight?” Depending on the answer we would decide whether to clean our plate to get the reward. Mom always had dessert for us, ice cream, pudding, cake, brownies, pie, etc. At that time it may have been seen as healthy eating because we were required to eat the balanced meal first and then we got 1/7th of the dessert.

In talking to my sister Mary this week she reminded me of a couple more sweets as reward traditions. When we would all go to the doctor to get our flu shot, Mom would take us to Cramer’s bakery in Yardley and we could get a doughnut or éclair for a reward. Also anyone willing to help Mom unpack the groceries (which there were a lot!!) would get a piece of Brach’s candy from Mom’s secret purchase.

I know I did not believe in the monetary rewards for good grades that were popular when Joe was growing up so I did fall back to the sweet tradition of my childhood. Joe was rewarded for a good

report card with a home made lemon meringue pie. Oh what a sweet, sweet treat!! Joe would come through the door and declare that it was time to start baking! Which I did with pleasure for us all!

What is your idea of perfect happiness?



Tom:

Perfect Happiness is our life, Tom & Libbie, together. Perfect Happiness is being content with where you are and with what you have, whether it's friends, material possessions or excellent Life experiences. Perfect Happiness is not wanting anymore of anything. Perfect Happiness is contentment. This is summed up so well by one of my favorite poets, Robert Service:

Contentment

An ancient gaffer once I knew,
Who puffed a pipe and tossed a tankard;
He claimed a hundred years and two,
And for a dozen more he hankered;
So o'er a pint I asked how he
Had kept his timbers tight together;
He grinned and answered: "It maun be

Because I likes all kinds o' weather.

"For every morn when I get up
I lights me clay pipe wi' a cinder,
And as me mug o' tea I sup
I looks from out the cottage winder;
And if it's shade or if it's shine
Or wind or snow befit to freeze me,

I always say: "Well, now, that's fine ...
It's just the sort o' day to please me.'

"For I have found it wise in life
To take the luck the way it's coming;
A wake, a worry or a wife—
Just carry on and keep a-humming.
And so I lights me pipe o' clay,
And though the morn on blizzard borders,
I chuckle in me guts and say:
'It's just the day the doctor orders.'"

Libbie:

Perfect happiness is a good feeling of contentment and satisfaction, living life and enjoying every day. Perfect happiness is not just one thing it is every thing. It is getting up in the morning to a new day. It is having a task and accomplishing it. It is working hard or doing nothing. It is finding peace at the end of

the day.

Happiness is having Tom to share my day with and happiness is knowing that my family is safe and they are ok (happiness is seeing daily pictures of Paige and Emily even though I cannot be there for every minute of their lives) Happiness is love!!

What was your parents' relationship like?



Tom:

Dr Seuss summed up my parents' relationship best with this quote: "To the World you may be one person; But to one person you may be the world". My parents treated each other this way. My Mother literally lived for my Father. She didn't have any outside interests of her own, she spent her time making sure Dad was comfortable. This included making sure three kids were clean, fed and homework done before Dad came home from work. The same was true of my Dad in a different way. When Mom needed something he seemed to stop everything he was doing and tend to her needs whether it was hanging a Family Picture she wanted on the wall or fixing something in the house. Their relationship can be described as loving.

They seemed to be Happy having a Family and living the American Dream. A house in suburbia with a Family of 3 kids, a

car in the garage, flower gardens around the house and a vegetable garden in the backyard was that Dream made into reality by their relationship. Family parties with lots of invited relatives for every Holiday completed the scene. I never saw or heard my parents fight or argue. They enjoyed many activities together such as Polka Dancing, going to weddings, and attending Family gatherings. They complemented each other in the kitchen. Mom mostly cooked the meals while Dad was the Pie and dessert maker. They were perfect for each other with a mutual love for each other or in the words of Henry David Thoreau, "There is no remedy for love but to love more"



Adolph & Victoria Glembocki 50th Anniversary August 28, 1993

Libbie:

My parents had a great marriage that lasted 75+ years together. Mom and Dad both had traditional roles in their marriage. Dad

went to work 5 and sometimes 6 days a week. He was the “bread winner” and worked hard to support his family. Mom was a “stay at home Mom” who managed the home and raised us. There was never a doubt that Mom and Dad were a loving couple with a common goal and purpose in life. When Daddy came home from work he would always seek out Mom and kiss her “hello” and they would talk about their day.

In their later life they had more free time to pursue fun activities. They were fortunate to live close to Bill and his family and not so far from Mary so they attended as many of their grandchildren’s musical and sporting events as possible. It was always clear that family was the most important thing in life to both of them.

Even though Mom and Dad did have different interests, Mom loved classical music, art and opera while Dad enjoyed sports, especially baseball and college basketball, they attended events together and shared these activities. They both liked to travel and they had many interesting vacations, often traveling to exotic places with Mom’s sister, aunt Dorothy and Uncle Bert.

Mom and Dad lived their last 6 years at Sakonnet Bay Senior home. Mom was no longer mobile and she needed assistance doing things. Their entertainment was reduced to what they could see on TV and they shared sports, music and Netflix movies together. In Mom’s last year of life, Dad fell and broke

his hip. He had a hip replacement and refused to stay a minute more than required because he needed to get back to take care of Mom. Even though they were unable to be together for the last 3 months. Dad would be at Mom's bedside all day and he was there when she died. They were devoted to each other until the end!

What traits do you share with your mother?



Tom:

My Mother had a very good Memory. She was the one I would come to for names and dates of people in her past and our families past in my pursuit of History and genealogy. I am fortunate enough to have inherited her Memory.

My Mother and I were complete opposites. Other than excellent Memory, we didn't share any traits that I can define. That's not a bad thing, it's just that we were different. I was an outdoor person, preferring to hike in the woods, fish in ponds and capture various slithery slimy critters in the creeks.

My Mother was an indoor person. The outdoors with different kinds of weather, bugs, critters, mud and dirt never appealed to her.

I love Music, especially Classical Music. Mom thought all Music was noise. I tend to be curious and experimental, especially with

different foods from different cultures or prepared differently. Mom tended to stay with the tried and true traditional fare whether it was her pot roast or a Polish meal with Kielbasa, Babka and Red Cabbage.

In summary, we were opposites. Other than excellent memory we did not have much in common.

Libbie:

Mom and I share many things in common. We both love classical music, opera, art, gardening, plants and flowers and most of all we share a love of family.

I am sure I got my love of fabric and sewing from my Mother. Mom was always at her sewing machine making dresses for herself and us four girls. I remember the fun we would have pouring over the newest pattern books and selecting fabrics for our new clothes. I was sewing some of my own clothes before I finished high school , I made all my dresses when I began teaching and I made all Joe's play clothes and even some of Tom's shirts in the early days of our marriage. To this day I love to go in a fabric store and see new fabrics and imagine what I could make

Mom and Dad moved out of their home in Holden, Massachusetts in 1989. They were downsizing from a large 4 bedroom house into a condo. In the process of this move they made almost all the contents of the house available to us kids.

Mom made lists of furniture, kitchenware, art, garden tools etc. and we all had a chance to say which items we wanted to have. If more than one sibling wanted the same object, in hopes to make everything fair and equal, Mom had a lottery system set up. Not one of us was favored over the others!

On moving week we all showed up with trucks and trailers to help empty the house. Imagine my surprise when Mom opened the hall closet and pulled out five bags of fabric scraps handing them to me saying, in front of my sisters, “Libbie, these are for you, I know you will do something with them”! The fabric scraps were leftover pieces from all the dresses Mom made over the years! In that moment my new quilting career was established. (thank goodness my sisters all agreed, the old fabric scraps and the memories they held were mine)

What traits do you share with your father?



Tom:

When I was in College I purchased a used Honda 90 motorbike. The bike was in rough condition, it needed covers for the air cleaner and had new front forks, apparently because of a bad spill or encounter with a solid object. It was a Honda however, so it started and ran well and was not a bad deal for \$50. When the school year was over I found a wood crate at the local Railway Express office. They were able to ship the bike to NJ in the crate for \$10. When summer was over I went back to college and arranged for Railway Express to pick up the crate from my parents house in NJ and ship it back. They wanted \$90 when they arrived to pick it up. My sister said no, that was too much because I told her it would be around \$10 to ship it. My Dad stepped in and saved the day. Somehow he managed to put the bike on a Southbound Silver Star Pennsylvania Railroad train

with a tag marking the destination as Deland, Florida. His Brother, my Uncle Frank, was the Pennsylvania Railroad Station Master at Penn Station, NY. Between him and my Dad they managed to get the bike checked in as luggage on one of the cars for the ride South.

Meeting the train in Deland was an interesting experience. I wanted to take the bike off the train and be done with it but they wouldn't let me. They had to cart it to the freight office where they discovered it did not have a freight tag. It had a destination Deland, Florida luggage tag but with no associated ticket. After they did some investigating they found that the Station Master at Penn Station NY had put the bike on the train and sent it to Deland with my name on it so this apparently was OK with them. They let me have my bike.

Dad always had his own way of doing things. I'm not sure if it's an inherited trait or a learned trait but I seem to share this quality. Bypassing rules and getting around bureaucracy had a lot to do with success in my career at bureaucratic heavy IBM.

Some of Dad's other traits such as a positive disposition, a can-do attitude and common sense have also been passed down to me. Creative solutions to simple problems is probably the greatest of these traits that I share with my Dad and I'm grateful for it.



(photo left) Tom's Honda 90 on the beach in Melbourne, FL. Shipped by train from New Jersey.

Libbie:

Every spring my Dad would prep the garden beds for summer flowers and a few tomato plants. It was an event to go to the garden center and pick out the geraniums, zinnias and other bedding plants. I would help Dad plant "Mom's" garden and almost every year I would plant some special packet of seeds. When I was nine I had a pumpkin plant that grew and filled the space behind the garage and vined even up to the roof. It must not have had enough light because the plant just continued to grow but it finally had one pumpkin that developed on the fence post. Harvesting that pumpkin was a special memory. In the

years after that I grew sunflowers, gourds and other plants. I don't think Dad ever understood why I enjoyed the work in the greenhouse so much, He often said I should not work so hard but I do think my love of growing things came from Dad.

Do you remember a special birthday as a child?



Tom:

My parents went all out for birthdays. Mom always baked a multilayer cake usually with some kind of fruit between the layers such as peaches or strawberries. All our cousins were always invited so the party was always large. My Dad always came up with these games that he thought were fun. A popular birthday game of the 50s was dunking for apples. My Dad had a twist on this. He suspended the apples by a string from the ceiling and required the children to catch the hanging apple with their mouth. Hands had to be behind your back.

Of course pin the tail on the donkey while blindfolded was also a party staple. Each party was special in it's own way because it usually was fun when all the cousins got together. The Adults of course had their own party going on once the children's festivities were over. There was much food and plenty of

alcoholic drinks to go around. My parents were not big drinkers but mixed drinks and bottled beer were always an adult staple at the “after party”.

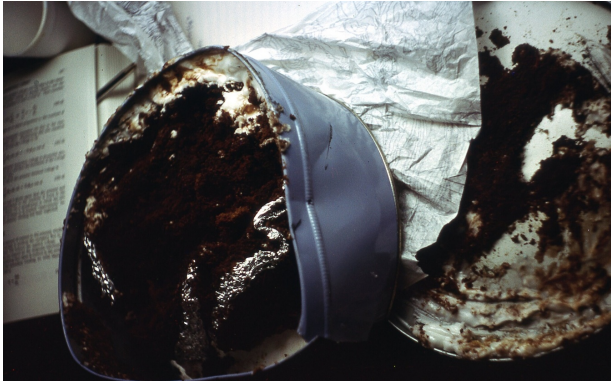
My Mother continued the birthday celebration tradition even when I went off to college. A particularly memorable birthday was the birthday cake she sent me from NJ to Florida. The Post Office had some decorating of their own to do making my birthday cake that year one of the most memorable ever. I found some 35 mm slides of the college cake and attached them here.

Libbie:

Birthdays in our Condon home were almost always simple family celebrations. Mom would make a special Angel Food cake and we would buy and give simple gifts (less than \$1). Most often our gifts would be given in a brown paper bag or if they were large they would be wrapped in the comic section of the Sunday paper. The special part of birthdays was the singing of the five birthday songs!

When I turned ten my Mom did let me have a very special party. I invited four of my friends over and they each brought their favorite doll. That day, with Mom’s help, we cut out fabric and made a dress for each of our dolls. I can’t even imagine how Mom made it through that day! We each had something we made new by the end of the party and Mom deserved a big rest!!

(below: Tom's "Special" Birthday Cake)



Tom's birthday cake, Nov 6, 1967 (decorating courtesy of the US Post Office)

What are the top 5 things that you and your spouse have in common?



Tom:

When I first met Libbie Computer dating wasn't a thing yet. Computers existed and were quite powerful but they were relegated to backrooms of banks and laboratories because they were expensive and gargantuan. Instead we relied on good old intuition about a person. I knew she was an incredibly nice Family person, Happy and fun to be with. It wasn't until we were together for several months that we discovered all that we had in common.

I love Classical Music and Opera and when I found out after several months that her Family instilled in her a love for Classical Music I was delighted.

My Dad and my Grandfather were avid gardeners growing everything from Vegetables to Flowers. This greatly influenced my love of gardening and all growing things. Libbie was born with a Green thumb from growing huge pumpkins at 10 years old to later on rescuing plants in her college dorm room. What a Happy match we are!

When I graduated from College and started going on business trips I had a boss named Jack who went along with me on many trips. Jack was a foodie and taught me quite a bit about wine pairings and seafood. When Libbie was growing up her Grandfather taught her how to serve mixed drinks. As we dated and went to fine restaurants, a proper wine pairing was something we both enjoyed.

I had a camera from about the 6th grade and took many photos in my school years. I recently discovered how many pictures Libbie had taken in her early school years to the present. I scanned an entire album of her school years. When I started the project I thought it was going to be a simple job of dealing with a handful of pictures. Four days and 300 pictures later I found out she took a lot of pictures! She explained that she had a job and paid for all of her own film and developing. I was in similar circumstances so between us we took many pictures.

My Family never traveled so when I got out of college and started working, business trips were frequent and fun until they weren't anymore. I hated being away from Home and Family. Retirement ushered in a whole new perspective on travel and traveling. Libbie and I have traveled all over the world and almost to all 50 US states and have enjoyed it all together. With planes, trains, automobiles and boats we have enjoyed experiences ranging from hiking the rainforests of Costa Rica, riding mountain trains in the Sierra and Rockies, hiking through wildflowers in the Swiss Alps, boating the locks of the Panama Canal and attending Ballet and Opera performances in many of the world's great cities such as London, Paris, Vienna, Moscow, New York and San Francisco. We trudged across permafrost in the pouring rain on Alaska's Denali and drank beer in a picker's circle behind the Post Office in Luckenbach, Texas. Travel has brought us many joys and a keen awareness of Cultural differences.

I count my blessings that we both have the same appreciation for Culture and the Arts in our music, travels, food, photography and love of nature .

Libbie:

It never ceases to amaze me that Tom and I knew in less than 6 months that we wanted to spend the rest of our lives together! How could we possibly know we had anything in common? How

does that happen? Fifty one years later I am still learning new things about Tom and I'm always looking forward to the next day.

So the question is, what do we have in common? Even before we were married, Tom's parents knew our first common thread. Mom and Dad G gave us "His" and "Her's" garden trowels for Christmas 1971....before we were married. In 1972 we moved in to our first home, a cute cape cod rental home in Apalachin, NY. That spring as soon as the ground thawed, Tom and I both started digging up the back yard. Tom bought his first, of many, many power tools, a rototiller, He had a grand time digging up most of the back yard and planting all kinds of vegetables. His major crop was tomatoes but he also had corn, beans, cucumber, and peppers. At the same time I prepared flower beds all around our little house. Since this was my first garden I think I bought seeds for every flower variety I saw. Yee-Ha! Presto! We had our first gardens! My flowers that year were amazing and Tom's harvest was more than 2 people could eat.

From this first adventure into horticulture, we have continued to enjoy both the pleasure of growing new things to the joy and appreciation of all things botanical. Whereever we go we seek out gardens, parks, and nurseries to enjoy the beauty of nature and most likely bring a new plant home to grow.

Another thing we learned about each other early on was our love of photography. Tom and I both spent time photographing our successes in the garden. Tom had the advantage over me because he had a tripod, but we both got great photos of the gardens, bees on my flowers, and all of Tom's produce.

I grew up in a house full of music. My Mother loved opera and symphony music and she played her 78 rpm records in the evenings. I loved to improv dance to Offenbach, Strauss and others. From this exposure I found my love of opera and classical music. I think Tom impressed me with his love of music from early on. He loved playing Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture at high volume in his Dodge Swinger! This was the beginning of our love of classical music, dance and opera.

Tom and I have never shied away from a large project, I think we both work well together and even through tough spots we share the enjoyment of the completed project at the end of the day, week , monthor year. We have built, or participated in the building of three houses, owned and maintained five rental properties and built a greenhouse/business. Each of these projects involved many hours of exhausting work and we were able to work as a team and accomplish the end goal always with a feeling of success.

Beyond all the things already mentioned and alluded to, Tom and I share a love for travel, a love of reading, love of art and especially a love of the families we came from and the family we created. Each day begins and ends with the same mantra, Life is Good!



Tom & Libbie Glembocki at the Dallas Opera, Dallas TX

what are the five top things you and your spouse do not have in common



Tom:

Differences in a relationship are a healthy and rewarding entity. While it is good to have a lot in common, balance in life is about having differences and admiring the different skills, activities or pastimes of your spouse.

One of the top things that Libbie and I do not have in common is Needlework. She loves to Quilt, Knit and Sew. I admire the artistic talents represented by a handmade quilt or a hand sewn shirt but actually doing the craft is not a skill we share.

Libbie loves to do Jigsaw puzzles whether they are the online version on a computer or a real printed puzzle. She said it was

the matching of shapes and colors that appealed to her and is a very similar skill to pattern and color matching when designing a quilt. I have never been a puzzle person. I don't know why but I don't get any pleasure from matching pieces and colors.

I enjoy building unique projects with electronics. I guess that's probably the engineering mentality showing. I love the challenge of suffering through many frustrating and seemingly impossible learning experiences in order to finally achieve a working prototype of something unique.

This is a very unique engineering skill and of course is something we do not have in common.

Libbie and I both have excellent Computer skills. A computer area that we do not have in common is the design and implementation of computer applications. I enjoy tinkering with software and putting bits and pieces together to create an app in some cases or to create a non user friendly utility to perform a function such as the programs I have put together for Selby Botanical Gardens.

Libbie has the skills to do what I call Freestyle Cooking. On the other hand my cooking skills consist of trying to follow a recipe. Prior to Libbie and I taking a cooking class at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette, LA I did not know the first thing about cooking. Since then I do well if there is a recipe at hand. Libbie

has the experience and talent to know what ingredients combine well with each other and how long to cook them. She creates amazing “freestyle” recipes. I enjoy cooking different recipes that use oddball ingredients that we have never tried but in my cooking the recipe is always nearby as a reference.

I’m sure there are many more things we do not have in common but overall that’s a good thing. If everyone could see light, compose and paint like Monet the Art world would be a boring place. Instead the world has a rich variety of artists like Frida Kahlo, David Hockney, Georgia Okeefe and Jackson Pollock each with their own style and interpretation.

Differences are the key to making life a fun and exciting experience all the time.

Libbie:

As much as Tom and I share many things in common, We attack a project and think through the process differently. Tom has always found happiness in new and unique projects. He enjoys learning about new things and building and creating new things. Since Tom’s career was in the creation and development of new products, he is always looking for something new to to build, be it in hardware, software, or construction. Get a plan, learn all you can about it (books and now Utube) and then do it until the project is done then move on.

Over the years I think I proceed much differently. I enjoy creating things with my hands, Be it growing plants or working on quilt and other stitchery. I find peace an calm in planting a plant, letting it grow and then planting the same plant again...for 30 years. It is the same way with my quilting, I am not bored finding fabric, cutting it up, sewing it back together and then starting the process all over again.

I would say another big difference Tom and I have is Memory. Tom remembers everything!!! This is probably because he journals almost every day and documents everything he has ever done. I, on the other hand, have limited recall of time, places, events, names, or even the foods we ate last week. It probably has gotten worse for me over the years because if I do remember something, Tom will remember it differently and most of the time he is right.

The last thing, or things we do not share in common all have to do with tactile experiences. Tom does not like getting wet. No pool, hot tub, beach, getting wet in the rain or even a sprinkler. I love all of these and could stay in a pool or hot tub all day and standing out in the rain or sprinkler sounds fun to me! Also Tom can not tolerate going anywhere barefoot and I am barefoot all the time. Dirt or sand between my toes is a good feeling. My last word is massage!! Tom can't even imagine this as healing touch

and I'm always ready for my next one.

How is life different today compared to when you were a child?



Tom:

The proverbial answer to this question is that way back when I was a child in school we had to walk 10 miles in knee deep snow and freezing weather.

The past may be an exaggeration by some but the future is even more stretched beyond belief. Fifty five years ago, in November 1968, the following article appeared in Popular Science titled “40 years in the Future”

It’s 8 a.m., Tuesday, Nov 18, 2008, and you are headed for a business appointment 300 mi. away. You slide into your sleek, two passenger air-cushion car, press a sequence of buttons and the national traffic computer notes your destination, figures out the current traffic situation and signals your car to slide out of

the garage. Hands free, you sit back and begin to read the morning paper - which is flashed on a flat TV screen over the car's dashboard. The car accelerates to 150 mph in the suburbs then hits 250 mph in less built up areas.

Pretty funny stuff! Oh, we wish it were true. Reality is that just like the children of today I walked less than a mile to school or there was the option of riding the school bus which I rarely did. My cousins who lived a few houses away and went to the same school were quite different. They rode the bus everyday.

The basics were taught - Reading, Writing and Arithmetic but the end result back then is not very different from the end result today. Of course Technology has intervened but that's more for the convenience of the school system rather than the student. Technology allows learning progress to be more closely tracked and issues identified more quickly but the end result appears no different from 50 years ago. Our minds have not expanded very much and researchers claim we are still only using about 15% of the capacity of the human brain. This is evident today more than ever. What we think of as a comprehensive database of human knowledge, Wikipedia, occupies only 4 Gigabytes of memory space. This is a very small portion of today's thumb drives or memory cards which can range in the hundreds or sometimes thousands of gigabytes. Our brains have not been trained to even learn this miniscule amount. Education has not changed much

from when I was a child.

Transportation today is still in a quagmire much as it once was when I was a child. Before my time there were trolleys and trolley tracks in almost every city and town. Beginning in the 50s these tracks started disappearing as they were ripped up in favor of a less efficient alternative, the automobile. It's not clear why this happened. Cars of the 50s and 60s were unsafe at any speed. Suspension systems consisted of heavy duty mattress springs. Seat belts and airbags were nowhere to be found and sharp protruding objects populated the dashboards. Reliability was horrible. Cars today are much safer and significantly more reliable but they are still resource hungry polluting beasts. The traffic problem has certainly not been solved by making cars safer and dependable. Planners are beginning to learn that turning a 12 lane road into 20 lanes is not very sustainable. When the 20 lanes are congested do you go to 40 lanes? Thanks to our transportation detour of relying on the automobile our surface travel options have not changed much from when I was a child.

Entertainment options have increased significantly from when I was a child. Thanks to the Internet and streaming we have at our fingertips hundreds of hours of mindless entertainment. This seems to be to the detriment of live performance and the arts.

Communication has gotten much better since my childhood. Gone are the days of wired telephones with attendant toll charges for every call outside of an immediate local area. We now can call, text or video communicate with anyone anywhere on the globe. All of this for just the expense of a monthly cellphone line and internet connection. For once something predicted in the past has come true! Dick Tracy from the mid twentieth century had wrist radios and later in the 60s the “Man from Uncle” TV show had a watch that he would talk into and say “Open Channel D” and magically communication would take place over a satellite connection.

With few exceptions, life in the past when I was a child doesn’t seem to be much different from today. Yes, today we have cellphones, Netflix and Amazon but let me know when you see a flying hoverboard come to the market. I’ll be among the first to order it on Amazon.

Libbie:

Oh my goodness, as I look around this room, the answer to this question is screaming at me. Technology has changed everything since I was a child. I look across this room and see no less than 6 screens that can produce video images, play music and relay information to me. TV, lap tops, cell phones and readers surround me and are part of my daily life.

When I was born TV was just beginning to be part of the American household. We had a TV and I remember Mom watching shows like Arthur Godfrey, Dinah Shore and I Love Lucy while ironing clothes and sewing. In the 1950's on Sunday night we would gather around the Television with its tiny screen and watch "Wonderful World of Disney". There were only three broadcast stations, no choice in programming, and signal quality made the image poor at best...but we watched in fascination. I also remember when my Grandpa Condon got a color TV! That was a big deal, now he could watch baseball and other sports in color! Later we got a color TV but I don't remember when that was.

We had music in our house, Mom had 78 rpm records that were played one at a time and it only played for 10 min or less and then it had to be turned over to continue the play. When we needed to know something we turned to The World Book Encyclopedia, a 22 book set of big red and blue books that had a little information about everything you ever wanted to know. As a family we went to the library every week to get books to read for that week.

Telephones were wired into the house. We had one phone and hardly a reason to use it. Long distance calls were charged by the minute so most calls to family were very brief, "hello, how are you? Goodbye"

I probably could go on and on! We actually carried our allowance to the bank, made deposits and recorded transactions on paper ledgers. My parents bought tickets for events at the box office. We got our weather information from the thermometer on the porch.

All these things I mentioned and a bazillion more are ALL available to me on any one of the aforementioned devices in this room. Anything I want to know, anything I want to see, anything I want to hear is right here for me at anytime of day or night. As I have been writing this I have Googled many details so I'm not telling tales. I am watching and listening to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony from Berlin, I know the time, temperature and weather conditions outside, I always know the date and time and at anytime I can find out what my family is doing and talk to friends and especially family for as long as I want.

It is amazing how much technology has changed over my lifetime. Being in a home that embraces all things new has been a privilege! Thanks, Tom!!

Did you have any pets growing up?



Tom:

There are two answers to this story. I did have official pets but there were also the unofficial nameless backyard pets. One day a small orange kitten showed up on our front porch. I went to the refrigerator for some milk and fed the poor crying kitty. Little did I know that once you feed a kitten it “adopts you” as its forever owner. I named the cat Butterball. Recently I called my sister to see if she ever had any pets besides my cat. I found out that my Mother would not let her have a pet because according to Mom one pet per family was enough. After many years with Butterball and after she was gone I purchased a pet store parakeet with my paper route money. The purchase included a bird cage and box of bird seed. For some reason I named the bird Dolly. In later years I thought about this name and concluded that the Broadway Musical Hello Dolly was popular at the time.

My parents even went to see it on Broadway.

Unofficial backyard pets included various critters such as turtles and snakes. I don't think any of these had names. One of the turtles was a little green pet store turtle. My next door neighbor, Mr. Zimmerman, was a carpenter by trade. He helped me build a little screened cage out of scrap lumber for my turtle. I in turn took care of his Beagle, feeding, walking and watering the dog while the Zimmerman family went on vacation.

Libbie:

We always had pets in our house growing up but I do not remember that any of them were actually mine. Bill had two beagles. Toasty was a pup we had when we lived in Rocky River, OH and Sniffer lived a long life starting in Ohio, then In Yardley, PA and his golden years in Holden, MA, with my sisters, after Bill was off to college.

Mary had a parakeet named Colonel Glenn that lived in a cage in Mary's and Holly's bedroom. We thought Col. Glenn should learn to talk so we always said his name multiple times when we were near the cage. "Col. Glenn, Col. Glenn" but he never learned to answer us.

We lived on a lake in Yardley and every Spring we got baby ducks and once they were big enough they were released to live on the

lake until winter. Feeding the ducks was a shared chore.

After I was in college Holly had a black cat named Lance that Mom cared for long after we all were off to our adult lives.

Tell me about the first time you got a cellphone.



Tom:

Back in the late 90s a friend lent me his “phone in a bag”. I had fun playing with it, making calls while driving which was a unique experience at the time. Libbie used this phone in her booth at a flower show at the Raleigh Convention Center. This was also unique – being able to phone back to her business to check on operations from the floor of the convention center.

Later around the turn of the century we each purchased a Motorola cell phone. This was a plain old phone with a one line LCD display, a standard telephone button keypad and a little springy wire antenna that stuck up out of the phone. When we first got the Motorola phones we used them on a family visit driving North on I-95. We had stopped for dinner at a Cracker Barrel in Virginia and while having dinner the phone rang. Not knowing what button to push to answer the call, I just turned it

off. Ringing problem solved! I personally think it is rude to other diners to receive calls in a restaurant, or worse carry on a conversation with the phone at a table, so in retrospect, turning it off was a good thing!

Libbie:

I do not remember my first cell phone. I am sure it was a flip phone that folded in half like a clam shell. Tom would tell you when we first got our phones we did not know how to answer or how to turn them off. I do remember seeing a story on 60 Minutes that showed people in the streets of Scandinavia who all had cell phones and everyone was so involved with the device that they were almost unconscious of the environment around them. At that time I was appalled, I could not imagine what was so important that everyone had to have one. It was no time at all before our country caught up with this new technology and now we all have to have cell connection 24/7. Now I feel lost if I do not have my phone with me but most of the time I need it for it's other functions. camera, Google information, maps, weather and clock are what I need the phone for....and ...sometimes even for communication!

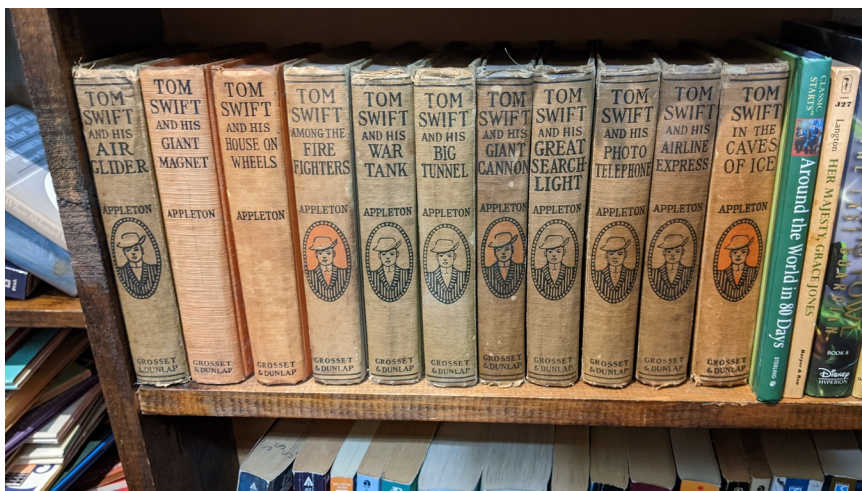
What did you read as a child?



Tom:

My Mother always bought us books for birthdays and Christmas. I read the standard adventure stories that she bought such as Treasure Island, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver's Travels and Moby Dick. As an Adult looking back at some of the reading I am grateful that she insisted on books for us as gifts whether it was for Christmas or a Birthday. When I was old enough to ride my bicycle to the town library I discovered the Hardy Boys and Tom Swift series of books. A few years later when I was earning my own money on a paper route I had the good fortune to stumble upon several used bookstores that had the Hardy Boys and Tom Swift titles that our town library did not have. I read every Tom Swift book that I could obtain.

Last summer, the summer of 2022, Libbie and I were waiting for a table at a downtown Sarasota restaurant for lunch. The venue was going to text us when our table was ready. Lo and behold, there was a used bookstore across the street. Of course we walked over there to browse and explore. In the back of the store was a shelf of Victor Appleton books. These were all original prints of his Tom Swift series from 1910–1941. Wow, these books were so ahead of their time. Tom had a cellphone, an eBike and an electric car 100 years before these items became commonplace.



Tom Swift Books in Sarasota Used Books Store

Libbie:

I was fortunate growing up! Going to the library and having books in our house were always an important part of my

childhood memories. Mom would read to us every night before bed. The book I remember most was *The Wind and The Willows*, which was about four animal friends and their adventures. The first book I remember reading was *The Boxcar Children* about four orphaned children and the adventure they had living in an abandoned boxcar. I believe there were several books about their adventures. I also read all the *Nancy Drew* books I could get my hands on. Nancy always could solve mysteries that stumped even adults. I liked that about her and enjoyed reading about her adventures.

Which musicians or bands have you most liked seeing live?



Tom:

My interests and tastes revolve around the classical music world which includes Symphony, Ballet and Opera. When we travel we always purchase Ballet or Opera tickets first then plan the rest of the trip around those tickets. We have been to the great Opera houses of the world with several interesting experiences.

A few years after the Soviet Union had collapsed I called a number in NY City when I saw an ad in Opera News for tickets to the Bolshoi in Moscow. This was before the Internet. A gentleman named Andrei answered the phone and took our order. He booked 2 seats for us and arranged for a hotel room in the Hotel Ukraine, Moscow. Andrei arranged for a driver to pick us up in front of the Hotel. The guy looked like a thug in a Black

Leather jacket but he got us there and waited for us after the performance to take us back. Andrei told us that when we got to the Bolshoi we should knock on the side door and ask for Tatiana. This was beginning to sound like a scene from a James Bond film. I had my doubts about this whole thing but on the night of the performance I dutifully went to the side door and knocked, asking for Tatiana. What a surprise, she was expecting us and handed us an envelope with tickets. We saw and heard a memorable Opera performance. The following night we went back to the Bolshoi and saw a Ballet, Swan Lake.

In summary it was a very memorable trip because of our pursuit of the Arts.

Libbie:

The Beatles first came to America in February 1964. They arrived in New York City and performed on the Ed Sullivan show. During this time my friends, Pattie Evans, Mary Joy White and I took a train from Trenton NJ to NYC to hopefully see the Beatles. At that time we had no plan, only a city guide book, a map and some young teenage dreams of seeing our heart throbs. We did not accomplish our goal on that trip but we did spend a good amount of time outside the Plaza Hotel wishfully thinking they would magically appear.

Later that year we had a better plan. The Beatles were back in America in August 1964, this time we had a better plan. Entertainment organizers arranged bus loads of teens from Trenton to go to the Beatles concert in Philadelphia. Pattie, Mary Joy and I were able to get tickets for that tour. We planned ahead for this special day. We had heard that fans were throwing articles of clothing and other things onto the stage with hopes that John, Paul, George or Ringo would get them. We decided to do something a bit different. Our thought was that throwing objects could be dangerous so we opted for something a bit softer... marshmallows! We spent quite a bit of time hand painting the Marshmallows with "We love you, Paul" and other messages. We also created banners for the busses so there was no doubt where this caravan of busses was going. We were armed and ready for our first live concert!!

There is no doubt that this was the most memorable concert I ever attended. Our tickets put us about 6 rows back and in good position to hurl the marshmallows onto the stage. This was a show I will never forget but also one I never heard. Actually I don't think the Beatles could even hear each other over the screaming throng. This concert was in an auditorium that was not equipped with a sound system to carry the music above the hysteria of hundreds of teenage girls in love. A newspaper story after that night did mention the variety of items thrown on stage

that night...including our marshmallows! For some years I did have several of my sweet bombs and the article as mementos of that night but now they are long gone. I see old Beatles fan footage and yes, I was one of those screaming teenagers, In Love!

Are you a morning person or an evening person?



Tom:

This isn't much of a question. The sun comes up every morning around 6AM give or take a few minutes seasonally. One of the greatest pleasures in life is to get up to see the sunrise. Who would want to miss this glorious event?

There was a brief moment in time that I thought that I was wasting too much of life's precious moments by waiting for the sunrise so I tried this routine of getting up at 5 AM. I previously read the book "The 5 AM Club" by Robin Sharma. The subtitle is "Own your morning, elevate our life". While this sounds great in theory - get up early and use the quiet time to work on fulfilling projects, the actuality for me was that I was too tired until "Ole Sol" made his appearance. Then my senses came alive and it was the beginning of a new day! I am definitely a morning person. What better way is there to celebrate all that life has to offer than

to take advantage of the day from its beginning?

Libbie:

I have always been a morning person. After a good night's sleep it is great to get up and get going first thing in the morning.

My mother used to recite this Robert Lewis Stevenson poem in the morning and I am sure it was directed towards my sisters and Not me.

A birdie with a yellow bill
Hopped upon my window sill,
Cocked his shiny eye and said
Ain't you shamed you sleepy head?

No, not me!! Rise and Shine!!

What project have you done in the past that continues to bring you pleasure when you remember it.



Tom:

Over the years I have done many projects ranging from building our own house to various agriculture and technology related activities. One of the adventures that I fondly recall is the journey to complete our first house.

Back in 1971 I saw a small 6 line classified ad in our local “Pennysaver” newspaper. This newspaper style flyer is given away weekly. The ad was for 5 acres of land on top of East Beecher Hill Rd overlooking the Susquehanna Valley in Owego, NY. The price was \$5,000 which my Credit Union was willing to

finance.

The following year we met with a builder, Newark Valley Construction, who had several models of home plans we could choose from. We chose a 1900 square foot L shaped ranch with a full basement and a large 2 car garage. We had no money but why should that stop us? We worked out a deal with the builder where we would provide sweat equity for our share of the down payment. The builder gave us a price of \$25,000 with me doing the electrical wiring, the plumbing and the heating as well as indoor and outdoor painting. In 2023, people pay more for a car than we paid for our first house. I was happy with the deal we struck with the builder until we went to the bank. They were not thrilled with us finishing a house they were going to finance. The issue the bank had was that I had no experience doing wiring, plumbing or heating. "But I could do anything" was not good enough for them. It was back to the creative financing drawing board for me. Since my Dad in his earlier working years worked as an Electrician on the Pennsylvania Railroad and also had a part time job in the HVAC business I concocted a document that stated my Dad was an Electrician and a Plumber and that he would be overseeing the work. I also got Ted of Newark Valley Construction to supply a letter stating that Newark Valley Construction would take responsibility for completing any electrical, plumbing or heating work that did not meet Building

Code standards in the event that I failed to comply with the standards. The bank agreed to this plan and we received financing approval to begin construction! Of course now the real fun was at hand. I purchased a copy of the National Electrical Code and a how to book of home plumbing systems. Our local building supply company took our house plans and estimated the size of the baseboard heater that we would need in each room.

This all went well. I was able to complete my portion of the home construction in a timely manner, passing all required inspections by our Town building inspector. 6 months after groundbreaking we were able to move into our new home.

Thinking back to that house building journey today brings a smile to my face. Somehow we managed to convince a bank to finance a house that I had no idea how to build but I was convinced that you can learn anything by reading a book. Somehow with diligent reading and studying we were able to successfully complete the project. Somehow the building inspector and the appraiser from the bank agreed the project was successful. It was an accomplishment that still gives me pleasure thinking about 50 years later.

Libbie:

This is an interesting question! There have been so, so many projects that we have done over the years that we have come

away with good feelings of success and accomplishment. We have built three houses, created many garden spaces that have brought natural beauty to our home And we converted a violet hobby into a business that lasted for 30 years. All of these activities brought satisfaction for a job well done and many happy memories.

In the late 80's my mother decided she wanted to make quilts. I had already been quilting for six or seven years by then so she asked me if I would help her start. This request launched a decade long collaborative project. Mom had a goal of making a small quilt or wall hanging for each of her twelve grandchildren.....or first born great-grand child.

Each of the twelve quilts were different colors and patterns that Mom chose over the coming years. Mom would pick the pattern and fabric and send it to me, then I would measure, cut and create kits to send back to her. Mom would then hand sew the pieces together to make the quilt top and send it back to me to quilt.

During this time Mom and Dad were spending their winters here in Sarasota and they would make an overnight stop to see us in Apex, NC on the way down and then again two months later on the way back. Also during these years I would spend a week or more in the summer with Mom and Dad in Rhode Island or at

Mary's in Maine. Each time we'd get together we would exchange projects, create new "kits" and trek to the nearest fabric store for new ideas. Often times Dad would join us and "help" in fabric choices.

My favorite of all these quilts was a wall hanging of house blocks. We decided that because there were so many different fabrics needed for this one we would "shop" in my fabric closet. The quilt had 12 houses, each with unique fabric for roofs, walls, and windows. I cut all these small pieces and made the kit. There were baggies for each part (roof, walls, and windows) but NO instructions for the construction. A great puzzle for the maker! I understand that Mom and Dad spent many days selecting which roof went with which building, and window. Any mixture would have been fine but their choices made the quilt perfect!

In 1999 when Mom turned 80 her quilt project was complete. At her family birthday party, Mom gave these quilts to her grandchildren. To be fair about the gift Dad placed one quilt in each of 12 numbered bags. Each of the grands in turn drew a number and received their Grandma's gift. Joe was unable to attend this party from California so I drew the number for him. Imagine my surprise when the house quilt was in his bag!! My personal favorite! Yea!!

This quilt for the moment hangs in my sewing room here in Sarasota. It brings joy to me every time I think of the fun hours I spent with Mom creating all these quilts. Someday in the future, it will be given back to Joe for Paige and she will know the story of Grandma Libbie, Great Grandma Mary and Great Grandpa George and the making of 12 special quilts.



Libbie's Wall Hanging Quilt



Our House on East Beecher Hill Rd

Where did you go on your honeymoon?



Tom:

On the morning of our wedding we had a dusting of snow from the overnight snow flurries. This was not unusual for upstate NY in March. Spring doesn't arrive until May. Our honeymoon plan was to drive South where it hopefully was warmer.

After an afternoon wedding reception we left our gathered family and drove South arriving in York, PA about 3 hours later. We decided to have a celebratory dinner at a SteakHouse in York which was an adventure in itself. We ordered Prime Rib with Baked Potato and a bottle of wine. The waitress carded 25 year old Libbie who unfortunately did not have her purse with her. After some explaining that she was over 21 and that she just got married the lady let her have wine. I suspect liquor laws are stricter nowadays. The meal came out incorrectly sequenced. Our Prime Rib came out but not the potatoes. The waitress grumbled

that this was not her normal “station” but she would find our missing potatoes. We were in a merry mood and just laughed at it all.

The next morning we drove to Cocoa Beach where we stayed for a few nights on the beach. On one of our days in Cocoa we drove to Walt Disney World in Kissimmee which had just opened.

Highway 192 is the East-West route that goes from the East Coast beaches to Kissimmee. The main gate of Walt Disney World is on Highway 192. The Highway is quite different nowadays. When we drove from Cocoa to Disney World the road was only 1 lane in each direction with cattle ranches and Orange Groves on both sides of the highway. Today it is 6 lanes wide and populated with tee shirt shops, gas stations, cheap burger joints and tacky souvenir shops full of tchotchke.

Disney World was quite different. Everything was new and gleaming. The concrete was pure white in the Florida sun as was the sand of the two resort beaches, the Contemporary and the Polynesian. Since it was Spring break the park was crowded for the park’s first Spring break ever. Around lunch time we broke free from the crowd and took the Monorail to the lush and beautiful Polynesian Resort. A tropical waterfall, Orchids and a rainforest occupied the center of the lobby. We had lunch here at the Kona Grill and then rented a little 2 seater motor boat for

cruising around the lake. The water through the Cypress trees was picturesque. Unfortunately today the lobby rainforest is gone to accommodate larger crowds and the 2 seater motor boats are gone.

After our nights in Cocoa Beach our next destination was an oceanfront Hilton on Singer Island in Palm Beach. This was a perfect sized 2 story oceanfront hotel. It was too perfect because in later years Hilton decided that a prime piece of oceanfront Palm Beach real estate deserved something bigger. There now is a tall Hilton tower where our “honeymoon hotel” used to be.

After Palm Beach we went to Miami Beach which was supposed to be the highlight of our trip. I had booked a room at the San Souci, a luxury hotel on Miami Beach. An online brochure I found while writing this story had the following description of the San Souci: “Unsurpassed for flawless service and elegant appointments, for its beautiful pool and cabanas, exquisite cuisine, fabulous music and entertainment.”

The nights we were staying there, the brother-sister duo “The Carpenters” were playing in the lounge. After we checked into our room we realized that this hotel had seen better days. The furniture was beat up, the carpeting and drapery were awful. We left immediately and started driving North without a place to stay for the night. After trying many hotels on our drive North

and getting turned away we stumbled upon an apartment complex where they could rent us a room for the night. Anything was better than the San Souci so we rented it and spent our last night in Florida before returning home.

Our simple honeymoon trip to Florida turned out to be quite the adventure. I'm glad it was since it made the trip more memorable and I wouldn't change a thing if I had to do it all over again.

Libbie

This is really a question for Tom to answer. I did most of the wedding planning and Tom planned our honeymoon "after Party". My focus on the Honeymoon planning was focused on a special wardrobe called a trousseau. I was sewing all my clothes in 1972 so of course I had to have all new clothes for the vacation that launched our "Happily ever after".

The day of our wedding we celebrated and were ready to go after only a couple hours of party. I made a navy blue polyester ensemble which was a two piece short, short dress and jacket with a scarf to match. The first night of our honeymoon we drove 4 hours to York, Pennsylvania. That night I remember being carded at the restaurant for underage drinking. I was an "old" 25 year old newlywed who looked like a teenager!

The next morning we were off to our Florida adventure! We drove through to the next morning where I woke to sunrise on Cocoa Beach. From there we visited Tom's college campus Florida Institute of Technology in Melbourne. Tom enjoyed sharing his college home with me but the highlight of this visit for me was the Dent Smith Trail, a botanical garden full of tropical plants and palms on the campus.

The other highlight of our honeymoon was our day at the newly opened Magic Kingdom. Since our wedding was Easter week everyone and their uncles were at the new park. In the early days there was no such thing as fast pass or lightening lanes so each ride took hours waiting in hot lines with hundreds of families. After several hours of these lines we escaped to the riverboat, train and monorail for a break from the crowds. We had dinner in the Polynesian Resort and then we rented a small motor boat. We discovered even in the craziness of the crowds there were fun quiet places that could be enjoyed. Sunset that night on Bay Lake was very special!

My Disney day outfit was a blue jumpsuit with a zipper front and a red, white and blue hip hugging beaded belt. The ensemble included a white lacey sunhat. I felt like a model in this homemade outfit!

The days of our honeymoon were special and also somewhat of a blur. I made several dresses and another jumpsuit and Tom even bought me my one and only bikini. I was sure way too much of me was exposed but Tom thought I was beautiful. Who knew you could feel so special! New clothes, new husband, new life, all contributed to a great start to our Happily Ever After!





What personal expectations do you hold yourself to?



Tom:

This is an interesting question because potential answers can branch into many directions. As with anything in life, personal expectation depends on passion, commitment and interest. All these attributes go into making a personal expectation for myself. For example if it's a government agency looking for something, these worthless bureaucrats only get the minimum work effort from me. Whatever minimal amount of input to get a bureaucratic ticky mark on a form is all they get. Of course this stems from my belief that government is our worst enemy, or more specifically the lazy bureaucrats who are employed by the government don't have our best interests in mind.

When it comes to a project I have committed to, my personal expectation is to go above and beyond and perform at the highest level even if it sometimes means spending hours pinning down seemingly minor details. I want perfection and I want it complete. A good example of this is my current task at Marie Selby Botanical Garden. I am dealing with over 100,000 images that have been taken over the years by a host of amateur volunteer photographers. Buried in the metadata for the image is the plant family name, species and genus as well as the accession number and plant collector, date it was collected and date it was photographed. This data is put into the metadata in no particular order and with no particular category separator. Sometimes one of the tags would be spelled wrong or accession number digits reversed. I have spent hundreds of hours developing python artificial intelligence based applications to sort this out. In order to be databased, all this data needs to be correct and in order. Others may have thrown up their hands and declared that this is impossible to do but I have committed to perfectly extract, reorder and correct the data. It has been a challenging project but I hold myself to a high standard of providing the seemingly impossible solution. When completed, our database will be available to Botanists worldwide.

Libbie

I would say I am a positive person. I would like to think I live each day finding the joy that comes from living. I see too many people who hold on to negative thoughts; complaints, criticism, anger, sadness, and fear rule their every waking hour to the point of blocking out all the good around them.

I do know I can be angry, sad, fearful etc. but I do not dwell in negativity. I believe you can create your own reality. If you are angry all the time you will find more to be mad at. If you are sad, more sadness will come your way. If you complain and are critical there is plenty to dislike. I choose to be happy, to find joy and beauty in the world around me. I let go of negativity and find peace at the end of the day

If you had to go back in time and start a brand new career, what would it be?



Tom:

I am possibly one of those rare individuals who was very satisfied with his career choice. I always had interesting projects to work on. I enjoyed what I was doing and was more than grateful to find a company willing to reward me for my efforts. Since I'm a naturally curious person I always managed to learn everything I could about other activities my project interfaced with whether it was chip design, mechanical design, testing or manufacturing. Having fingers in so many pies accidentally made me valuable enough that when company wide resource reductions, i.e. layoffs, came around it was hard for management to eliminate my position.

If I started a brand new career different from what I enjoyed doing as an Engineer, it most likely would be a career in Art or Music. While very noble professions, neither Artists or Musicians are known to be people who are able to financially support themselves. Since this is a fantasy question, I would love to spend half of my working hours painting in watercolors or sculpting in clay. For the other half of my working hours I would concentrate on Music for both Clarinet and Piano. I can envision myself in a small 3 or 4 piece ensemble or possibly in a small Orchestra. Of course at this point in my life I have not developed enough skills to do either Music or Art but I always believed anything is possible with enough applied work and tenacity.

In summary, reality would have me in the exact career path I followed with no changes. As a fun “what if”, I would pursue the impractical career of Musician or Painter.

Libbie:

In 2008 when my mother in law, Victoria Glembocki came home from the hospital to spend the last months of her life in hospice care I was asked to stay with her. I was there the week she came home and several times in the coming months and then again the week that Mom died. Each time I came I found many special memories that I will treasure forever and I observed the gentle care of the hospice organization.

Then in 2010 my parents moved from their condo to Sakonett Bay Senior Living and for the next eight years I made frequent trips to Rhode Island to visit them. In those years I not only visited my parents but I also got to know many of the other elderly residents. I found that I enjoyed time in this aging community. My parents and each resident had a lifetime of learning, stories and experiences that were worth listening to and learning from. Even though age comes with many limitations the elderly have so much to share!

I think I found that I had the patience and empathy needed to be a positive light in an otherwise quiet end of life. I am sure I would have been good in a career of caregiving or recreational therapy with focus on elderly.

What are your favorite books?



Tom:

I am a very diverse reader.

I grew up on Adventure series and Science fiction like the Hardy Boys and Tom Swift. In my High School years I read every Ian Fleming book. Of course Ian Fleming is the creator of James Bond. Lately I have enjoyed fun detective Series such as the Stephanie Plum series from Janet Evanovich and the Dirk Pitt adventures by Clive Cussler as well as happy ending romances by Nicholas Sparks and Richard Paul Evans.

One of my favorite series of all time is the Broken Road series by Richard Paul Evans. Richard Paul Evans started by writing a “true meaning of Christmas” story for his two young daughters. His wholesome and spiritual approach caught on with the public and his book became a bestseller. This is where I first discovered

him. Now many of his novels have also become Hallmark Movies in addition to being bestsellers.

In the more contemporary classical category I like John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* and Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as favorites. Steinbeck is so descriptive in characterizing the dust bowl and the plight of the Joad family, it's good reading. I also think anything by Hemingway is outstanding, something the journalists of today can not claim about their writing. For the *Bell* story, the emotional tale of love between Jordan and Marie is set against a background of peasants fighting for their future in the Spanish Civil War. This is as realistic as a romance can get. Since he was a journalist and war correspondent, Hemingway is quite descriptive with the war scenes and emotional toll on the population.

In summary, I have chosen as favorites a few classical novels in very diverse genres that should withstand the test of time; they are not this year's "must read" fad. These are my treasured reads and once in a while I enjoy picking one up and randomly rereading a chapter or two, savoring the words on the page, remembering the joy that reading one of my favorites has brought me.

Libbie:

I like to read a lot. Sometimes my favorite book is the last one I have read because it is the one that is “fresh” in my memory but often times not. I find that much of contemporary literature is not good literature. It is written by the author in a rush to meet a publication deadline or a yearly quota. If you don’t have something to say.....repeat yourself five times or add a few chapters reflecting today’s social agenda! Ugh!!

Over the years I have had several authors that once I have read one offering I couldn’t wait to find another. Pearl Buck was definitely one of my all time favorite authors. When I read The Good Earth Trilogy the books took me to the other side of the earth and with pros introduced me to a different land and culture. Pearl Buck’s books were originally printed in the 1930’s and were republished in paperback in the 1970’s and 1980’s. I believe I have read every book in this paperback series. For years I saved my copies of these books. The covers were beautiful and each book had a unique story to tell. I am sorry to say, I no longer have these books, in our 2020 downsizing I decided to donate this collection before moving to Florida.

Another author I really enjoyed was Rosemund Pilcher, starting with her book, The Shell Seekers. Ms Pilcher wrote of the people in the English countryside. I remember her descriptions of the people, gardens and the rocky cliffs were unrushed and they carried me to this peaceful place.

It has been many years since I read these books. I should probably find copies and reread them to see if I feel the same way about them today.

What was your wedding like?



Tom:

The day was a beautiful Saturday in March of 1972. As was typical for the Southern Tier of New York State, the sky was cloudy. Owego, NY is in the New York Southern Tier on the Pennsylvania border and is one of the cloudiest regions in the United States with just 52 days of sunshine per year. Snow flurries overnight put a light dusting of snow on grassy areas and car windshields.

At a little past noon Libbie and her Dad began the walk down the aisle of St Patrick's Church in Owego. The aisle contained a red carpet with a white runner in place for beautiful Libbie. A bouquet of yellow roses in her left hand completed the scene as Purcell's Trumpet Voluntary was played.

The ceremony was over quickly in a very traditional “I do” manner. A folk duo with an acoustic guitar sang the popular wedding song “There is Love” by Paul Stookey.

The guests then retreated to the Owego Treadway Inn for a pre reception while we stayed at the Church with our parents, immediate family and the bridal party for professional photography.

It was remarkable how quickly the ceremony came and went. 15 minutes to get married, one hour for photography and then the newly minted Mr and Mrs Thomas Glembocki were off and running to the wedding reception.

Our wedding reception was one of the best. We had a 3 piece band playing various tunes, a dance floor for fun times, a bar and a “sit down” chicken dinner. A Champagne toast kicked off the festivities. With 128 guests to greet we hardly had any time at the party before it was time to change and leave the Treadway Inn. Surprisingly, to leave the Treadway Inn Libbie was dressed in a pretty blue ensemble and I wore a white shirt, tie and Sports Jacket. Times have slightly changed. I suspect couples leaving for a honeymoon nowadays are dressed less formally.

Recalling these few details of our wedding day has brought a smile to my face. This was one of the best days of our lives. Little did we know what adventures we would be facing in the next 51 years (at the time of this writing). The journey has definitely

been an E ticket ride as we continue our Happy journey into the sunset.



Tom and Libbie Glembocki, March 25, 1972

Libbie: My wedding was one of the best days of my life. Everything about that day and the days leading up to it were special even though the planning was a challenge! Tom and I come from different religions and different family traditions. I was raised with Mid-western Protestant traditions. Weddings were simple church ceremonies with a few readings, songs, and of course wedding vows. Then on to the church basement for the reception, complete with “finger food”, punch and cake. Tom on the other hand came from a Polish Catholic background where

the the marriage was a full Mass because marriage is a sacrament. After the long time in the church it would be time to party! Sit down dinner, music, open bar and lots of dancing were the norm.

In planning our wedding I was challenged with finding a happy median. Luckily I had a few things going for me. First, Tom and I both lived in New York while my parents and family were in Massachusetts and Tom's were in New Jersey. Since I never really lived in Holden, Massachusetts I was not expected to come to my "home" church to be married. We chose St Patrick's Catholic Church in Owego and the first problem was solved.

Right about this time the Catholic church was going through ecumenical changes. A few years earlier I would not have been allowed to be married in the church without being a Catholic. Several years earlier a teacher friend of mine had the same issue and St Patrick's would only perform the marriage in the church rectory. We were not only allowed to be married in the church but the priest presided...but No Mass.

The next big issue was the Party! Tom was all in favor of following his family's traditions which did make a lot of sense. We were asking our guests to come hundreds of miles to celebrate with us so it was our responsibility to feed them and give them a good time.

Mom and I spent the months leading up to the wedding working on every detail. At that time long distance phone calls were charged by the minute so we relied on daily notes through the post office. For my Mom this wedding was very elaborate and she had to keep finances reasonable. My sister Mary, and John were also getting that spring. They had planned a much simpler event in Mom's backyard with finger food. I am so glad I kept Mom's notes because it is interesting to see now what we thought was very expensive then.

Our wedding reception was at the Treadway Inn in Owego, NY and their events coordinator was a tremendous Help in the planning. She was able to guide me in food selection, table decorations, the cake, and the band that played live music!. Oh, and Yes, the bar!! All in all it Was a fun Party!

Our ceremony was short and to the point. We had several readings, music, and vows. Two teachers from my school sang The Wedding Song {a popular song at the time sung by Peter, Paul and Mary} I truly believed the Lyrics...I was an over the top romantic!!

If you ask Tom's sisters they would tell you our wedding was memorable because it was the shortest they had ever seen. {"Do you, Libbie, I do! Do you, Tom, I do"}) and we were done. If you ask my sisters the same question they would say the reception

was the memorable part because of the food, music and dancing. For me it was a great time but I was ready to get going on the rest of my life.

P.S. After Tom and I left we were told the party continued on into the night with both families and guests getting to know each other, sharing food and drinks in the hallways of the Treadway Inn. Fun time for all!

What are your favorite recipes, either to cook or to eat?



Tom:

The American novelist and newspaper columnist Fanny Fern created the phrase “The way to a man’s heart is through his stomach”. This age old cliché is as true today as almost 200 years ago when Fanny coined it. When we were first married Libbie liked to cook creatively from a Time Life Series of Cookbooks that we subscribed to. Every month a cookbook with the cuisines of a different country arrived in our mailbox. From these cookbook pages came one of my favorite recipes of all time. Libbie excels at this memorable dish called “Deviled Steak”. The spectacular recipe calls for a beef steak to be warmed in a chafing dish with mushrooms, Worcestershire Sauce, Sherry and other ingredients. The “coup de grace” comes at the end of the cooking when she would pour a few tablespoons of Brandy over

the beef and flame it. Not only was this a dramatic way to create a meal as flames shot up from the pan but the end result is tasty and is easily one of my favorite dishes.

Fast forward 30 or so years and retirement graced our lives. I never knew how to cook and had never learned. My Mother believed that boys did not belong in the kitchen. I was OK with this growing up but then was starting to feel left out as Libbie created many wonderful entrées. To rectify this we both signed up for a continuing education course at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette, Louisiana. While the college was on Spring break we went on campus everyday and used the School of Hospitality kitchens to learn Cajun cooking. This was a great experience for me. We cooked four course meals every day from fish filet covered with étouffée to Gumbo and Jambalaya. I took it all in and learned a lot. When we returned home I went to work practicing my newly acquired skills with many weird, wonderful and different recipes. The website All Recipes cooperated by sending a new recipe every day, many of which I attempted. Some were big hits, others were complete failures. My favorite recipe that I cook is a dish I have created called Coquille St Tom. It is a derivation of the Julia Child scallops recipe Coquille St Jacques. In my version there are a number of substitutions, most notably a crab and white fish mixture instead of Scallops. The dish has been widely praised when I brought it to our Ballroom

Studio and also praised when I cooked it for the neighbors. It was fun giving out the recipe to those who requested it

The title of this story is about favorite recipes. In a lifetime of many excellent culinary adventures it is hard to pin down an exact favorite. The above examples are but two memorable foods of the many hundreds of dishes we fortunately have been able to sample.

Libbie:

I have enjoyed cooking my entire life. Making both savory entrées and sweet desserts have always been fun for me. I have just one tried and true recipe for the past fifty+ years and that is pizza. Almost every week we have my homemade pizza on Sunday nights. No matter how many times I have made this same “recipe” each time it is different and most of the time better than the one before.

When Joe took on my pizza talent I was surprised to find out dough making was much more scientific. He would finely measure out the yeast and other ingredients and he proofed the yeast before starting. I remember once he asked me about the type of flour and yeast I was using and at that time my answer was, whatever was available. I have learned from him that high gluten bread flour makes better crusts.

I think making Pizza has been a favorite because over the years making it has almost become rote, no recipe, and no rules. Every time I make it, it can be different by topping the crust with whatever we choose. Often I serve pizza when we have guests. I see Joe also creates personal pies for the girl's parties and that puts a smile on my face....everyone likes pizza!

Who are your favorite artists?



Tom:

I have about as many favorite artists as there are artists in the universe.

I like every kind of visual art but in particular the paintings of the European and American Impressionists appeal to me the most. This would include artists like Claude Monet, Childe Hassam and Edward Hopper as well as the sculptures of Auguste Rodin. Of course Libbie and I have traveled to the home of Claude Monet in Giverny, France and the estate of Auguste Rodin in Paris. Monet's estate contains the famous Japanese bridge and the water lily ponds that appear in so many of his paintings. What a treat to see them in nature the same way they inspired Monet 100 years ago. The Rodin estate is a museum now and contains the largest collection of Rodin sculptures in the world.

We are members of the James Museum of Western Art in St Petersburg, FL. The facility contains many fantastic paintings by painters and sculptors of the US Western states. Many of these artworks are themed with depictions of cowboys, Indians and landscapes of the beautiful Western Parks of the United States. A favorite artist here is the paintings of John Nieto, a visual artist who captures the essence of a person or animal using vivid primary colors.

I could go on and on with the many creative individuals that we have come to know all over the world through their paintings and sculptures. The list is endless and is a tribute to the creativity of the human spirit. There is an interesting quote which sums up my love of art. Earth without art is just “eh”.

Libbie:

I love to go to art galleries and explore the diversity of talent in expressing the beauty of life on canvas, in sculpture and in other media. Recently we have found The James Museum of Western Art in St Petersburg, Florida. This museum displays a vast collection of many artist's pieces expressing the beauty of our Western states through different lenses; native Americans, frontiersmen, pioneers, cowboys, Chinese Americans and the wildlife that inhabited the land. We have visited this museum many times since moving to Florida and each time there is

something new to see.

So, that does not answer the question, does it? I have several favorite artists, the first that comes to mind is Mary Cassatt who was an American Impressionist painter who painted mostly beautiful images of women and children doing everyday activities. Her paintings give an intimate view to daily life with a beautiful perspective.

Another favorite artist for me is Claude Monet because he spent his life exploring the effects light and color had on his subjects. He saw beauty in landscapes, haystacks, lily ponds and especially his garden. He painted many of the scenes over and over again showing the changes light, weather and time had on his subjects. He had a great lesson for all to learn, we all should always be aware of the changing beauty that surrounds us...especially in the garden.

A third favorite artist, also an Impressionist painter, is Edgar Degas. I love his focus on dance and the beauty of movement. He worked in many different media; drawing, paint and sculpture and in all these he expressed a unique view of the dance world.

If you look around my house you could come to the conclusion that I do enjoy art from many places around the world. We have paintings and art works from many of the places we have traveled but my favorite artist comes much closer to home. I

have works of my favorite artist on many of the walls of my home. Mary (Stauffacher) Condon, my Mom, majored in art in college at the University of Wisconsin. When she could find time over the years she would continue her education and take art classes and learn more skills. Mom's paintings were never masterpieces to be viewed in art galleries around the world but they are loved masterpieces in my home and the homes of my family members.

Would you prefer to have an adventure, or read about one?



Tom:

This is an easy question to answer. I'm guessing that over 99% of the people who are asked this question would answer that living an Adventure far exceeds reading about one. Living an Adventure always presents an opportunity for sub adventures, adventures that were not planned and may possibly involve a Plan B Adventure.

One of our recent trips was a bird watching expedition to Panama and Costa Rica. The plan of record was to travel to the Oso Peninsula of Costa Rica and meet up with an Ornithologist, Karen Lavelle, who is an American researcher living there studying the Yellow Billed Cotinga. (I never question some of the exotic avocations some people get into as career choices).

Through Karen we met Archie, a local Costa Rican, who was going to lead us through the rainforest jungle. The humidity in the rainforest is always around 100% and on this particular day the temperature was in the high 90s. The hiking was strenuous since the terrain was hilly but the birds and wildlife more than made up for it. Somewhere in the backcountry Archie, our guide, became overheated and was having troubles. He had to sit down in the path and was not looking too great. Fortunately, Louie, one of our birders, was a doctor. He recognized it as a diabetes attack and immediately mixed up some sugar based drinks for Archie. In about 15 minutes our guide was well again but we eased the stress on Archie and ourselves by hiking less strenuous hills. The birding was just as spectacular.

This was an adventure of a lifetime, an adventure that could not be adequately described in a blog, journal or book. It required real world conditions with a cast of real world characters in pursuit of an elusive goal. The trip will long be remembered and is living proof that it's the journey and not the destination that we all traverse in life.

Libbie:

Having an adventure be it travel or a fun experience is always preferred to reading about adventure in a book. With that said I would still chose reading books because there is not enough time or money to experience all the adventures that can be found

within the pages of books.

If you could choose any talents to have, what would they be?



Tom:

One of my pleasures in life is reading. I admire some of the contemporary great authors and often try to write short stories emulating their style. Some of these authors are Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Clive Cussler, Richard Paul Thomas, Sara Alexi and Nicholas Sparks. I not only read for the pleasure of reading but also stop to admire and study the wordsmithing the author has used to paint a description, characterize an event, develop a character or construct a plot. I then try to develop a story of my own using some of what I learned. When I'm feeling thick skinned or brave I sometimes submit these stories to literary websites. The criticism and comments then become enlightening. Sometimes they are especially harsh and cruel, other times the comments are

satisfying and encouraging. In any case, I do have the ability to write, perhaps not at the Pulitzer level, but well enough for my enjoyment and occasionally the enjoyment of others.

A talent I wish I had was the ability to write poetry. This would be an excellent companion to writing stories. Some of my favorite books are books of Poetry, especially the Poetry of Robert Service. Every time I reread a poem in one of his books I am always amazed. How did he write that?

A Robert Service extract:

I've watched the big, husky sun wallow
In crimson and gold, and grow dim,
Till the moon set the pearly peaks gleaming,
And the stars tumbled out, neck and crop;
And I've thought that I surely was dreaming,
With the peace o' the world piled on top.

Libbie:

I have always admired people who can pick up a musical instrument and just play it. When I see someone just sit down at a piano and play any song you request I am in awe. Several times over my life I have piano lessons but have never progressed past reading the notes on the staff and playing (plodding) through the sheet music in front of me. Being able to really play the piano and create music would be awesome.

Have you ever experienced a severe storm?



Tom:

On the East Coast of the US the prevalent severe storm type is hurricanes. Over the years we have experienced many hurricanes. Some were small and only a rain event and others were windy, gusty and accompanied by rainfall measured in feet.

Our most recent Hurricane was Ian. In the days leading up to the landfall of Hurricane Ian the predicted path of the storm was all over the place. As the storm approached we in Sarasota were going to be getting a “drive by” hurricane with the storm a few hundred miles off shore safely sailing by in the Gulf waters. An hour before landfall the path was now predicted to be a direct hit on Sarasota. As we watched the radar and live video cams I noticed the storm was breaching the dunes in Naples, Florida, about 125 miles South of us. None of the news services were reporting this but I could see with my own eyes with the help of

the online unattended webcams that Ian was making landfall South of us delivering the brunt of the storm into Southwest Florida. Hurricanes are fueled by water temperatures over 80 degrees. Once the storm crosses onto land it loses much of its fuel source. Hurricane Ian was briefly a category 5 storm but now as it continued its northward journey up the coastline it was down to a Category 1. It eventually reached our home in the afternoon which was good.

Howling winds and driving rain are palatable when it is daylight out. You can see what is happening to you. We received 15 inches of rain and because we have Hurricane proof windows we were able to sit on our sofa and watch the storm outside wreaking havoc with small trees falling, pine tree branches blowing across the yard and other landscape bushes getting tossed to and fro, A humorous moment occurred when in the midst of the storm we watched a squirrel climb one of our pine trees and fetch a pinecone from out on the end of a branch. Of course the branch was fiercely whipping in the winds but the squirrel was determined to fetch dinner. These little guys are tough!

Hurricane Ian was a dangerous storm, many people lost lives mostly due to drowning. We lost power for 4 days which is a minor inconvenience compared to those who lost homes, loved ones or their own lives.

Libbie:

The short answer is yes I have experienced more than one severe storm. Which one should I tell you about?

The blizzard of 1978 was called a bomb cyclone. The storm dumped snow on all of the northeast, over 40" on our house in Owego, NY. The snow drifted up over the garage door and would blow right back when we shoveled it away. It was enough snow that year to help us decide to move to a warmer climate in North Carolina.

In 2000 snow also found us in Apex, NC when an unbelievable 23" fell. The storm began on January 18. Mom, Dad and Sue were driving south with an expected overnight stop in Apex. They were hearing weather reports on the car radio that sounded like armageddon was near, they laughed at the fearsome reports when they only saw a few snowflakes as they neared the Raleigh area. That night we were pounded with a record 23" of snow that stopped everything for a week. The greenhouse was on its own, I had my fingers crossed that everything was going to be ok but we had no way of telling because roads were impassable and power was out. Fortunately our automatic backup generator did come on and the greenhouse was able to support the snow weight. Neighbors near the greenhouse were able to tell me on the phone that everything looked ok but it was several days before we could venture out to check. Seeing the greenhouse

standing, heat on and plants still alive was pure happiness!! Mom, Dad, Sue and I had to delay on our travel plans to Florida. We hunkered down at home we enjoyed reading, quilting and staying warm inside before we were able to get on the road south. What a freak storm, less than an hour south the roads were clear and dry, you would never know the storm of a lifetime had just taken place.

How did you choose what college to attend?



Tom:

When I was College hunting I knew I wanted to attend an Engineering School. All through High School I was drawn to Science and always did very well in Math. The only real filter for me was cost. Since I was paying my own way through College I needed an affordable school. I was overjoyed when I found that there was an Engineering School near Cape Canaveral. Back in the 1960s the US was in the midst of the Space race. This small school was Brevard Engineering College, a school I never heard of but it was fully accredited as a BS, MS and Phd granting engineering school by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The college had a beautiful tropical campus on 100 acres. Enrollment was 6,000 students. The price was right. A recent online search in 2023 uncovered the 1963 College Catalog for Brevard Engineering College which listed tuition as \$270 per

semester. Even harder to fathom was the meal plan. 21 meals per week was only \$120 per semester. In 2023 our weekly grocery bill is more than that. The location of the school, Melbourne, FL, was adjacent to the NASA facilities at Cape Kennedy.

I later learned that the reason I never heard of the school was that it had only been established in 1958. The purpose of the school was to serve as a provider of higher education for the scientists and engineers working on the space program at nearby Cape Canaveral. The College had obtained a 100 acre campus with a dozen or so buildings for free from the City of Melbourne, the remnants of an unrelated school that had closed. The nearby Space Industry poured buckets of money into additional buildings and lab facilities on the campus as a self-serving gesture. There was a critical shortage of Engineers. The nearby Space companies were actively recruiting graduates as they received their diploma. I was a beneficiary of this since IBM was one of the companies recruiting engineers. The pay at IBM was better than most companies but the standards were higher with a minimum 3.0 grade point required for an interview.

After my first year at Brevard Engineering College the school changed its name to Florida Tech. The new name was chosen to give the school more National exposure which assisted fundraising efforts.

The choice of college to attend was made easy by the almost ideal qualities of Florida Tech. It was an affordable engineering college in the midst of the hub bub and excitement to get to space . Transportation was free because my Dad was a Railroad employee which meant train tickets to Florida in coach were free. A pleasant climate and an Ocean front environment was the cherry on top of a delectable package.



Crane Creek passing through the Florida Tech campus Botanical Garden, then known as the Dent Smith Trail, a place Tom loved to explore.

Libbie:

I knew in my senior year of high school that I wanted to be an elementary school teacher. My parents were facing the expense of college tuition for five children so I looked at several state colleges. When Mom, Dad and I drove through the beautiful mountains of northern Pennsylvania and arrived in the small town of Mansfield I knew this was going to be my home. Any of the state schools of Pennsylvania could have given me the teacher education but the rural beauty of Mansfield instantly felt like home.

Which relative did you wish to have spent more time with?



Tom:

Our family was regionally close. All our relatives lived in the tri-state NJ-CT-NY area so we were fortunate to see them quite often. There were the incessant celebrations of anniversaries, birthdays and holidays as well as impromptu visits for a backyard BBQ or just to pay a visit for no reason at all. These occasions provided ample opportunities to spend time with relatives.

Of all my relatives the most interesting character was the husband of my Mother's sister, Uncle Fred. Uncle Fred was friendly, flamboyant, irresponsible, a dreamer, a schemer and always the center of attention and life of the party. Despite all these sometimes questionable qualities, he had a big heart.

Uncle Fred rarely worked at a real job. He would always create a business with him as President, hire some of the most questionable people and then promote the heck out of it with contests, giveaways and Family fun for all. The only skill needed was his sales ability. One year the town of South Plainfield, NJ was installing sewers throughout the town. You guessed it, Uncle Fred was now a plumbing contractor. The sewer line as installed by the town had a stub in front of each business or home. The homeowner was responsible to dig a trench from house to street and hook their home to the sewer line stub. Uncle Fred didn't just arrange for sewer hookups but he promoted them with horse drawn carriage rides for kids and families, popcorn, ice cream and cotton candy for all. It was a 3 ring circus with Uncle Fred as ringmaster.

In the 1940s a group of Polish Immigrants banded together and built a Community Center known as the Polish Home. A Ballroom with Hardwood Dance Floor, kitchen, game room and full service bar rounded out the amenities. The ballroom was a very active space with weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, Christmas and New Years parties. Uncle Fred's catering company served them all. He lobbied the Polish home board to expand the ballroom kitchen which came with the added bonus of room on the first floor for 2 bowling alleys with manual pin setting.

Whenever Uncle Fred visited the Polish Home bar he always announced drinks were on him enhancing his popularity among members even more. It didn't matter that a lot of the time his finances did not prudently allow him to do this.

Sometime in the 1960s Uncle Fred, who was Irish, was elected President of the Polish Home. Fiscal responsibility was not one of his skills. He managed to install some very expensive automatic pinsetters in the bowling alley, manufactured by AMF. That summer at 16 years old I went to AMF pinsetter training school where I learned the electro mechanics of the machines. I loved it. Attending with me from the Polish Home was the bartender, a guy who was not very bright and was more interested in the contents of a bottle of alcohol than wiring schematics, motors and relays. This all was an education for me from the electronics of an automatic pinsetter to the sad state of the human condition. Even at such a young age I recognized that the local bar is not a place to hire quality people. Uncle Fred however had a big heart and thought he was helping someone down on their luck.

In my College days Uncle Fred was a salesman for the Cushman Motor Company. This company made industrial Golf Carts for hauling dirt, utility tools and lawnmowers. Uncle Fred was trying to get a contract from the NJ State Government for him to supply Golf Carts. I was invited to tag along with him for a very nice

lunch with a State Representative at a fancy restaurant in Trenton, NJ. Uncle Fred transformed into a lobbyist promoting himself. I had never been in an establishment like this. Dim lighting, thick plush carpets and impeccable service ruled the day. Prior to this my only restaurant exposure had been Family establishments that my Mom & Dad, on rare occasions, took our Family to. Uncle Fred got the contract and I once again added to my life experiences – exposure to plush eateries and the murky world of business and government contracts.

Uncle Fred was not afraid of getting the Family involved in his business. He solicited funds from anyone who would give him the time of day. Even my Grandmother was listed as a shareholder in one of his many companies, Central Jersey Frozen Foods. I found this out recently from an archived newspaper article I stumbled into online.. Central Jersey Frozen Foods was based in Bernardsville, NJ. The scheme was to sign up for weekly delivery of Frozen Foods and get a free freezer to keep all this frozen food in. Uncle Fred once again was the promoter with much advertising, games, prizes and a fleet of trucks delivering frozen food to people he signed to long term contracts. Of course when people started defaulting on these contracts my parents garage became a warehouse of used freezers. My understanding was that the IRS was also looking for these freezers as assets to pay back taxes. There never was a dull moment! My Mother's

feelings about the business highlighted what the underlying problem was. She had a family to feed on a tight budget. Her local supermarket gave her better selection and value so she never signed up for Uncle Fred's service. My feeling is that once people discover they are paying more for a lower quality product they will walk away from their "free" freezer

In later years and before his death Uncle Fred moved to Cincinnati, Ohio. He always took good care of his Mother. When she was in need, he moved back home to tend to her needs. I suspect the move was really to escape the heat from debtors and other people he owed money to. We visited him one year in Ohio where he had started a Home Remodeling Business. We arrived in time to see his deluxe booth at the Cincinnati Home Show promoting his construction company. On a return visit 2 years later Uncle Fred was still his same self. He invited us out to dinner where we found out he had filed for bankruptcy. Of course I paid the bill but in the back of my mind was the thought that this was the guy who always bought drinks for everybody in the bar whether he was broke or not. Uncle Fred had a big heart.

Libbie:

This is a very easy question for me. My brother Bill's life was cut way too short. Bill and I have always been close as friends/siblings but our lives took us in different directions.

Although when we were younger we were more focused on our own family and careers, we looked forward to the times we had together. I have special memories of camping, grape harvesting and wine making in Apalachin, NY, camping in the Smokie Mountains as the first “leg” of a Condon cross country marathon trip, several Disney vacations with our families and many many full family reunions at Bill’s home in Portsmouth, RI.

In the late 1990’s both Bill and Barb and Tom and I were looking forward to having more time in retirement. As an investment in this future vision we co-owned the Island Reef condo in Siesta Key. When we owned this condo Mom and Dad were able to spend several more winters here in Florida after their other rental options became unaffordable. At that time it seemed clear to me that we had the foundation for our winter retirements here in Sarasota.

As Mom and Dad aged and Bill became aware of his own health issues things changed. Mom and Dad no longer were able to make the winter trip to Florida and Bill chose to redirect their share of our investment so we sold Island Reef and Tom and I moved here to Stoneybrook.

From 2006 to 2017 when Bill died we saw each other less and less. I would make many trips to Rhode Island during that decade to be with and care for Mom and Dad but most of those trips

were scheduled to coordinate with Bill's vacations or family gatherings. I would see Bill and Barb for a few hours before they were off on an adventure. At that time I just thought Bill needed the time away without worrying about Mom and Dad. Little did I know how precious these trips away would be for Barb and the family!

Also during this last decade Bill and Barb would spend some time each winter here in Florida. We would have a few nice times together either on biking adventures or out to dinner. It seemed as though our bright future as retirement neighbors was mapped out and endless. Again, little did I know!! Bill sold his veterinary hospital in 2015 and "retired" ... only working on a parttime transitional basis for the new owners. His bright future ended pretty much before it began and my dreams of having family close here in Florida ended way too soon. I am so thankful for all the good times we had over the years and my precious memories. I wish I had more time! I miss you, Bill!!

If you could have dinner with anyone in the world, living or dead, who would it be?



Tom:

This is a wide Open Question. Many people have come and gone from the earliest of time to the present. I thought about a dinner with Adam and Eve. But other than asking Eve if she had any good Apple recipes there isn't much I would want to know from them.

In High School I took 4 years of Latin which means I learned all there was to know about Julius Caesar and the Roman Empire. Aha I thought, Caesar would be a good candidate for an "invite to dinner" fantasy. Then I thought about it some more and decided that a politician or government leader is not the type of person I would like to get to know better. Actually, a politician is not the

type of person I would ever want to associate with. For an interesting dinner it would be more insightful to enjoy a conversation with someone who has made some great contribution to human existence.

My thoughts immediately went to Jennifer Doudna, discoverer of the CRISPR Algorithm for manipulating and splicing genes and DNA. Thanks to her the world quickly had an antidote to the rapidly spreading deadly virus, COVID-19. What a fascinating person to have dinner with. She was recognized as having conferred the greatest benefit to mankind by the Nobel Prize committee and now has the title Nobel Laureate Jennifer Doudna. The Biographic Author Walter Isaacson did a very detailed job writing her biography in a huge 552 page book, "The Code Breaker".

It would be interesting to see what Jennifer is like as a person. Even though she is a certified genius, is she outgoing in personality or is she the stereotypical shy person unable to relate to people? There is so much I would like to find out about her beyond the excellent job Isaacson did detailing her life in the book.

It's fun dreaming and this is a big dream. The chances of me ever having dinner with Nobel Laureate Doudna are near zero but hope springs eternal and if it ever happens what an amazing day

it will be.

Libbie:

Dinnertime was a special time when I was growing up. Every night we ate at the dining room table. As children we learned how to set the table correctly and table manners were the rule. It did not matter if the menu was hot dogs, fish sticks or Sunday roast beef, we learned the importance of family dinners. No one was allowed to start eating before everyone (all 7) were seated and we gave thanks for the meal.

Dinner was a time for the family to not only eat together but to share our day. Manners were stressed as we learned to not only talk but also to listen to each other. No one was allowed to leave the table until everyone had finished eating and then we had to ask to be excused. After dinner we all helped clearing the table and doing the dishes.

This may sound like a strict and rigid routine and maybe it was but I have many good memories of dinners with my parents, sisters and brother sharing food and conversation around the dining room table.

If I was to choose someone to invite to my dining room table it would not be one person but one family. Having dinner with Joe, Christa, Paige and Emily with time to enjoy conversation with no

rush and no distractions would be special!

What places can you travel to over and over again?



Tom:

This question is easy to answer. Libbie and I have traveled all over the world. We have visited the great Art Museums, attended performances at some of the World's greatest Opera Houses and have seen spectacular Natural Wonders from the National Parks of the American West, the glaciers of Alaska and the rainforests of Central America. All of these places are wonders of the world and deserve to be visited again and again but there is one place I love to visit above all the others. This of course is the Swiss Alps.

When Libbie graduated college back in the 1960s she went on a European tour. Of all the countries she visited, Libbie noted that Switzerland was the one country she wanted to return to with me. It would be almost another 50 years before Libbie introduced me to the beauty of Switzerland. In 2015 we flew to Zurich and rented a car. Our first stop was the city of Lucerne. We visited the

tourist hot spots of the Lucerne Wood bridge, the Lion and the Wall around the city. A highlight for me was to visit the home of Richard Wagner and view original handwritten scores of his most famous Operas which were written in this house. We took the tram to Mt Pilatus on the way out of the City as the last tourist stop before driving into the Swiss Alps town of Lauterbrunnen and the Lauterbrunnen Valley. There is so much beauty in this valley that it easily qualifies as the most beautiful place on Earth. We had a multitude of choices of trams, gondolas, cog railways and narrow gauge rail to access this beauty. Memorable hikes through fields of wildflowers sealed our vow to return.

In 2023 we returned to the Lauterbrunnen Valley, this time staying in the town of Wengen. Wengen is at an altitude one mile high in the Alps and is accessible only by Cog Railway. It's a small village with a Main Street and several hotels, restaurants and stores. The luxury of this small village is there are no cars. Surrounding Wengen are some of the highest mountain peaks of the Swiss Alps. From the balcony of our hotel we were awestruck by the beauty of the glacier and snow capped Jungfrauoch, Munch and Eiger mountain peaks. Collectively these peaks are referred to as the Top of Europe at 12,000 feet elevation. There is no prettier place on Earth. We are planning to return here again and again.

Libbie:

When I was growing up we had a summer family road trip every year to my parents childhood homes in Brodhead, Wisconsin and Grandpa's farm on Stauffacher Rd outside Monroe, Wisconsin. Both Brodhead and Monroe are located in Green County and that name says it all! The rolling hills, farms, cows and lush green pastures were special to this girl from the suburbs. To this day I can close my eyes and be back there. There are so many good memories from those days that I will always cherish.

I have been back a few times in my adult life. Most of the people are gone, cousins have grown up and moved on but just being there brings back so many happy times. When I am asked "where are you from"? My answer could be Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, North Carolina, or Florida but in my heart I'm from Wisconsin.

What is one of the best trips you've ever taken? What made it great?



Tom:

Over the years we have taken many trips. The best is always the last trip we have taken.

Our most recent trip was a few weeks in Europe at the end of June where we went to Switzerland and Italy. Switzerland was an outdoor adventure hiking the Alps, visiting the car-free villages in the mountains and enjoying the wildflowers. Italy was more for experiences. Sure we did the moronic tourist things like take a gondola ride in one of the canals, visit the leaning tower of Pisa, St Marks, the Coliseum, Vatican and Roman ruins. These overcrowded venues are less enjoyable than they sound

The highlight of the trip was the personal experiences. Thanks to some University connections by Amanda Busta we were able to

visit a winery after hours at night in Tuscany. We were traveling with some members of a Polka band so at the winery Ted and Mollie broke out the accordion and trumpet. Libbie and I danced around the enormous stainless steel tanks of fermenting grapes to the tunes of Polka music. How cool is that?

In another never to be duplicated experience we visited a family farm in the Parmesan Reggiano district where they were making wheels of Parmesan cheese and barrels of Balsamic Vinegar. One of the owners, Susan, carried a 50 pound wheel of Parmesan out of the aging room and set it on a picnic table. We learned to cut fresh pieces of cheese from the wheel, drip some balsamic on it and snack on it. Later we had a wonderful lunch with the family. All 4 generations of women in the family participated in cooking a traditional Italian lunch and dessert. This is where we started learning that in Italy it was common to spend 3 or 4 hours at a meal having good conversation, eating good food and drinking locally made wine.

Despite how much we enjoyed Switzerland and Italy, I know that our next trip will find us once again in an immersive experience, experiencing a culture and customs different from ours.

That leaves us with the question of what's the best trip we've ever taken? Without a doubt our best trip has to be our honeymoon. For the record we were living in a very cold and forever cloudy Owego New York and went to Florida for our

honeymoon. While the warm weather and clear blue skies of Florida are a plus, the destination was not what made it one of the best trips ever. The fact that we were starting a new life together has more impact today than back then, over 50 years ago. Starting a new life and a lifetime of adventures together easily makes this one of the best trips ever.

Libbie:

In 2016 Tom and I went on a trip in Alaska that was offered by a company called UnCruise. Most travel and cruise packages allow the vacationer to carry their “world” into a new land and see sights without actually leaving the comfort of “home-like” accommodations. UnCruise offers a unique experience on small boats with 60 passengers going to places no large cruise ship could go. Each day we had new adventures discovering the wilderness of Alaska.

We started our two week adventure with a land “Cruise” on a train from Fairbanks to Denali. In Denali most visitors get only a tiny glimpse of this huge park. Our group boarded a school bus that took us over winding dirt roads to the opposite end of the park and the Kantishna Roadhouse. Our bus driver not only navigated the 92 miles of rough wilderness roads but also gave a continuous narration of life in Alaska and if that was not enough she spotted wildlife and often stopped so we could see and take

pictures. We were surrounded by awesome beauty! The trip was long and slow but at times it was not long enough or slow enough, there was so much to see!

During our two days at the Denali Roadhouse we were offered many different experiences and we chose a two hour guided hike on the frozen tundra with a botanist as our guide. The two hour trip turned into a five hour slow trek across the frozen tundra to a glacial river and back. Our guide told us about all the flora and fauna along the way. We were told that a bear had been spotted that day near the trail but we did not see him. The diversity of the plants growing on the frozen tundra was amazing! There were even flowering dogwood trees measuring only a few inches tall! It was hard to imagine how they could grow in such an unfriendly environment. Our guide stopped several times to pull out her camera and notebook to document a rare plant in bloom. Her passion for the wilderness was contagious!

Later on our “land cruise” we stopped overnight at Knit River. During that stop we took a helicopter ride up the glacier to a dog camp. Flying over the glacier allowed for an awesome view of the ice. As we arrived at the dog camp our pilot pointed out the fog and storm that was rolling in and said he may not be able to come back to get us but not to worry, the dogs could get us off the glacier if he couldn’t. We had a fun time “mushing” the dogs in almost whiteout conditions. What a fun experience for my

69th birthday, July 21, 2016!!

Our UnCruise guide for the week was continually sharing his knowledge of all things Alaska. He held us in awe when he recited poetry of Robert Service as though he were telling the story for the first time in beautiful oration.

The second half of our trip was on the UnCruise boat wilderness Explorer. We had a round trip excursion from Juneau through Glacier Bay and back. The entire trip was packed with one awesome experience after another. One day we were on a small 15 passenger Zodiac under a glacier. The sound of the ice calving off the glacier was louder than thunder and the splash of the ice created large waves in the icy frozen waters. As we were watching our guide asked if anyone wanted hot chocolate and then if we would also like some Peppermint Schnapps added. What a fun and memorable experience!!

On another Zodiac trip we encountered a pod of about 15 Humpback whales who came close to check us out. They came within a few feet of the boat and would dive and reappear on the opposite side of the boat. Absolutely awesome!!

Every day of this trip was filled with exciting adventure in the wilderness. The weather the whole week was foggy, wet, cold and sometimes snowy. It was hard to tell it was July but that did not matter. We were surrounded by crew and guides that

enthusiastically shared their love of nature and the land and they made this a trip of a lifetime!

If you had unlimited access to money, what would you do with it?



Tom:

The news, popular TV shows and even YouTube Vloggers are inundated with people who have spent their lives pack ratting, curating collections of esoteric items and pursuing that last item to “complete their collection” . I personally don’t get it.

As we wind down our lives and downsize to a more manageable collection of “stuff” we are finding that we are incredibly happy with significantly less things. On our move from North Carolina to Florida we filled a large 40 cubic foot dumpster with materials that went to the landfill. We gave away carloads of items to the local church charities. In addition, when we left our house for the last time we left behind a house full of furniture, TVs, electronics, linens and bedding. We also left behind a fully

stocked kitchen with appliances, dishes, silverware and pots and pans. This was a true downsizing.

With our lives now focused on cultural experiences rather than things, our budget has been designed to accommodate all the travel that our bodies and minds are able to withstand. In short, there is no personal need for money for anything.

If we had unlimited access to money I would spend my time assessing the needs of organizations that need financial help and provide for them. On a smaller scale we do some of this today. Naturally none of these organizations would be social agencies but instead arts organizations and organizations dedicated to making life better culturally and educationally.

Advancing the human condition means providing opportunities for enrichment with access to education, the arts and sanctuaries of beauty. Unlimited access to money will make the world a better place by supporting these goals.

Libbie:

I make it a rule that I do not read Tom's response before writing my own but I just broke my own rule and all I can say is, Amen. At this point in my life I have all I need and more. I do not need more things and even though travel to new and interesting places would be fun we do all the travel we can physically handle

so finances for more travel is not needed. I would also agree with Tom's list of things to advance the human condition but I would put emphasis on sanctuaries of beauty, gardens and farms for the population to get back to nature.

On a personal note, I would fund travel to bring my family together more often. I do realize family schedules and activities do often get in the way so I would make sure the funding of trips was not the deciding factor in not getting together.

What's one of the most beautiful places you've ever been?



Tom:

Earth is such a diverse planet. There is beauty at almost every turn. From the tradewinds and gently swaying Palm Trees of the Caribbean to the depths of the parched and heated valley floor of Death Valley there is beauty everywhere. We have awoke at 3:30 in the morning to make the trip up to the rim of Haleakala in Maui to see the sunrise and we have hiked trails in the Swiss Alps where the only form of transportation is the cog railway and Gondola car. Despite all this beauty widespread on our planet I have to classify one that stands above the rest, both figuratively and literally. It is the Blumenthal Panoramic Wildflower Trail on the side of a mountain overlooking the Lauterbrunnen Valley in Switzerland.

To get to the Blumenthal is an experience in itself. It involves a Gondola ride from the Lauterbrunnen Valley to a mountain ridge overlooking the city. From there it's a ride on a narrow gauge railway along the mountain ridge to the little village of Murren. This ride is scenic in itself since the railway rides along the edge of the ridge affording many wonderful views of the snow capped peaks in the Swiss Alps. These mountains have elevations of 13,600 feet and are the highest of the Swiss Alps. A short walk through the car-free town of Murren leads to the start of the Blumenthal trail. When we were there it was June and luck was with us as the wildflowers were all in bloom. After hiking for several hours we came to a large open slope covered with beautiful blooms in all the colors of the rainbow. A mountain goat was nearby oblivious to us as he was engrossed in eating the wildflowers and intermingled grasses. Below us in the Valley we could see the colorful tops of hang gliders riding the thermals. Libbie sat on a large boulder and said there is so much beauty here she could cry. Never before had we come across a spot with so many glorious sights. From the sweeping wildflowers of the field to the beauty of the valley below dotted with old wood farm buildings to the towering heights of the snow covered peaks of Jungfrauoch across from our view. This is easily the most beautiful spot on earth.

Libbie:

There is a little town called Wengen in the Swiss Alps one mile from Lauderbrunnen, Switzerland. Wengen is a car free town that is one of the most scenic places I have ever visited. If you look up you see tall snow capped mountains. Looking down you see the beautiful valley that is dotted with cows grazing on alpine farms.

The town of Wengen couldn't be more picturesque. All the buildings, old or new, are of Swiss architecture with steep roofs and bright window flower boxes. Every home had beautifully planted vegetable and flower gardens and as you step beyond the town limits the mountains are adorned with the most wonderful wildflowers. It is so beautiful I could stay there forever but I have to remind myself that it is summer and I'm in the Alps where snow dominates the landscape most of the year. The buildings become snow covered warming huts for the energetic skiers who come for winter fun. I am sure that Wengen takes on another kind of beauty but I can save that for post card pictures while I stay warm here in Florida.

What is most important to you when choosing a new home?



Tom:

Realtors have an answer to this question in one time worn but true phrase. “Location, location, location”.

Our first home was a 2,000 square foot ranch that we built on 50 acres of land. The land was basically the top of a hill overlooking the Susquehanna River Valley. The location was ideal because it was only 3 miles from the IBM plant where I was employed making it an easy commute on a few country roads. We were on the side of a hill so I designed the house with a walkout basement. This made the back of the home 2 stories high. We took advantage of the height in the back to put glass panes across two upstairs rooms and sliding glass doors on a third. This afforded us a fantastic view of the river valley. The land

surrounding our home allowed us to play at our hobbies. I bought a tractor older than I was, a 1942 Ford 9N that did multiple jobs. A tractor plow attachment and discs were used to prepare a garden larger than any normal person needed. A large five foot wide brush hog was used on the tractor to keep the fields mowed around the house. A front mounted blade helped clear snow from our 200 feet of driveway. In the backyard we built a barn and a geodesic dome greenhouse to support our gardening. At one time we even had pigs in a fenced area with a low shed building to shelter them. You're not supposed to name animals you are raising for food but our pigs were named Petunia and Marigold. They made the best hams and bacon ever! Our new home choice was perfect and met all our requirements for location, location, location.

Our next choice of a new home was a home that I built myself. A work transfer to North Carolina had us purchasing a 5 acre lot that actually was in a housing development complete with all underground utilities. My saw, hammer and common sense got away from me and we ended up building a house that had over 5,000 square feet. Once again we wanted a home that would accommodate all our hobbies. We had plenty of space outdoors for gardening and many rooms inside for task specific projects. Libbie had a sewing room, a fabric room and a materials cutting/pressing room. I had a clean indoor workshop, an

outdoor workshop, an office and we both shared a floored walk up attic.

Our final home choice is our current home in Sarasota Florida. This home is half the size of our previous home but we have downsized considerably and are making it livable. Sarasota is the Arts Capital of the Gulf Coast and is the main reason we are located here.

With pleasant coastal weather including delightful winters and summers that never get too hot we enjoy an enviable standard of living. There are no income taxes, property taxes are low, car registration is inexpensive with no inspection and basically we have many other freedoms that are unfortunately enviable and inviting to residents of other states. There seems to be a mass migration underway of people escaping from other states and wanting to live in Florida.

The Arts, a superior Standard of Living and exceptional weather are all the items that are now important to us in the choice of a home and is why we now call the Sunshine State home. Our wants and needs may change over time but our choice of a home all boils down to location, location, location.

Libbie:

Three of the four homes we have lived in over our 51 years Tom and I have built so it has not been a matter of what we would chose in a house but rather where the house/land was located. I always needed to know where the house would be on the property in relation to the sun and sun exposure for my future garden or dream greenhouse. As it turned out the greenhouse dream was bigger than any home lot so Bluebird Greenhouse ended up being five miles away from our home.

Our home here in Florida was the first house we have owned that was preowned. When Tom and I began house hunting, I knew we were looking for a house that needed to be in a good location, preferably in the Stoneybrook community. It needed space for us to live, space for our hobbies, space outdoors for gardens, and definitely garage space for Tom. When we found this house we knew right away that it checked all the boxes. Our realtor kept saying we should not buy it because it was two story and was more suitable for a family with children. He was sure buyers our age should be ready to downsize and consider a smaller one story home to live in their senior years. I am so glad we did not listen to him! We made the right decision and we enjoy every minute in this home.

What is one of the most memorable road trips you've ever taken?



Tom:

This is being written in November of 2023. It is hard to believe but it was 13 years ago that Joe and Christa bought their home in Huntington Beach, CA. My memorable road trip was a cross country tour on the way to their new home. My car was filled with various hand tools to help Joe with rebuilding the bathroom in the Master Bedroom. Getting there made the trip memorable because I designed the journey to be a cultural exploration of a broad sampling of sights, tastes, sounds and natural beauty of the US.

On July 16, 2010 I left our home near Raleigh, NC at 7:30 AM. The first stop was Nashville, TN. I arrived early enough in the afternoon to enjoy the splendor of the Cheekwood Estate and

Gardens. Cheekwood contains 55 acres of gardens and a world class art museum. When I visited I was fortunate enough to see the gardens adorned with glass forms by the glass artist Dale Chihuly, one of my favorites. The estate was built in 1929 for Mr and Mrs Leslie Cheek. Famous landscape Architect Bryant Fleming designed the landscaped grounds. Mr Cheek was a Nashville grocer and founder of Maxwell House coffee and thus had the resources to build a monumental estate. I visited the gardens and art museum in the afternoon then returned in the evening to view the glass illuminated. Lighting placed inside specific pieces of Chihuly glass turned the gardens into a summer evening wonderland. The gardens at night are even more spectacular than the daytime display of flora.

It was now dinner time and in Nashville that means it's time for BBQ, specifically a smoke house I located called Bart's. I was not disappointed by Bart's BBQ. While their pulled pork was traditional and good, their uniqueness is the cornbread. Bart's cornbread is served as a flat thin pancake. To this day I'm still not sure if this is a good thing or not. Does food shape affect the tasting experience?

The next day was an easy drive. I chose another city in the same state, Memphis. The trip was becoming more about the journey than the destination. Memphis is the home of the Blues, notably Beale Street. This is the place where many legends got their start

including Elvis Presley, BB King, Little Richard, etc. At night the closed streets were filled with people and blues bands. Some bands played inside bars, others were set up on the street. My hotel also was on Beale Street which was a plus since after an evening of music, BBQ and brews it was a short elevator ride to a comfortable bed in my Hampton Inn room. During the day in Memphis I enjoyed the Dixon Museum of Fine Art and Gardens. Extensive landscaped gardens surrounded a Southern style Mansion filled with art of the European Impressionists. This was quite surprising! Fine Art by Matisse, Renoir, Gauguin, Cassat and Turner was on display. I expected the outstanding BBQ and Blues music of Beale Street but it was a delightful surprise to find this high quality museum with a mission of collecting the art of the impressionists. During my visit the art of American Impressionist Helen Turner was on display. Wow, only 2 days on the road and the trip is getting better by the day. This museum is an underrecognized gem which I was grateful to find.

The Lincoln Highway was created in 1913 and starts at Times Square in New York City. The end of the highway is Lincoln Park in San Francisco. Near the start of this forgotten highway is a bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln by James Earle Fraser. The plaster original of this statue is displayed in the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City. I arrived too late in Oklahoma City to get to the Museum so the next morning after

breakfast I was at the doors when they opened. The museum bills itself as the Premiere museum of Western Art. It has many iconic pieces of art including the just mentioned plaster sculpture of Lincoln by James Earle Fraser as well as some outstanding landscapes by artists such as Bierstadt, Remington and Russel.. I like the museum for the Art, not so much for the Cowboy stuff. In an incredible waste of space they have full size movie sets in a sequence of enormous Air Conditioned buildings.

Two thirds across the country I had a date to rendezvous with Libbie. She was flying to Albuquerque in 2 days. These 2 days are what I need to get from the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum to meet her plane in Albuquerque .

On the way there I of course found some landmarks. One of these was the Biti Pie company. This is a family owned small bakery that makes fresh pies daily in about a dozen varieties. The pies are only about 4 inches in diameter. Their slogan is “why have a slice when you can have the whole pie”. I picked up a Lemon Biti Pie and a German Chocolate Cake Biti to bring to Albuquerque since it was going to be Libbie’s birthday. As a side note, upon entering the State of Texas I stopped in the Visitors Center for a restroom break. At the front desk I chatted with the two ladies sitting there in white cowboy hats. I casually mentioned Biti Pies. They both almost together said “today is Wednesday ”. Wednesday is Lemon Pie day at Biti Pie. I have to mention that

the Biti Pie Company is exactly 117 miles away yet these two seemed to know the daily menu of this esoteric hole in the wall pie company.

Another not to be missed landmark is just outside of Amarillo - Cadillac Ranch. A Texas cattle rancher planted a dozen Cadillacs into the soil of his ranch fronting I-40. The Cadillacs are nose down at a 45 degree angle all in a row. This is a working Cattle Ranch so a visit to Cadillac Ranch involves parking on the shoulder of the Interstate and then walking through a gate in the barbed wire fencing. The fencing is to keep the cattle within the ranch confines. The cattle generally ignore tourists stopping to visit the buried cars. People of course climb the cars, sometimes paint them with graffiti which is encouraged and pose for selfies.

On the way to Albuquerque I saw a sign only a science geek would love. It said "National Museum of Nuclear Science Exit 166". At Exit 166 a short trip off the interstate took me to the parking lot in front of this unique museum. Inside were some of the most bizarre exhibits. Decommissioned Nuclear Bombs and Nuclear Bomb models were everywhere. The most unique site I saw was a group of Japanese tourists posing with the models of Little Boy and Fat Man, the weapons dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki respectively. There was also quite a bit of science on display. The periodic element table embedded in the floor tiles at the entrance to the museum was a nice touch. Educational

exhibits about fusion, fission and nuclear power were well done. Out in the back of the museum were minuteman missiles and a B52 Bomber that was used to drop an atomic bomb on Bikini Island in the South Pacific. This is truly a unique museum and of course would be expected of a museum located in New Mexico, the home of Nuclear research and the Project Trinity site, location of the first Atomic Explosion.

Albuquerque ABQ Airport

Eventually I arrived at the Albuquerque Airport Cell phone lot and waited for Libbie's American Airlines flight. Luck was with us and everything was running on time. We visited Old Town and had a very nice birthday dinner before our drive North to Santa Fe. In Santa Fe we fortunately used the Benziger condo which is located just off the Plaza, the center of all things Santa Fe.

We had tickets to the Santa Fe opera to see mezzo soprano Kate Lindsey in the Tales of Hoffman by Jacques Offenbach. This is Libbie's favorite Opera which we were attending as a birthday performance. .

Santa Fe Opera

The Santa Fe Opera building is an open air pavilion on top of a mountain. When seated inside the Opera House you have a beautiful view of the surrounding Santo de Cristo mountains since the Opera House has open air sides. When we arrived at the

parking lot after the long uphill climb in our car we were treated to the sight of the legendary Santa Fe Opera tailgating. People set up elaborate tables behind their car complete with white table cloths and in some cases lit candelabras and fully set dinner tables with wine and food.

Our performance was interesting. During the Opera a thunderstorm was brewing outside with lightning, wind and rain. It was interesting to see people's hair blowing inside the building as occasional wind gusts blew through the auditorium. The Opera itself was superb as could be expected since Santa Fe is one of the country's premiere Opera Houses. Mezzo soprano Kate Lindsey did not disappoint. She is a singer we have seen twice before at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. I'm amazed at how such a powerful voice could be housed in such a diminutive woman. How nice she would follow us to New Mexico.

We had an interesting experience just off the Plaza in Santa Fe. We stopped into the Nedra Metucci art gallery which is one of the largest in the world. They feature the works of many famous painters and sculptors such as Glenna Goodacre, the sculptor of the Sacagawea US One Dollar coin.

We felt like we were intruding since throughout the gallery Art dealers were on phones with their worldwide clients. One dealer who was free welcomed us and told us to look around. Later he

approached us and told us they just got a new painting by Georgia O'keeffe that we should see. It was unusual because it was smaller than her usual Oil paintings. He took us to the O'keeffe Artwork hanging in a gallery. The price tag was \$3,000,000. I think he mistook who we were!

After Santa Fe it was on to Monument Valley. We had a room in Goulding's Lodge which is a long Lodge building nestled into the side of a hill and overlooks the valley. Outside our room was a patio with chairs and a table. We decided it would be nice to have a glass of wine while watching the sunset over Monument Valley. We went to the local grocery store in the town of Kayenta and learned that this area including Goulding's Lodge is on the Navajo Reservation.

Alcohol is not allowed on the reservation. A Native Navajo Indian in the Supermarket line in front of us overheard our conversation and told us where the nearest store was off the reservation to purchase wine. He knew it was exactly 49 miles away. We smiled at his knowledge but chose to not pursue this option.

On the way to California we spent a few days in Bryce Canyon hiking and sightseeing before driving to Death Valley Junction, CA. This is a unique little town with a population of 4. We had lunch in the Amargosa Cafe which is owned by the Amargosa Opera House. This venue was used back in the 1920s for

vaudeville shows when the Death Valley Railroad transported Borax from the Pacific Coast Borax Company mines. The tracks have long been abandoned, as have most of the buildings in the Mojave desert. The Cafe had a single employee who took our order, prepared our sandwich and was happy to chat with us. Not too many visit the Junction. The Opera House next door is still maintained by a non profit organization. It wasn't clear why except as a unique architectural historic building. After lunch our next stop was Death Valley National Park where we had a hotel room reservation in Furnace Creek.

This park is one of the most beautiful in the US. From a Marble Canyon to a salt water flat 283 feet below sea level and some of the most beautiful painted hillsides I have ever seen, this Park has beauty at every turn. A road appropriately named Artists Palette Drive twists and turns through hills covered in turquoise, yellow, red, black and green sand. I was here in July because I wanted to see what 128 degrees felt like. It was hot. Libbie described the heat with a light breeze as having a hair dryer blowing in your face. With the desert floor at almost 200 degrees and an air temperature of 128 this was accurate. Four days in the Park was not enough time to even make a dent in seeing the 2 million acres encompassing this land of beauty. We left here happily vowing to return as we made the several hour drive to our final destination on the West Coast, Huntington

Beach.

This road trip was memorable. Although most of it was on the Interstate, the stops at various towns and cities gave me an appreciation for the diversity in America. The trip's theme and Subject matter was Art and Natural wonder. It fulfilled this objective more than I could imagine.

Libbie:

Road trips were a big part of my childhood memories, packing up the station wagon and the seven of us crunching in for a long drive was part of life growing up in the Condon family. These trips all came with their own share of memories but the most memorable road trip was not in my childhood.

The June 11, 1986 road trip with Tom and Joe to the Southwest, was the most memorable road trip of my life. We started the trip with two airplane flights from Raleigh to Tucson, Arizona where our two week epic rental car journey began.

After flying through the night, we spent our first day in Tucson getting ourselves acclimated to the new environment and time change. We drove that first night to Kitt Peak Observatory. Unfortunately our timing was off and we did not have much time there before they closed. We did get to see the largest collection of telescopes in the world and a huge solar telescope. The views on the drive to the peak were spectacular. That night we ate in a

Mexican restaurant named LaFuente and we were entertained by a mariachi band. What a great way to kick off our trip!

On our first full day in Arizona we went to the Senora Desert Museum and learned about plants, animals and desert life. The day was plenty hot and we could really get a feel for the unique environment. After lunch we headed back to Kitt Peak to see the exhibits we had missed the night before. This whole trip was planned as an educational trip for Joe but as we experienced just the first day, we were all on a learning adventure.

Day two we spent the morning in Tombstone, Az. We checked out the town, Boot Hill and the OK Corral and learned about the wild west of 100 years ago. The afternoon we drove 3 hours to Deming. Along the drive we stopped several times to explore canyons and collect interesting rocks.

Day three we started our morning in Rock Hound State park where we found lots of interesting rocks, lizards and even a rattlesnake which Joe wisely decided to stay away from! After a picnic in the park we were on the road again to Alamogordo, NM to meet up with the Benziger family at John Benziger's sister's house.

Day four was a more relaxing day with no big road trip. Joe had fun with his playing with his cousins and we took a trip to White Sands to go sledding on the powdery sand. The air temperature was 100 but the sand was cool and we all had fun sledding on rented sand boards.

Day five we were off to Carlsbad with both families. We did the cavern tour in the afternoon and it was quite special because the individual listening devices were geared for the age of the listener so even the youngest had a directed tour. The cavern was fascinating. Later in the day the kids took a dip in the hotel pool and after a fast dinner Tom, John, Laura, Joe and I went back to the caverns to see the bats emerge at dusk. The swarm of bats were amazing.

Day six was our longest driving day, seven hours. We played musical kids at every rest stop so things were interesting. We arrived in Albuquerque around 4pm. We let the kids have a quick dip in the pool then it was off to dinner and a sunset ride to up the tram to the top of Sandia Peak. The views of Albuquerque and the plains below were spectacular.

Day seven was a short drive from Albuquerque to Santa Fe to the home of Grandma and Grandpa Benziger. We had lunch there and then we were off to Bandelier to hike through the cliff dwellings of Native Americans. It was a fun afternoon for the kids.

Day eight started with a morning of hiking with the Benzigers in Bandelier. Around noon we were off on our epic road trip again. John encouraged us to take the “back way” to Kayenta which included a 33 mile stretch way off the beaten path on a dirt road through the mountains. The scenery was beautiful but Tom was not too excited about the driving! Late in the day we were able to

watch the sun go down and the moon rise on Monument Valley but we decided to save the park for the next day.

Day nine We Spent the morning at Monument Valley. The park consisted of a visitor's center and 18 miles on dirt roads around the monuments. We needed 4 wheel drive for that rugged trip but went anyway with our rental car! Every view of the monuments was more spectacular than the last! What a fun and memorable morning. We had our first Navajo Taco for lunch which was yummy. Joe and I did a lot of sleeping in the car while Tom drove that afternoon but we did wake to see Sunset Crater. Sunset Carter is a fairly new volcano, only 800 years old. The lava flow and cinder piles were as far as you could see! Our journey ended in Flagstaff that night. After a dip in the pool and dinner we headed off to Lowell Observatory. We saw a short slide show and then we were able to look through the 90 yr old telescope. We were able to see Saturn and its moons through a 24", and an 8" scope. I went away thinking there would be more sky watching for Tom and Joe when we got home to Apex!

Day ten, Flagstaff! We headed to Meteor Crator. The park had a lovely observation deck where you could look out and see the immense hole the meteor created. We started by looking out from the deck but then decided to hike the 3 mile trail around the perimeter. about half way around Tom and Joe decided to hike down to a cave they saw while I waited on the trail.. I had a fun time looking at flowers and Hummingbirds for a long time but

then got worried that my boys had gotten lost in the cave below. Just as I was about to go find a search team I spotted Joe's red t-shirt about a mile ahead on the curved trail. They seemed to think I had given up on the hike and was back at the deck. I'm glad they heard my call and waited for me to catch up! This day's hike was more than enough to let me know I was not in shape to hike the Grand Canyon!!

Day eleven we took a short ride from Flag staff to the Grand Canyon. We took a side trip to Sunset crater on our way and hiked through the lava flow and learned a lot more about volcanos. By lunch we arrived at the east end of the canyon. We spent the rest of the day getting our bearings and enjoying the spectacular views. After a swim in the motel pool and an early dinner we headed back to the rim for the beautiful sunset views. The changing colors of the canyon walls were awesome.

Day twelve, first full day at Grand Canyon. We hiked the down 1.5 miles on the Kiabab train. Every turn and switchback gave beautiful views but I learned a great lesson. For some reason I thought it was a good idea to have Joe carry the backpack which contained all our water. The only problem with this genius idea was I had to catch Joe to get a drink! Not a good idea!!

Do you have a favorite poem? What is it?



Tom:

There are too many poets who have written too many poems in the world to answer this question fairly with only one choice. Way back in the last Century my answer would have been the poem I wrote in 6th grade. It won our school poetry contest. The only thing I remember about that poem is the \$10 prize money I won and the new fishing pole plus tackle the prize money helped me acquire. In 2023 dollars that is a prize of about \$100 which for an 11 year old can fetch some very fine fresh water fishing gear.

My favorite poet today was born in 1874 and wrote the most commercially successful poetry of the 20th Century. Robert Service was a banker by trade but when his bank sent him to the Yukon he became inspired by tales of the Klondike Gold Rush. He had no experience in mining or the gold rush but wrote several

poems about the NorthWest wilderness which became immediately popular. He eventually released a collection of poems with the Yukon Territory as his subject matter. A second collection of poetry resulted in massive sales allowing him to quit his job and travel widely from a base on the French Riviera.

Robert Service has been called the Bard of the Yukon which I consider humorous considering his lack of gold rush knowledge and limited knowledge of the hostile Yukon wilderness. I own several books of the collected works of Robert Service. YouTube is flush with many readings of his poems by people such as simple mountain men to college professors and even a country singer, Jim Reeves.

My favorite poem by Robert Service is “Spell of the Yukon”. It’s about a prospector who battled the Yukon territory seeking his gold fortune but learns the gold isn’t all. A great way to appreciate this poem is to listen to a YouTube reading with eyes closed. The descriptive narrative becomes more vivid as the valley and mountain peaks appear either bathed in moonlight or glowing in the sun. A favorite stanza of mine from this beautiful writing is the following:

I’ve stood in some mighty-mouthed hollow
That’s plumb-full of hush to the brim;
I’ve watched the big, husky sun wallow

In crimson and gold, and grow dim,
Till the moon set the pearly peaks gleaming,
And the stars tumbled out, neck and crop;
And I've thought that I surely was dreaming,
With the peace o' the world piled on top.

This is poetry!

Addendum:

THE SPELL OF THE YUKON

by Robert Service

I wanted the gold, and I sought it;
I scrabbled and mucked like a slave.
Was it famine or scurvy—I fought it;
I hurled my youth into a grave.
I wanted the gold, and I got it
Came out with a fortune last fall,
Yet somehow life's not what I thought it,
And somehow the gold isn't all.

No! There's the land. (Have you seen it?)
It's the cussedest land that I know,
From the big, dizzy mountains that screen it
To the deep, deathlike valleys below.
Some say God was tired when He made it;
Some say it's a fine land to shun;

Maybe; but there's some as would trade it
For no land on earth—and I'm one.

You come to get rich (damned good reason);
You feel like an exile at first;
You hate it like hell for a season,
And then you are worse than the worst.
It grips you like some kinds of sinning;
It twists you from foe to a friend;
It seems it's been since the beginning;
It seems it will be to the end.

I've stood in some mighty-mouthed hollow
That's plumb-full of hush to the brim;

I've watched the big, husky sun wallow
In crimson and gold, and grow dim,
Till the moon set the pearly peaks gleaming,
And the stars tumbled out, neck and crop;
And I've thought that I surely was dreaming,
With the peace o' the world piled on top.

The summer—no sweeter was ever;
The sunshiny woods all athrill;
The grayling aleap in the river,
The bighorn asleep on the hill.
The strong life that never knows harness;

The wilds where the caribou call;
The freshness, the freedom, the farness—
O God! how I'm stuck on it all.

The winter the brightness that blinds you,
The white land locked tight as a drum,
The cold fear that follows and finds you,
The silence that bludgeons you dumb.
The snows that are older than history,
The woods where the weird shadows slant;
The stillness, the moonlight, the mystery,
I've bade 'em good-by—but I can't.

There's a land where the mountains are nameless,
And the rivers all run God knows where;
There are lives that are erring and aimless,
And deaths that just hang by a hair;
There are hardships that nobody reckons;
There are valleys unpeopled and still;
There's a land—oh, it beckons and beckons,
And I want to go back—and I will.

They're making my money diminish;
I'm sick of the taste of champagne.
Thank God! when I'm skinned to a finish
I'll pike to the Yukon again.

I'll fight—and you bet it's no sham-fight;
It's hell!—but I've been there before;
And it's better than this by a damsite—
Some for the Yukon once more.
There's gold, and it's haunting and haunting;
 It's luring me on as of old;
 Yet it isn't the gold that I'm wanting
 So much as just finding the gold.
It's the great, big, broad land 'way up yonder,
It's the forests where silence has lease;
It's the beauty that thrills me with wonder,
It's the stillness that fills me with peace.

Libbie:

When I was 13 years old I was given a new desk for my birthday. The desk was a piece of unpainted furniture and I painted it white with blue drawers. Dad had a glass top made for it and I kept special pictures and notes under that glass. My favorite poem at that time was, *Overheard In the Orchard* by Elizabeth Cheney:

Said the Robin to the Sparrow,
“I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings
rush and worry so.”

Said the Sparrow to the Robin

“Friend I think that it may be,
That they have no Heavenly Father
Such as you and me.”

This poem remained under the glass in that desk until we downsized in 2018 and the desk was donated to the Dorcas shop. The poem did make it to the “save/treasures” pile but it also is sort of a mantra of mine when I need to slow down and appreciate all the gifts life has give me.

What was the biggest kitchen disaster you ever experienced?



Tom:

When I was growing up my Mother was a traditionalist. Boys do not belong in the kitchen! My sisters had the brunt of kitchen duties helping Mom and learning to cook. This suited me well at the time, however as an adult this left me without any kitchen skills. Later in my youth Boy Scouts taught me cooking but mostly with fire. Dinner consisted of wrapping meat in aluminum foil along with potatoes and onions. This wrapped food was then tossed into the campfire and left there for an indeterminate amount of time. When it was dinner time, the aluminum wrapped food was retrieved and unwrapped. Surprisingly it was cooked to perfection most of the time.

One quiet Winter Day as a married Adult in 2012 I was making toast in our toaster oven in the kitchen. I left the toast browning while I ran upstairs to do something. I completely forgot about the toast until I heard the Smoke Detectors throughout the house sounding. I thought oh no and ran downstairs. Unbelievably the entire downstairs was filled with smoke and there were flames coming from the Toaster Oven. I didn't think this was possible with just bread but I was wrong. After Opening every window in the house and setting up some fans for cross air flow to clear out the smoke, Libbie very sternly said to me "you better learn how to cook somewhere".

I took her up on the challenge and found a Cajun cooking class at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette, LA. The college was on Spring Break around Easter time and made the empty hospitality class kitchens available to Adult Continuing Education. I never thought Libbie would go for a Cajun Cooking Class but she willingly went along with it. We drove to New Orleans and spent the weekend at a Bed and Breakfast enjoying the French Quarter before taking the short drive to Lafayette where we stayed at a Marriott on the edge of campus. Every day we boarded college transportation, the "Ragin' Cajun", for the ride to the building our class was in. What fun!

We cooked a 3 course meal every day with a different type of Chef such as a Corporate chef, a Celebrity Chef, the college Dining Hall

Chef, and a restaurant Chef. I certainly learned a lot about cooking and following recipes. What a great experience!

From disaster in the kitchen to Gumbo, Etouffees and Bread Pudding it has been a fun journey. Even though it was an auspicious start, the end was certainly worth the wait. Flaming Bananas Foster anyone?

Libbie:

Funny thing, I do not remember any kitchen disasters. I do remember when I was a teenager my sister Sue had left a kettle on the electric stove, the water all boiled away and when I came in the kitchen the kettle had melted into a puddle of melted steel. Lucky thing it did not start a fire!

What is one of the worst trips you've ever taken? What went wrong?



Tom:

I have never had a bad trip. In our travels we have had experiences that could be considered bad but not bad enough to make the trip “the worst trip we’ve ever taken”.

We have had some interesting plane flights. On one trip returning from the West Coast we had a stop in Las Vegas. The airport was experiencing high winds. As our plane approached the runway a large gust of wind pushed the plane sideways and the pilot instantly pulled up and went back around. It was still windy and incredibly rough on our second attempt but somehow we landed. The entire plane cheered when the wheels safely touched down.

On a different trip we were on our way back to Raleigh when the pilot announced that the flaps were not working. The flaps are normally used to slow the plane down for landing. The flaps normally extend and make more wing surface so the plane could stay in the air at slower speeds as it approaches the runway. Without flaps we touched the runway at much higher than normal landing speed, then the pilot had to use the brakes to slow us down. Fire trucks met the plane because the brakes were going to be red hot. Our plane had to sit at the end of the runway for 30 minutes until the brakes cooled and fire officials inspected the wheels. It was not safe for ground personnel to have a plane with red glowing brakes at the terminal.

None of these incidents ruined our trips, they just added some interesting talking points to otherwise ordinary travel experiences.

Libbie:

I am sure there have been mishaps on most of the trips I have taken over the years. It could have been too hot, too cold, too wet or we could have missed a connection, jumped on a train to the wrong destination or have been delayed for hours waiting for a plane and the list of wrongs goes on and on. Remembering these mishaps only shadows the good times we have on our trips. I do not choose to hold on to bad memories because there has always been good times to equal or exceed the bad time. Travel always

comes with good and bad and I choose to remember the good.

What is your best advice for raising children?



Tom:

There are so many “correct” ways to raise children, not to mention what the experts say, that this is a tough question. Best advice would be to let them be themselves and not try to force them into a path they would not be happy with.

As a generalization, it is important to raise children in a loving environment. I cringe when I see people disciplining their children by yelling at them or calling them names. This is bad behavior on the part of the responsible adult.

Beyond this advice, children need to be guided to appreciate education and all the doors that will unlock before them when they become educated. With raising children education is a requirement, not an option. Hopefully their education will be well rounded with the STEM subjects as well as an appreciation

for the arts including visual art, performance art and music.

Children need to live with joy, thankfulness, ambition and kindness. This advice came from Dr. Suess. He suggests in his book “The Places You’ll Go” that sometimes things will be wonderful; sometimes there will be challenges.

Oh the places you’ll go! There is fun to be done! There are points to be scored. There are games to be won. And the magical things you can do with that ball will make you the winning-est winner of all.

Libbie:

It is a big responsibility raising children and as much as we dream of having a family and being a parent there are no guide books that will get you through. Every parent and every child is different and it is a big responsibility to meet each child at their needs and teach them. Values, manners, morality, respect, wonder, appreciation, love etc are important in raising all children but each child may need different approaches to these lessons.

I was the middle child of five. My older sister Sue and brother Bill were honors students and both very talented in music. As a child I thought I needed to be just like them but I also knew I wasn’t. Mom would always tell me everyone was different and that was ok. Each was special in his or her own way. Even though Mom

and Dad nurtured me and the talents I had my child's brain said; "give up you'll never be as good as them." Much later in life I realized the value of having parents who raised each of us as a unique individuals. I do not have to be a reflection of my siblings we each have our own value and space in the family and in this world.

What places have you lived, and when?



Tom:

I like this question because it gives me a better insight into where Libbie has lived and when. Even though we have known each other through 50 wonderful years of marriage, exact dates for when she lived in any of her many cities and towns during childhood and teenage years are nebulous to me. Sure, I can recite every place Libbie has lived in but if I had to specify an exact year it probably would not be accurate.

I, Tom, had a much simpler life with respect to places that I grew up in.

My parents met and eventually married in New York City. I know their first date was the movie “Gone With the Wind” which came out in 1939. They continued dating up to the time Dad was drafted into the Army and sent to the South Pacific during World

War II. During a leave in August 1943 they got married and soon after the war ended I was born in 1946.

Young children are always drilled with the address they live at in the unlikely event they were to be lost or otherwise separated from parents. The address I was ingrained with was 305 East 161st in the Bronx, New York City, New York.. For anyone who is familiar with the streets of New York, 161st Street is the same street that Yankee Stadium is on. Our apartment was a 4 block walk from the Stadium. I lived in NY long enough to attend Kindergarten there in one of the NY City Public Schools, PS 35 Franz Siegel Elementary School.

In the early 1950s, white flight took over the city. Large droves of people escaped the apartments and public transportation of the city to live in suburbia, where the grass was green, trees in front of homes provided shade, a car sat in the garage, commuting to a distant job was in vogue, and everything was wonderful. I was part of this migration as my parents settled into a home in the suburbs of Dunellen, NJ in 1951. We lived on 254 Whittier Ave in Dunellen from 1951 until 1966, a total of 15 years. In Dunellen I attended Elementary School from 1st through 8th grades and then 4 years of High School.

Tired of constantly repairing an old home that needed a new roof, soffits, siding and a furnace, my parents moved into a

newly built home nearby in 1966. Although they only moved one mile away, the home was located in a different town, Piscataway, NJ. While my bedroom was in my parents new home at 60 Ninth St. in Piscataway, NJ, I had moved to a dormitory in Melbourne, Florida the year before for my college years. These were some of the best years in my life so far. Little did I know the best was yet to come. Melbourne and Florida in general was a whole new world to me.

The sky was always blue, Sunsets were glorious, the climate was agreeable and my love of plants and the environment were satisfied. The College had a magnificent Botanical Garden on Campus. Our college President was also President of the Florida Palm Society so the Botanical Garden was his playground for having spectacular tropical specimens brought in to join the natural environment of the Palm Hammock that surrounded a winding, wide body of water named Crane Creek. When I lived there Florida was less developed. Nowadays it is referred to as “Old Florida”. The Spanish Moss hung from Live Oaks overhanging the roadways, large Philodendron climbed the Palm Trees, scrub Palmetto grew everywhere. Sadly this has all been replaced by row upon row of homes as Florida has now become the number one State to move to even though it’s not nearly as big as Alaska, Texas or California.

In 1969 I graduated from college and took an Engineering job at IBM Corp in Owego, NY. Owego was very rural. When Libbie and I married in 1972 we were able to purchase 50 acres of undeveloped farm land on top of a hill overlooking the Susquehanna River Valley. We built a ranch style home on this land at 1922 East Beecher Hill Rd with glass across the back giving us a beautiful view of our land and the valley beyond. While living on this property I was able to build a Geodesic Dome greenhouse and a 2 story barn for our equipment. In order to completely be "Farmer Tom" I purchased a Farm tractor, a Ford 9N with a 3 point hitch. This allowed me to hook up a plow, a cultivator disk or a 7 foot snow blade for Winter snow removal. I also had an eight foot brush hog attachment which would mow down anything up to 2 1/2 inches diameter. This was excellent for clearing an overgrown field for our oversized garden.

A company transfer in 1978 brought us to North Carolina where we once again built a new house but this time on only 5 acres of land at 103 Downing Place, Apex NC. We lived in North Carolina from 1978 to 2020. Those were happy times as we raised Joe in a country environment which was not exactly country and was not city either but we had all the amenities that could be expected from either lifestyle - country or city.

While living in North Carolina we owned a condo in Sarasota, Florida since 1999. This was our go to place for Opera, Ballet and Symphony. In retirement we sold the North Carolina home in

2020. We also sold the condo and bought a 4 bedroom home to live full time in Sarasota, Florida at 9579 Knightsbridge Circle . Florida gives us a chance to enjoy the weather, the Arts and our volunteer jobs at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens as well as other charities such as Give Kids the World, a Make A Wish foundation venue for critically ill children. Life is Good!

Libbie:

My dad was an accountant for US Steel and Wire for his working life. Being part of the company management allowed ...or demanded that Dad and our family moved several times to new places to a new work assignment.

I was born July 21, 1947 in Joliet, Illinois. I lived the first 7 years of my life in a small three bedroom yellow bungalow at 351 Baker Ave. The house was small and I remember sharing a bedroom with Bill and Mary. Most of my memories at that time were of playing outside in what we called the “lower lot” which was a bit of extra property because the house was on the corner of Baker Ave and Grant Street. We were two blocks from Woodland Elementary school so we walked to school and came home for lunch every day.

In 1954 we moved to Rocky River, Ohio. We lived in a “big” brick house at 20736 Eire Rd. The house again was a three bedroom but this time it had a bedroom “suite” in the attic that was Bill’s

private domain. I shared a room with Holly, who was 5 years younger than me. Beach school was again walking distance so we were able to walk home for lunch every day. Dad took the bus to nearby Cleveland to work every day and we would often meet him at the bus when he came home. Mom had a great flower garden and I had my first gardening experiences here.

Rocky River only lasted three years and our family was moved again. This time, in 1957, Dad's job moved to Trenton NJ. Mom and Dad found a suitable home for us across the Delaware River in Yardley, PA. We lived at 2329 Lakeshore Dr Yardley, PA. As the address implies we lived on a small lake which provided lots of views of nature and fun adventures for us. Schools were farther away so we rode the bus to the schools.

I was in fifth grade when we moved to Yardley, I graduated from Pennsbury high school there in 1965 seven years later. In fall of 1965 I started my freshman year at Mansfield State College. Dad was transferred again in spring 1966 to Worcester, MA. Their new home at 76 Woodridge Rd, Holden, MA was never my home because after graduating I took a teaching job in Owego, NY.

During my first year of teaching, 1969-1970, I shared an apartment in Vestal NY with a fellow teacher. In 1970-1971 I moved to a second apartment in Apalachin, NY and lived with

Arlene Denijs another Kindergarten teacher in the school district. In 1971 I met Tom and we were married March 25, 1972 and we began our lives together. I will assume Tom has already told you that part of our story above so I won't repeat, except to say all this has led me to this place and "life is Good!"

What's a small decision you made that ended up having a big impact on your life?



Tom:

In the Spring of 1969, before college graduation, I interviewed with various companies looking at interesting jobs. The Space Race was on to get to the moon and companies were looking for Engineers. It was a great time to be a new Engineering graduate. At the same time my cousin Barbara was getting married in April. Barbara lived across the street from our home in Dunellen, NJ which means we grew up together through all 23 years of our young lives. I wanted to go to her wedding in NJ but I was in college in Melbourne, FL and of course had no money for a plane ticket.

IBM was on campus interviewing for engineering openings they had in the Federal Systems Division in Owego, NY. I decided that at their expense I could fly North on a Thursday, interview on Friday, fly part way back by getting off the plane in Newark NJ Friday evening, attend the wedding on Saturday and resume flying back to Melbourne on Sunday. It was a great plan that never happened. At the last minute IBM rescheduled the interview for the following week which meant I missed the wedding but still had to go through with the interview.

As luck would have it I liked the interesting work they had shown to me. As part of the interview process they hired a taxi service to give a tour of the area. I enjoyed the surrounding farm lands and decided that this was where I needed to be. A generous job offer followed almost immediately which included many benefits most of which I had no interest in. A 23 year old has zero interest in health care, dental care, life insurance, retirement benefits or any of the other amenities included. There were two areas of interest - money and vacation time. The rest was just noise. I accepted the offer and started working the week after graduation.

A nonchalant job interview at a place in NY I never heard of before changed my life forever. I started a career with a major corporation in a skills area I was interested in and in a geographic area that had beautiful but very cool summers and

harsh winters with excellent nearby skiing. This skiing included skiing after work at night where 52 years ago I met a beautiful and exciting woman who changed my life forever, all because of a job interview to get to a cousin's wedding.

Libbie:

In 1982 we had just finished building our house on Downing Place, Joe was 5 years old and I had started back to my teaching career. That year I had been substitute teaching at several of the Wake County elementary schools which was a challenge, exhausting and often not fun. When I had free time I gardened and often visited Fairview greenhouse our local greenhouse to buy more plants for our new garden spaces at Downing Place.

One day in April, I was at Fairview Greenhouse with my friend, Nancy Doggett. I said out loud to Nancy that I would love to work there. The owner, Joann Dewar, overheard me and she said, "How soon can you change your clothes and get started?" I was hired on the spot for part-time work. What I did not recognize was that it was two weeks before Easter and Joann was very understaffed for the work they needed to get done. What Joann did not know was how serious I was about wanting to work there and grow plants. That seeming little exchange and the part-time work I did at Fairview Greenhouse changed the trajectory of my life!

What are your favorite memories of your child growing up?



Tom:

There are many memories of Joe growing up through the years. I'm not sure if the word "favorite" applies since there are so many fond memories.

When Joe was as high as the kitchen counter I have a wonderful photo of him standing on a kitchen chair, his face and clothes covered with flour, helping Libbie make something in the Kitchen. I'm guessing it was a pizza but it could have been anything. The picture is a precious memory.

Another favorite memory is of Joe and our dog Samantha. Sam or Samantha was an Irish Setter. Whenever Joe went out on adventures in the woods surrounding our home the dog would happily prance along by his side. Accompanying Joe was also a

chance for Sam to chase the latest rabbit or squirrel or whatever critter she would manage to flush out of the underbrush. The two of them traveled everywhere together. When Sam would come back muddy and wet I knew they had been visiting the pond behind our house. If she came back covered with brush and burrs it was evidence they were in the old tobacco field together. If she came back clean it meant they had spent the time wandering in the woods

Building tree houses in the woods behind our house was another memorable activity. One time we had left Joe and his friend Trevor building tree houses in the backyard while we went to our greenhouse property 4 miles away. It was the time of landlines. The phone at the greenhouse rang. It was Trevor. He reported that Joe had fallen out of the treehouse and thinks Joe may have broken his arm. The treehouse platform was about 6 feet above the ground. We rushed home and took Joe to an emergency care facility. X Rays confirmed that Joe had broken his arm.

Memorable is the outdoor activity in the field behind our woods. The field was overgrown with dried weeds from what formerly was a 66 acre tobacco farm. Joe and his friend Trevor were launching rockets in the field. It was an ideal space for doing this activity because once the rocket reached apogee the rocket motor was designed to set off a charge in the upper part of the cardboard tube making up the rocket body. This charge forced a

folded parachute to get propelled upward, dislodging the nose cone. The body and nose cone floated back to the ground slowly hanging on cords from the parachute. The relatively large field allowed for recovery and relaunch most of the time.

One time a rocket launch didn't go so well and the rocket motor set the field on fire. Out of curiosity for what the boys were doing, I climbed the hill and saw the two of them trying to stamp out a field fire with their feet. The dry weeds burned quite well. I called the fire department and then attempted to join them by using a snow shovel to tamp out the fire. It was futile but thank goodness a fire department pumper truck showed up and drove across the field. They only needed to squirt a little water on the fire and it was extinguished in less than 10 minutes. The fire guys were nice. They said that since this was Spring Break they understood calls like this of boys unintentionally getting into trouble.

Writing about favorite memories of Joe growing up can take many, many pages. There are many memories in a lifetime and this was just a snapshot of a few memorable events.

Libbie:

Oops, My answer is not to the question above! Even though it is not, I will keep this answer and then answer the question.

My favorite memories of growing up are all based on being part of my family. Over the years we took many vacations and educational road trips as a family. Even though it involved seven of us piling into a car with no air conditioning, no video screens, no radio, actually no entertainment other than the games we created to pass the time and the songs we all knew by heart. We each took turns choosing which song we would sing next and somehow over the years we knew exactly which song would be chosen and by whom. We could almost predict the “play list” but that did not matter. We still waited our turn to pick which song would be sung next. Daddy always chose, “I’ve Been Working on the Railroad” Mom chose, “Shine on Harvest Moon” and “Aba, Daba, Daba Daba” My favorite was always, “White Coral Bells”

The songs we sang on our family car trips we carried into our adult lives to share with our children and grandchildren. Even though younger members of:

our family did not know the importance of all these old songs I am sure they all could feel the importance in the fact that these songs are part of the glue that holds our family together.

Answer # 2

Even from a very young age, Joe was a very confident and free spirited boy. We had our hands full keeping track of him! At just under three years old he learned he could earn money by selling

his “pictures” to our neighbors. One morning before 7 am we got a call from a neighbor who asked, “do you know where Joe is?” Joe had let himself out, crossed the culdesac, rang the doorbell on a selling mission. Luckily our neighbor was already up and as a parent of grown children he was humored by Joe’s visit.

As Tom described above, Joe was an outside boy and he always had an mission and an adventure to report to us upon his return. He would tell of the creatures he found; Turtles, frogs and snakes sometimes even bring them home to hopefully make into pets.

One day when he was in kindergarten Joe and his friend Ryan came home from one of these treks and told of the fun they had at the “cliff”. To our knowledge there were no cliffs in all of Apex so we had Joe show us this new place. It turned out to be a gully that was cut out by the creek that ran through the undeveloped property near our house. To a five year old it was a cliff! As parents we did caution the boys about safe and unsafe places but there was no way we could, or would, stop Joe from enjoying the outdoors and exploring nature.

When Joe was in middle school he chose to walk home from school instead of taking the bus. As the crow flies (and Joe walks) it was a little over a mile journey, over two miles by car, and a longer trip for the bus with multiple stops. As a parent, knowing Joe, I thought walking was fully acceptable. One day I got a call from a neighborhood parent who needed to tell me that Joe was

doing this hike. I know I answered that I did know and maybe said something like, “isn’t it a beautiful day for a walk?”

When Joe was in high school we owned the beach house on Topsail Island. We often spent weekends there and many school vacation days. My memories of this time were again of Joe’s independence. Many times I would get up in the morning and Joe would already be out of the house and exploring the beach. Even though we could not see him on the beach we were always confident he would return from his sunrise adventure ontime for breakfast.

As a teenager Joe learned to windsurf on one of our trips to visit his cousins in Maine. He got very competent in this skill and he even wind surfed in the ocean at Topsail. One memorable day I was sitting with my Dad on the cottage deck watching Joe wind surf. Joe was so far out in the surf we could only see him through our binoculars! At one point Joe made a turn and the sail went down, Dad was concerned about Joe disappearing in the waves but I assured him Joe was ok as we continued to watch. I was correct, Joe did wrangle the sail and he popped back up and went zipping on his way but not soon enough! some neighbors on the beach were also watching and thought it was time to go to the rescue....as the neighbor was paddling out through the breakers, Joe was already blasting to shore.

As I tell these stories I can clearly see how Joe nick named himself, Ocean Wonderlust! Even from his youngest days Joe was always out for independent adventures!

Well this story did not go the way I intended! I wanted to tell of the many trips Joe and I took over the years. Often Tom would be involved in a big project at work so Joe and I would travel together to visit family or go to the beach. Joe was always a great travel companion and a good navigator. That will have to be a story for another day.

What questions would you like to ask your ancestors?



Tom:

My question would be who are my ancestors? I don't know of any ancestors further back than my Maternal Grandmother's parents. The origin and names of any other relatives are mysteries to me.

My Maternal grandparents were alive when I was growing up. I wish I had the wisdom back then to ask them why they left their homeland of Poland. I can guess that it was because of political change. Russia had invaded and took over the Country, essentially eliminating Poland. My grandparents immigration papers say "Country of Origin: Russia". I'm sure this affected their lives. I did not know my Paternal grandparents at all. My Father's Mother died before I was born and his Father died when I was 3 years old. They seemed to have immigrated at the same time as my Maternal grandparents, around 1900. The same

question applies, why did you leave and tell me about your journey to get to the US. How did you know where to live? How did you manage living day to day without being able to speak, read or write English? Did you have English speaking friends to help navigate living in the US?

These questions of course will never be answered. In the future people will be able to use Artificial Intelligence robots to look back at their ancestors but the knowledge most likely will be sketchy for any timeframe before the 20th Century. Technology has been marvelous at documenting life, unintentionally or not. Our lives are available in thousands of photos, blogs, selfies and government records today whether we like it or not. Future generations will have an easy time of figuring out who we were.

Libbie:

Since I have knowledge of many of my ancestors through genealogy records I have many questions I could ask. For the Cortelyou ancestors I would like to know what early America was like in New Utrich in the 1600's. Also for the Cortelyou , Condon and Crouch families I would want to know about their experiences around the time of the Revolutionary war.

Even though we have a great wealth of information about the 140 Swiss immigrants who left Glarus, Switzerland and bravely traveled to a new country with hopes of a better life, I would like to ask Anton and Anna Stauffacher about their personal

experiences on this voyage. What were their experiences, challenges, dreams and goals?

What's your favorite holiday, and why?



Tom:

It is appropriate that this question would appear on Christmas Day in 2023. In keeping with the spirit of the season the Wall Street Journal published an essay titled “The Awe of Christmas” on Dec 22. While the story focused on coming together in peace, love and song, Christmas is also the time of over the top decorations and lights. This is my favorite holiday.

Christmas has become an American Holiday. No matter what your religion or beliefs are, Christmas probably appeals to you. In New York City the department stores go all out to put together elaborate window displays. Hudson Yards, Bryant Park and Rockefeller Center are covered in millions of twinkling LED lights. Disney World starts decorating all their resort hotels and the parks on the day after Halloween. The Pumpkins are retired and the wreaths start adorning light poles, doors and windows.

Garland stretches everywhere. Enormous decorated Christmas Trees stand in the lobbies of each of the Disney hotels. Meanwhile at private homes across the country, individuals erect light displays covering their property. Some are synchronized to music, others use projection mappings to transform the facade of a home into a winter wonderland.

Christmas has evolved into this celebration where awe overtakes us. The glittering, twinkling lights, the festive sparkling tinsel, the layers of garland and greenery plus traditional music with resonant sounds of choirs and song puts us in a state of joy and wonder. People are exchanging gifts as a sign of love. At least for these few moments of the year the world is one with cheerful ebullience. There is joy and happiness everywhere. Can there be any doubt of why I like Christmas as my favorite holiday of the year?

Libbie:

Christmas is my favorite holiday!! The Christmas season is filled with love and happiness. It is a time for friends and family to slow down and enjoy the gifts of life.

Christmas has been my favorite holiday since my childhood with memories of candlelight Christmas eve church service, singing in the choir, then all the fun and traditions of gifts, food and family on Christmas day.

Later memories are of Tom and I, cutting down and decorating our own first tree, then the fun years with Joe, experiencing his first Christmas and watching him grow through the years. Now it is fun to see Paige and Emily at Christmas time.

The whole Christmas season is filled with joy and happiness, my favorite holiday!

