LETTERS
FROM
WASHINGTON

CAROLINE ARNOLD

ADVENTURES IN THE OFFICE OF SENATOR JOHN GLENN
AND OUR NATION’S CAPITOL

1985 - 1988
PREFACE

“Write to us and tell us what it’s really like in Washington,” my friends requested in the fall of 1984 as I prepared to go to Washington for a graduate fellowship in the office of Senator John Glenn. I was then 53 years old, president of the Kent Board of Education, working on a Ph.D. in speech communication at Kent State University, and poor. I had not had a full time salaried job for almost 15 years.

I took that request seriously. I was eager to see for myself how things worked at the heart of our government, and liked the challenge of offering sketches of what I was seeing to my friends -- though always mindful of the subjunctive nature of personal observation, the contingent qualities of reality, and the ultimate impossibility of describing anything completely and accurately.

During my first year in Glenn’s office I wrote 42 letters – about 150 single-spaced pages – to friends back home in Ohio and scattered across the nation. During the following three years the letters became fewer, but longer. The narratives are not confined to events in the Glenn office, though they are centered there. There are descriptions of day-to-day activities in 503 Hart SOB, of news conferences and hearings; there are reflections on international and national events, about political decision-making and information management, and about social, personal and musical events, mostly reconstructed from notes.

Except for correcting typos, supplying missing words, letters or punctuation and occasional clarifications, I have resisted rewriting or revision. In a few cases I have omitted names or used pseudonyms, and some personal remarks have been dropped.

* * *

Between 1970 and 1985 I eked out a living in Kent as a free-lance musician (cellist; orchestras in Cleveland, Akron and Youngstown) and sometime proprietor of the Peaceable Kingdom Bakery in Kent. I tried repeatedly for professional level positions and was usually deemed overqualified.

In the wake of the May 4, 1970 shootings at Kent State I volunteered as a teacher-guide in the KSU Experimental Programs that had been set up to bring issues like racism, war, women’s studies, and political dissent to the undergraduate curriculum. In 1984, I was teaching a course titled “Men and Machines” on the social impact of computers. Although I had proposed and designed the course, which had been cited by the Ford Foundation as the kind of innovation they valued in awarding a grant to the Experimental College, I was considered unworthy to be paid for teaching it because I didn’t have a Ph.D.

The gaps in my budget in the early 1980s were filled by financial help from my father, Dwight Arnold, who had taught at Kent State for over 30 years. After he died unexpectedly in July 1984, the bottom dropped out. My son Seth had just graduated from high school and hoped to start as a freshman at KSU. My daughter Alys was living with her father in California and attending Santa Barbara City College. I owned my house, but could barely pay the taxes on it.
I had no health insurance and my car had died of old age – I felt lucky to sell it for $100.

It was a tough summer. Seth got a minimum-wage job printing T-shirts at a local sporting-goods store and postponed starting college. Friends helped in every way – paid my property taxes, left bags of groceries on my porch, loaned me a car when needed, gave me clothing or concert tickets.

After I discovered that I was still eligible for the tuition waiver granted to children of Kent State faculty, I recognized that my best hope would be to go back to school and get a Ph.D. I enrolled in the speech communication program with Carl Moore. The university also gave me a teaching assistantship, but they deducted an amount equal to the tuition waiver from the $4000 p/a stipend for graduate assistants, leaving me with take-home pay of less than $250 a month.

Under those circumstances, a notice on a campus bulletin board of a six-month graduate fellowship in Senator John Glenn’s office at $1000 a month looked tempting. Encouraged by Dr. Walt Adams, Dean of Graduate Studies, I applied and was interviewed in Glenn’s Columbus office. By Thanksgiving I knew I was going to Washington.

It was difficult to let go of my life in Kent. In addition to serving on the school board I was moderator of the Unitarian-Universalist Church, and active in the local Democratic Party, the Kent Environmental Council, and in other civic and musical endeavors. My house and garden were treasured parts of my life. I had three dogs and four cats, much beloved. The only way I was able to talk myself into leaving home was to promise myself that I would be returning home in the summer.

Just to get ready to go and to give Seth a little to live on I had to sell some things I would like to have kept – musical instruments and family heirlooms. But I held onto my Commodore 64, a crude little computer with a separate disk-drive, EasyScript word-processing software, a cheap dot-matrix printer that used tractor-feed paper, and an old B&W TV set for a monitor. I took the whole rig with me when a friend drove me to Washington on Sunday, January 13, 1985. The first of the promised letters was composed on the C-64 on Thursday, January 17.

My first months in Washington were hard. I was homesick; $1000 a month, after taxes, didn’t go very far. Seth, trying to manage alone in our house, had to deal with a leaking roof and furnace failure in a bitter winter. On Capitol Hill with no car, I walked, biked or took the Metro, using a backpack to carry groceries and supplies.

In June, I was offered a permanent position in the Glenn office at $20,000/yr. I had little choice: I took it, leased a car and moved out to Alexandria to share a house with two young professional women.

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Trials notwithstanding, I had a wonderful time in Washington. I gained a new respect for the people who work behind the scenes in government with conviction, courage and the belief that they are making things better. I was finally defeated by the physical environment, the social climate, and the parochialism of Washington, in about equal parts.

Despite living and working in air-conditioning, I found the heat and humidity of Washington
summers brutal, and it lasted from mid-March to mid-November. The heat added to the stress of commuting – about an hour and a half each way in rush hour. There was constant noise, even in the dead of night, and the nights were never dark -- sky-glow from highways and shopping malls quenched the stars. And Washington extended for miles in every direction. It took about an hour to get out past the strip malls and apartment complexes into the green countryside.

Socially, although I had many wonderful friends, I found the wealth and privilege of Washington very depressing. At an age when others were at the peak of their earnings, I was earning less than $25,000 a year. I couldn’t afford to be a player in the pastimes of my peers. I was also deeply troubled by the plight of the residents in the inner city, the antics of Mayor Marion Barry, as well as the grisly killings – even on Capitol Hill -- and the fear and suspicion they generated.

In the middle of 1988, John Glenn himself suggested that with the new Senate computer systems I could do my job from his Cleveland office, which was within commuting distance of my home in Kent.

Letters from Washington ended then, though of course I continued writing letters, now about Ohio events to my new Washington friends. But that is another story, for another time.

* * *
To Ed Furtek, after my interview with him in Columbus for the John Glenn Fellowship

24 October 1984

Ed Furtek
Domestic Policy Director
Senator John Glenn
503 Hart Building
Washington DC 20510

1st Umpire: Some's balls and some's strikes, and I calls 'em as they is.
2nd Umpire: Some's balls and some's strikes, and I calls 'em as I sees 'em.
3rd Umpire: Some's balls and some's strikes, and they ain't nothin' until I calls 'em.

Just so. It is an old story, but it identifies some cognitive styles in current use. What the story misses is that in consensual governance we call the pitches through our shared understandings and not by the whim of an umpire. There remains the responsibility of those charged with communications to recognize that all understandings are informed by interests and to try to be fair and evenhanded in addressing those interests.

I greatly enjoyed our conversation. I was impressed with your commitment to the processes of governance, because finally the quality of our future will be determined less by laws we have enacted than by the quality of processes and discourse we are able to achieve. I believe I could make a substantial contribution to those processes as an intern on Senator Glenn's staff.

Thank you; I look forward to hearing from you soon.

To Don Anthony

4 November 1984

I got it! Six months in Washington on the staff of Senator Glenn. I am frantic – there is an enormous amount of work to do: I have to get the house winterized and rationalized so that Seth can manage it; something thrown together in the way of a Washington Wardrobe, write a
couple of papers, continue to honcho the Unitarians, get Seth registered at KSU, shop, clean, cook, hang up my clothes, pay bills, write letters and sometimes sleep, if there is any time.

On top of all this, now Carl Moore wants my plan for graduate study, next week is OSBA convention in Columbus, the following week is Thanksgiving, and time runs out after that. I will go to DC for a few days in December to find a place to live. I have contacted Barbara Nnoka, the delightful Quaker I stayed with when I went to take the Foreign Service Exam. She will put up a notice at the Meeting House that may locate an inexpensive room for me. $1000 a month is not very much to live on in Washington, and I will need to send back $200 - $250 a month to keep the house running and the taxes paid.

I don’t see any hope of continuing to have a car. Seth seems to be resigned to living without one. I hope we can get a compatible, responsible person with a car to live in the extra rooms. I am very concerned about the animals. Terrible and Tompkins may just disappear (I suspect they have another home) Jacob, my wonderfully competent little cat who can always find a nugget of dog food or a loose drapery hem to bat about and play with, and who sleeps curled on my lap (as now); one-eyed Owen Brown pesters me when I sit down to eat, Boots, old now and arthritic cannot jump to my lap but crawls up painfully to be petted, gaunt Shadow sits in the kitchen sink during the day and comes to my pillow at night, drooling slightly because of missing teeth. The big dog Albert sleeps under my bed and greets me with a lick on the nose in the morning. Little Isabell is always apologetic but so grateful to be spoken to; Christina, white and fastidious, who will not eat with another cat in the kitty-corner; Tompkins with his remorseful mewing on his return home after only five minutes; the Terrible Tiger, so shy and lonesome.

But it’s Gertrude Stein who concerns me – she’s been patient and devoted to me. She was never handsome or graceful. I used to say she didn’t want to be a dog, she wanted to be a little girl. She is partially blind and deaf now, cannot locate sounds or see more than about ten feet away. She knows how to fit herself into my sleeping position; she’s been part of my life for 15 years. But there is no point in being sentimental.

Before I chicken out and go to bed, I’ll try to put down my outrage at Jaynes’ book without setting fire to the paper. Your dissertation ideas made me think of the proposal of Francois Jacob that consciousness, language and music came to us courtesy of the dinosaurs. When dinosaurs dominated the daylight hours, the only time our ancestors could survive was the night season; in the dark the tiny mammals could use audible signals and learn to ‘mark time’ in order to hunt, avoid danger, find each other, and survive. It is of course the ability to perceive and process time that makes music possible.

Jaynes: Carl Moore suggested that he wanted to read "The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind" and the title fascinated me, so I got it out of the library. In its baldest outline it proposes that before the time of the Greeks humans had "bicameral minds" in which one half had auditory hallucinations that were messages from the gods, the other half
minded the store of everyday activities, and there was no consciousness because there were no connections between the two chambers of the brain.

To be sure, the Assyrians had a 'literate bicameral theocracy' run by a sort of group hallucination engineered by the priests and kings, but it wasn't tyrannical because the people weren't really conscious. I find the whole thing so goddam silly I can't believe anyone would take it seriously. Jaynes writes from racist, sexist presumptions in pompously convoluted and cute prose: "a force that grails the scientist and combines the rebel." He also makes unsupported assertions, cites research very selectively and assumes that since he has now explained the Whole Truth there is nothing more to be said.

It makes me unspeakably angry that a charlatan like that gets fame and riches for such bullshit, not least because I don't totally disagree with his conclusion. It is finally that 'the innocence of certainty' is forever denied to us, conscious as we are of time, of past and future, and of our mortality. But the arrogance of Jaynes assuming that it is only modern, educated, enlightened white MEN who are conscious is horrifying, while his corollary—that people with bicameral minds don't really suffer because they aren't really conscious is pure Nazism.

My Halloween party was a success. I dressed as a Maxwell's Demon, and we had a Black Hole, an Olbers' Paradox, a Charmed Quark and a couple of Free Radicals. No one came in a Red Shift, as a Semi-Conductor or a Tran-Sister, but a good time was had by all.

The frost came on Friday, freezing the nasturtiums and marigolds and the last of the beans and peppers in the clear dusk beneath a lighted sky.

* * *

JANUARY 1985

Thursday, 17 January 1985

My office is in an alcove with four desks, each with a telephone, and there is a copier for the use of the three 'fellows' who work in this back corner of the second floor of Glenn's suite in the Hart Senate Office Building. There is a restroom, a kitchenette with refrigerator and toaster-oven, and a supply closet stocked with paper, notepads, pens, markers, paper clips, tape, staples, cards, and what you can't find there is in another closet downstairs.

Multiple copies of the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post and Washington Times are delivered every morning; there is a monthly listing of Issues Papers and Info-Packs that will be delivered by Congressional Research Service (CRS) for a phone call, and many Ohio newspapers and national magazines can be found in the Mail Room just down the corridor. We have a door to the 6th floor hallway, and an interior stairway down to the main Glenn offices.
All the ceilings are set with 18" square light panels about 4' apart, with the air circulation system around the rim of each square. Everything is uniformly bright, evenly warm, and there is a constant subdued blur of sound from the ventilators. Senator Glenn's personal suite is in the southeast corner, with tall windows on two sides; only a few Legislative Aides have windows.

My job so far has been reading -- everything from the newspapers to the Senator's important speeches -- and going to classes offered at the beginning of every session by Congressional Research Service. I have so far attended classes on Genetic Engineering, Higher Education Reauthorization, the Mid-East, the Deficit, and the Defense Budget. At midday the Library of Congress even feeds us, right there in the Mumford Room in the Madison Building.

We get there by taking the little 18-seat subway train from the basement of the Hart Building to the Senate side of the Capitol, then walking through the old winding tunnel of painted stones underneath the Capitol, along another passage to the Cannon House Office Building then under the street to the basement of the Madison Building. It takes half the time to go above ground, but isn't half as much fun as the subterranean route.

The people of the Capitol seem young -- I estimate that 60% are under 40. They are white (most of the blacks are service or security personnel) and about evenly divided between men and women. All are well dressed, many very stylishly, and most wear their ID cards on bead-chains around their necks. No one looks poor, angry, depressed, happy, excited, anxious or bored; talk is polite, well-modulated, grammatically correct and unsurprising in content. In the seminars people ask good questions, rarely challenge the experts; the experts are unruffled and able to field the questions handily, but usually without humor or whimsy. At lunch, where we are supposed to be discussing weighty issues most talk is 'where-are-you- from?', 'who's-your-Congressman?', and 'do-you-know-so-and-so'.

My fellow fellows have specific assignments: Joel in education and labor, and Carl in agriculture and economics. My assignment is the Press office, which means I need to keep current with everything. The three of us share and compare a lot of things and spend a good bit of time talking in pairs. I haven't been asked to write anything yet, but Joel and Carl have, and I see them being programmed to be functioning units of "What John Glenn thinks."

Reading the speeches Glenn has given in the past few years I have been wondering whether he actually thinks all the things he says in them, or if he only thinks he thinks them because he reads them in his speeches, or if there is any difference. It appears that I may be asked to write a speech for him to give to women's group in March.

I have 24 hour access to the building, a key to the office, my own telephone number, the use of the WATS line (but please limit personal calls to before 9AM or after 6PM) and a ticket to the Inauguration. There are shops and supply stores in the basement, a cafeteria and a fast-food place (prices are not cheap) and there is a credit union, all within the Senate buildings.
I am living in a room in a house just across the corner of Constitution, Maryland and 2nd NE Avenues. My landlady is delightful -- well-informed, liberal, easygoing, and very kind. She often greets me with sherry when I get back in the evening and has been feeding me and helping me find my way around. I get very tired, and miss being able to move around and relax during the day. I also find it hard to wear stockings all day.

Everyone I meet is helpful and friendly, but most don't appear to be very passionate about anything. They don't laugh much, don't reveal much about themselves, and seem rather two-dimensional to me. That's not bad, it's just different for me.

P.S. Please someone in the Speech Communications office, send a note to the Bursars' Office and tell them I really am in Washington and don't need to pay the KSU Campus Bus fee.

* * *

Saturday January 19, 1985

Staff meetings are held Friday mornings in the Senator's office. It is a spacious room – double doors, a soffit ceiling two stories high, and draped windows looking out on 2nd Street. People crowd into the room; Elena says sit anywhere except in the Senator's chair. The four women on the oversized couch move to squeeze me in. They are talking about child-care. Pat has made arrangements to leave her 21 month old daughter with another young mother, and is recounting her anxieties. Others are teasing her, suggesting drug-dealers and child porn rings. There are not enough places for everyone to sit: some stand, some sit on window sills or the floor in front of the coffee table that holds *The Smithsonian* and *U.S. News & World Report* and other magazines. There is large globe standing beside Glenn's desk and models of aircraft and spacecraft on top of the tall bookcases flanking the door.

Ten minutes late the Administrative Assistant (AA) Kathy comes in and sits on the Senator's desk and takes charge of the meeting. We are told about tickets for the Inauguration, security measures in the building, and upcoming events, resignations and new staff assignments.

"You will notice that AB is no longer here. She was asked to resign. I don't want to say much about it. She was a good worker, but she did something that showed very poor judgment, probably because she was young. It was very regrettable, and I don't want you to think badly of her."

Carl, Joel, Susan and I were introduced as the new "super-interns". The next series of training programs for computer terminals was announced for February. Someone noted that "they got a shot of Ron on the NBC news last night" at the Press conference on the committee on committees. There was a small interchange about what would happen if Glenn got on, or didn't get on, the Armed Services Committee, or if the number of subcommittees were reduced.
Someone observed that the Senator was outside waiting to use his office and people left quickly. On the way out Dale, press secretary and my boss, said he wanted to meet with me and Kathy in her office, so I waited. I wasn't sure which Kathy. It turned out to be the AA.

The Senator had received a letter, she said, saying that I had opposed the ROTC and spoken out against my country. Of course the Senator believed in free speech, but I should understand that everyone on his staff was in a very sensitive position.

I thought they were scared, but I wasn't. I said I that would probably be S.P. (it was) and that she was referring to an article in the Kent Record Courier about a protest about the KSU Homecoming Parade last fall (right again). I produced from my little notebook a photocopy of Ms. P’s letter-to-the-editor and my response, and gave it to them. They were a little taken aback, I think, and started talking about the Senator's beliefs: he believes in a strong military; he is a supporter of ROTC. He also believes in freedom of speech, and does not expect that all his staff will agree with him at all times on all issues.

I pointed out that I had never objected to the presence of ROTC in the parade, only to the fighter plane, which in any case did not appear, and that I wasn’t even at the parade – I was at my Saturday class.

Then they wanted to know about the letter which had been published in the Jan. 9 Christian Century on the abortion issue: "Of course the Senator takes a pro-choice stand on abortion, but we have to be very careful what comes out of this office."

Finally they wanted me to draft a reply to Ms. P. -- I should say x, y, and z, and check with them before I made any public statements.

So I did. I went to my desk and wrote out a draft, longhand and revised it. It took me 15 minutes (that long because I didn't have access to a computer terminal) but I decided not to put it on Dale’s desk until I got back from two seminars in the Madison Building. I walked down to the subway musing: I don't think the Senator read Ms. P's letter, and he may not read my reply – several staff members sign his name. ‘What the Senator thinks’ is apparently a collective construct, and the purpose of reading his speeches is to teach me not only the party line but also the correct words and phrases to express it.

It is my feeling, though, that it is precisely in such words and phrases that the unconvincingness of his utterances lie. I think he is a moral man, an intelligent man, an honorable man, but I don't think he thinks (as a process) the way he is represented as thinking in his public statements. Dale and Kathy are quite right that simply being “pro-choice” (for example) is not fine-tuned enough for a “public” opinion, but what they miss is that the statements they give him aren't either. If I can do anything other than be a fungible unit in the Senator's mind it must be here. I may not be given the chance, but I will give them the choice.
When I got back from classes in High-Tech & Industrial Innovation, and Tax Reform (separated by a lunch of hearty salad, rolls, beverages and cookies) I found Kathy and asked if she wanted to see a draft of my letter. She didn't; she said Dale would look at it. I told her I wanted to talk to her about speaking for the Senator, and she agreed, for next week. Dale was not to be found, so I left the draft on his chair and headed across the street, home after the first week of work.

Am I surprised? No. Carefully tended beliefs work; certainty, even when wrong, is more workable than uncertainty. So it matters less whether people “decide to work less when taxes are higher” than that economists believe that they do. It matters less whether my views are appropriate than that they are controllable. We are all insecure: we want to do it right, we want to be good guys, we do the best we can, and it isn't very good -- but we get better at it. And that makes it all worthwhile. Before I left Kent I was surprised, and touched, at the hopes people told me they had that I would be able to do something in government processes that seemed to them remote and unresponsive.

* * *

Things have been a little tough with too little money, and a last minute decision to leave my son alone in charge of my house. He seems to have risen to the occasion, even though he ran out of money buying his textbooks. Nor would I have managed without my delightful landlady who has even loaned me a little money because I don't get a real paycheck until Feb. 1. Betty has been to Nicaragua with Witness for Peace, has been out this week protecting Planned Parenthood from Right-to-Lifers, and took me to a seminar on US-Soviet relations at William Penn House Wednesday evening.

* * *

Saturday January 26, 1985

They are dead-pan, meager-looking people whose mouths twist with satisfaction when they pronounce their Truths: it is a Scientific Fact that Life Begins at Conception; abortion is murder of human beings in the womb. Staff meet them in the reception area, listen politely and state Glenn's position: pro-choice.

I stayed back. I cannot contribute to the conversation, and in truth, I don't like them. What I wanted to say was that their agenda is tantamount to communism, because it locates moral responsibility in the state, not in the individual. Also, if everyone believes abortions are murder, as they claim, how come women get them? But they wouldn't know what I was talking about.

The next morning the granite sidewalks in front of the Hart Building were strewn with cardboard babies on broken sticks, muddy handbills and torn posters, and the newspapers had pictures of indignant Right-to-Lifers arrested on the steps of the Supreme Court. On the next page were photographs of anti-apartheid protesters indignant at not being arrested.
My landlady is in a group that considers themselves poets and meets every Thursday evening. This week was Betty’s turn, and she made a tray with crackers, cheese and pate, and another with wineglasses and two bottles of wine. The first to arrive were two women with the clean-edged, trim and stylish look of Washington professional women. I had not planned to be present at the meeting, but Betty wanted to introduce me, so I stayed, in my saggy grey sweater with my bare feet in old-lady slippers. Polite talk followed about my provenance and work with Senator Glenn. After the only man in the group arrived there was some joking about his gender, and whether he let anyone know he was a poet.

Betty offered tea, and when it arrived it was admired as “liquid sunshine” and I was advised that I would have to get used to the way poets talk. Presently Betty passed around copies of her poem, a rather good, unpretentious piece of 10 or 12 lines: “Myself as Baroque Pearl.” After it was read there was an extensive conversation about whether it was ‘ironic’ or not, and if not, then what? Definitions of ‘ironic’ were recruited and rejected, and it was finally decided that the poem was “wry -- that’s W-R-Y.” Then the word “brutality” in the poem was examined and interpreted as referring to the action of a mother pulling a child out of the path of a truck; assorted scars on psyches from such events in their childhoods were mooted about. Before that got very far, however, the child-running-into-the-street script pushed its way back in, and the discussion degenerated into talk about how children were or should be punished. I excused myself about then, pleading letters to be written. As I went up the stairs I could hear the first lines of the next poem: “He took off his face/And the inner light streamed out.”

Very few people arrive in the Senator’s office before 9 o’clock. The first order of the day for everyone is to read the newspapers. This morning I got a call from Dale (press secretary) before I had fairly started on the papers: Alina, his secretary, was ill; would I sit at her desk and answer calls. And would I be interested in writing the Floor Statement in support of the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1985 that Glenn would read next Monday?

Dale was patient with my phone incompetence (which button do you press?) and sent me first to take a paper up to the Aging Committee office. I settled at Alina’s desk and between errands and phone calls I read the bill and some background documents, as well as the Senator’s Floor Statement for the 1984 bill, which had been filibustered down in the Senate.

Then Dale needed some typing: statements of Senator Glenn upon being appointed to the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), on Sen. Gore’s appointment to the SASC, and on no appointment being made, covering the bases for any likely outcomes of the committee assignments. I did two of them on a terminal of the office word processor; Dale hadn’t finished drafting the last one.

Periodically the telexcopier would buzz, roused by a ring of its own telephone, then grunt and groan for four minutes and subside. I reflected that a document page could come from Columbus in four minutes, but it took me 20 minutes to walk half a mile through subterranean corridors and wait for
elevators to get a document from Sen. Metzenbaum’s office in the Russell Building.

Dale was in and out, rushing in to make four phone calls, write a few sentences, rush out, return and ask for something, and go out again. When it got down to the wire and the final statement on the SASC was needed I made him sit down at the word-processor and type it in himself, promising to clean up the mistakes for him. I discovered he had never used the computer before, and he learned he could use it. I corrected it and sent it to the printer.

Printer #3 sits right outside the door of the Press office. It is enclosed in a case with a hinged clear plastic cover and the inside is lined with sculptured foam -- to reduce the clattering noise it makes. When you tell your terminal to print a document it promptly flashes PRINT REQUEST BEING QUEUED!, then the system has to think about it for a while. Presently you hear the printer start to grumble. After it starts it takes about 30 seconds to print a page.

I managed to put all three statements on two pages, and Dale asked for copies for five people. So I went to tackle the copier. It is so simple it's confusing -- just lay the sheets face down at the right end, tell it how many copies you want and press the button. But it ran out of paper in the middle of my job, and I had to hunt up someone who knew the wheres and hows to feed it.

Meanwhile Dale had composed a statement of Sen. Glenn about an industry locating in Columbus, which had been approved by the appropriate Legislative Aide (LA). Dale asked me to call the Washington bureaus of the Columbus papers and read the statement to them over the phone, then put a copy on the Senator’s desk, so he would know what he had said about the company.

Most of the staff are young, and about half are women. It is difficult to know who has power and who has mobility -- and what their moves are. It is also hard to estimate who knows what, and more importantly, who has the standing to display knowledge in which situations, what the scripts are for different situations. I have a desk and telephone; all three of us (the Fellows) have passwords on the word processor, but there are only a half-dozen in the office, and none of them upstairs in our area. We have two Selectric typewriters, one of which whispers to itself all the time it is turned on; both are already being ignored. I mostly read; Carl spends most of his time on the telephone and Joel scans the newspapers for articles on education or labor to photocopy.

I miss being able to look out at trees and weeds, bicycling or running along streets of houses and lawns, the familiar warmth of Gertrude Stein (my old black dog) beside me in bed, Owen Brown (the one-eyed cat) jumping up my front for no reason, Tompkins (another cat) wailing his remorse at having been out in the cold, and little Jacob stepping daintily onto my lap as I sit at my C-64 in the evenings. It is very different here. Everyone is bright and well-informed, reads books and goes to plays and concerts; is clean, attractive and trim, speaks standard American (with only an occasional Southern tinge) in complete, pithy sentences in well-modulated voices.

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I look out between two brick walls, one white, about 10 feet long; the other yellow, extending about 15 feet. There is a metal chimney, a downspout and three black wires are visible along the bricks. Beneath there is a white picket fence dividing this yard from the one next door, a few tree branches saved for firewood, an overturned garden seat and my landlady’s car. Beyond the car is a metal garage with a rusty roof, three trash cans and two trash-bags, all of different colors. From here I cannot see the twisted path by which cars reach the alley to get out to the street. At eye-level sprawl stiff elm-branches, their twigs already spiky with leaf-buds. Under the Mozart serenade from the radio is the steady thunder of jets leaving or landing at National Airport; the sky is grey.

Yesterday when I turned on my radio at 7AM I heard a charming concerto for oboe, violin and cello. I knew it wasn't Mozart because I knew he hadn't written any such piece. (If he had, it would have been played ad nauseam by both oboists and cellists, who have always felt neglected by Mozart. Cellists especially have transcribed and fudged to get anything by Mozart to play on recitals.) My first guess was Haydn, because he wrote so much, because new things of his still come to light periodically, and because it was so nicely inventive and competent, and had some delicious surprises and unexpected turnings. But I was wrong: it was Salieri.

Salieri? The epitome of mediocrity? No, that's not fair. I, of all people, shouldn't take over the assumptions of a playwright whose aim was to produce a theatre-piece. Suppose for a moment that Mozart and Salieri produced music of equal competence – and let's not talk about 'genius' which is always a posteriori anyway. It would account for Salieri's tragedy all the better if he knew that Mozart was no better musician than he, but received the recognition and adulation that Salieri thought he deserved.

I will admit that it is likely that Salieri (and Mozart) believed that the ability to write successful music was a gift from God. Still, it seems that the biggest difference between Salieri's music and Mozart's was that Mozart was willing to take risks -- both musical and social -- that arose not so much from daring or genius as from the confidence of an unexamined superiority complex. There is a certain irony, after all these years, in the rehabilitation of Salieri by a movie. Because of Amadeus, Salieri is now being researched and recorded.

All this makes me all the more determined to pursue the social construction of consensus about reality. Surely music means what we agree that it means: music is great because we agree that it is great; music is performed because we agree that it is worth performing. Of course, I am tempted to replace the “we” of the preceding sentence with “men”. It is my judgment that there is no substantive difference between the music or Fanny and Felix Mendelssohn, except quantity, a function of time and opportunity. Had Fanny had that one gift of God, a penis, we might now be thinking of Felix as a gifted younger brother.

The conditions that make us into musicians have to be socially grounded -- no one is born with an
instinct or talent for music, nor any sense of right or wrong in music. Music is a learned sensibility and it depends on both the wider social milieu – the musics available – and the very considerable influence of the music-teacher. While it is no doubt possible to teach oneself to play a musical instrument, it is never possible to be a self-taught musician. To become a musician one must have a teacher or mentor.

And a music-teacher is not merely a drill-master or disciplinarian, and is often not a ‘teacher’ but a colleague or friend. This person is ultimately the bestower of a musical identity, in the sense of defining musical rights and wrongs, in teaching one to speak for oneself among musical peers, and in sponsoring the new musician in the socius of musical culture. The notion of talent, or “gift from God” has been very profitable for a few men, very damaging for most aspiring musicians, and a veritable red-herring in musicology.

* * *

The movie Carmen is handsomely done. The vocal performances are spectacular, as are the visuals; there is a wonderful sense of design and color, with a spaciousness and simplicity that is quite breathtaking. The orchestra is secure and professional, but the sound level was too high for the theater in which I saw it, and after nearly three hours I felt quite thumped on. I observed that the Dolby sound did better with crickets than with French horns.

The acting was very good by any standards, especially in what can only seem in this day and age as a goddam silly plot. The only really tacky bit was the end of Michaela's prayer -- a head shot with her looking piously off into space, not moving her lips, singing from the sound-track. It did occur to me to be grateful that I had never had to conduct love affairs by singing arias with orchestral accompaniment.

* * *

The Washington Bach Consort performed two cantatas, the Magnificat, the 3rd gamba sonata and three fugues from The Art of Fugue at the National Christian Church, an elegant cream-painted barn too full of people. I was irritated right from the start by their use of organ and contrabass along with the cello for the continuo – it made the continuo line thuddy and thick. The oboist had either breathing or phrasing problems, or both, and the violin soloists both had limp sounds and sleazy intonation. There was throughout a lack of precision that led me to wonder if the musicians could hear one another, or if they were just seriously under-rehearsed. The chorus and soloists, however, were very good to excellent, precise, together, in tune and well balanced, and the trumpets were right up there with them. Each of the flutes sounded very good alone and awful, together. But the hands down winner of the Bad Sound Award was the viola da gamba, which made at good times an audible wheezing whine, and the rest of the times it gave off faint electric-motor buzzing, with static from the harpsichord. Both fast movements were played through on the verge of runaway, with much rushing and trying to get back together. I was embarrassed, because this group is going to represent the United States at the Leipzig Bach Festival in March. Cold here, too. I fought my way last Sunday through bitter winds and blowing snow, with a wind chill of minus-30° to the Metro station and on to the Washington Friends Meeting on Florida Avenue. The outdoor inauguration ceremonies have been cancelled; perhaps God is trying to tell
us something about Ronald Reagan.

My work has gotten more interesting this week. I have written two letters for the Senator, and the Floor statement that he will use next week when he cosponsors the bill to take the edge off the Grove City decision of the Supreme Court, which allowed Federal funds for a college that practiced discrimination against women. I guess I am impressed that my words are going to appear in the Congressional Record.

* * *

January 31, 1985

I have indulged myself in my favorite vice – hot chocolate made by whipping an ounce of semisweet chocolate bits into a cup of boiling water – and found something tolerable (Brahms) on my tinny radio. I no longer have any excuse not to begin, except tiredness and a little homesickness for known faces and voices, for my cats and my wood fire.

Next week Senator Glenn will vote on the confirmation of Edwin Meese as Attorney General. He has not indicated any certainty about the way he will vote, but it is clear that most staff members are hoping that he will vote No. In any case, it now appears that I will have at least a hand – maybe both hands – in whatever statement he makes on the Senate floor and/or to the Press.

Tuesday I tagged along with Dale to distribute Press Releases to Press people wherever he could find them. The first place we stopped was Dirksen 106, where the Meese hearings were taking place. There was 15 feet of the public waiting behind a velvet rope at the left of the great wooden double doors, a cluster of TV camerapersons carrying or standing over cameras, recorders and power-packs. At the door center were two uniformed Capitol policemen, and an usher who directed people to seats or standing-places. I waited outside while Dale went in, observing that he simply flashed his ID and walked through.

Next we visited the Senate Press gallery. The man at the AP desk took the release and handed it to a woman sitting at a computer, who glanced at it and said “Old news” and put it aside. Dale then suggested that I should go back and listen to some of the Meese hearing.

The policeman asked if my Senator was on the Judiciary Committee, and I said no, but Senator Glenn had asked me to come, and I was waved in and directed to the far side of the room, behind the Press tables.

The room is the size of a large gym, with marble wainscoting, golden grained wood paneling, large brass torch-shaped sconces between tall windows and around the other walls, and white ceilings with decorative moldings and bas-reliefs of classical figures. The Senators of the committee sit
behind a desk that curves around the front of the room, on a dais. There were aides, secretaries and pages behind the Senators, and reporters crouched on the step in front of the desk.

Meese and his attorneys were seated at a table covered with green baize, facing the Senators. The lights were very bright and the room very crowded. I was standing among people with green ID cards (Press) around their necks. Most of them were not looking at the Senators or the witnesses. We could not see Meese at all, beyond about 12 rows of chairs. I was also too far away to read the names of the Senators, and tried to spy on the notebooks of the Press people sitting in front of me to find out who was speaking.

Wednesday I went again to the Meese hearing, this time with John (the Legislative Correspondent for matters Judiciary.) John is 26 and has no doubts: Meese is a crook. He carried a case full of letters he was responsible for and led the way to a room on the second floor of Dirksen where we could listen to the hearing on loudspeakers in greater comfort. The room was half the size of 106, but had the same decor, and only one other person in it.

We listened for two hours, not hearing anything new, not changing our minds. My impression is that Meese is not a crook -- he's too dumb and too trusting, a dangerous combination. He seems to think that elves will keep him from making the same mistakes again, and that what he had done was wrong because it got him in so much trouble in being confirmed as Attorney General. I kept wondering why it was so important to the Republicans to confirm him.

Thursday morning my ID card and "Senator Glenn" got me a seat in 106, on the center aisle so I could at least see the backs of the heads of David Martin (Meese's counsel) and his two underlings who never said anything except some form of "me, too" when they were spoken to.

The lights seemed brighter – I counted 20 lights on ten-foot aluminum poles clamped to the wall sconces. The committee was not yet called to order, and press people with two or three cameras hung about their persons roamed around taking pictures; chairs and tables held coats, coffee cups, notebooks, memos.

Finally Senator Thurmond called for order with a rap of the gavel, although there were no other Senators present. Thurmond had the witnesses take the oath, and a declared a recess; then a second recess until four Senators had arrived and taken their seats. Two raps of the gavel and he said: "Yew know what this yearin's all about?" and we were off.

David Martin was smooth and charming; he talked about the “appearance of impropriety” and how he himself had given such an appearance at some time. But finally (chorus of "me, too" from Davis and Feather) Martin concluded that Mr. Meese did not give the appearance of impropriety by his actions with McLean, the Army commission, or the transition fee. Under questioning by Thurmond
Martin said that the memo shouldn't have been made public because you can't conduct business in public. The Democrats were not very keen that day. Even Metz seemed unwilling to press very hard. I had trouble not smiling when everyone finally agreed that there was no appearance of impropriety — if there was no such appearance, what was everyone doing there? Why hadn't Meese been confirmed last year?

The hearing dragged on; my sitting-place got numb. I reflected that if I took a loan from someone and then got them a job with the Kent Schools, I would be put off the school board. David Martin stammered at one point and blurted out — "There was no pressure on me, but it's an unfriendly place." Then Senator Biden made another long, deliberate, rambling statement and asked Martin if, had Meese disclosed his financial dealings with McLean, the Office of Government Ethics would have found the "appearance of impropriety." Martin waffled: "I'd like to explain..."

At 12:30 Senator Thurmond had left the chair and Hatch was talking. Presently he asked Martin if he wanted a recess. Martin replied "Well, I've been drinking a good bit of water." Everyone laughed, but Martin's plea notwithstanding, the hearing continued until 1:20 and was called to resume at 2:00. I went scurrying down the stairs to the cafeteria.

Only staff with IDs are permitted in the cafeteria between 12 and 1:30, but even so I had to wait in line 10 minutes for a bowl of Senate bean soup and a carton of milk. Len, staff director of the Energy Subcommittee (of GAC) joined me at a table on the non-smoking side. The Senator will probably vote no on the Meese confirmation, Len predicted, but he won't be happy about it; he may decide not to make a floor statement on it. I asked Len what the payoffs or costs of making a floor statement would likely be. Well, if he votes no, the Republicans won't like it — the administration and the voters who like Reagan — and Glenn won't get the chance to make some appointments that he might have been able to if he had played along with the administration. But Glenn won't change his vote for that reason. There might be payoffs from the Democrats if he votes no — Len wasn't sure. We talked more about Washington. Len had been with the Senator from his first term, and Len had drafted a bill that was passed and signed by the President during his first two years with Glenn, something of a record in the halls of the Senate.

I decided I couldn't take any more Meese and went back to the office to find an urgent note from Dale: would I draft a letter regretting that Senator Glenn was unable to attend the Chinese New Year celebration of the Chinese Association of Greater Cleveland. There was also a note from Alina asking me to work on the letter at her desk because she needed to go after Dale at the Foreign Relations Committee where the Senator was. So I started on the letter, answering the phones and monitoring the CNN news on the Press office TV, in case they showed the Senator's reply to Weinberger. (They didn't.)

Dale and Kathy were very pleased with the letter to the Chinese Association, and it was sent off on the telexcopier to Cleveland to be typed on letterhead and delivered in time for the Chinese New
Year on Saturday. Then we learned that Mr. Yen of the Chinese Association was in Washington, so I brought up my draft on the WP and turned it over to a secretary to be reformatted, run off, signed with the autopen and given to Mr. Yen in person.

Meanwhile Peggy and the Computer Center expert had succeeded in printing the mailing labels for the 9x12 envelopes for the letter and booklet on human rights in Afghanistan, so I stuck on 64 labels, stamped them all FIRST CLASS MAIL, and, sitting on the floor of the Press office, put letters and booklets in 45 of them before I was tired enough to call it a day.

After three weeks I am beginning to know who’s who, and why. I still have trouble believing I can write convincing prose for a man I have never talked to at length, and whose style and convictions I do not hear firsthand. Friday I spent the day working on a draft of a statement for Glenn to use when he announces how he will vote on the Meese confirmation. I conferred with Dale, Ed (Domestic Policy) and John, each of whom has a slightly different agenda for the statement. Dale is anxious to "get ink" from the statement and to overcome the Senator’s reputation for not taking a stand on anything until the shooting is over. Ed wants the Senator to be out front, but wants to be sure that what he is out front on has national appeal. John (the youngest) wants the Senator to be strong for Truth and Justice and the Ideals of Democracy. (exaggeration mine)

The Senator has not made up his mind, and probably will not do so until after the briefing session the four of us will have with him as soon as the nomination is voted out of committee next week. The briefing will be structured around the statement John and I will write, which means that the other agenda – my agenda – is to write something that will convince the Senator that what we have written is what he believes. There is no doubt among us that the Senator should vote against Meese. If he should decide to vote for the appointment, he will not want to make a floor statement, so we don’t even talk about that.

After that conference, which took two hours, I went down to lunch, came back and negotiated with John about how we would divide up the work on the statement and went back to my desk to write up the summary part of the statement. Because I felt Glenn needed support for deciding to vote No, I cast the reasons why Meese was unacceptable as rhetorical questions: "How can I be sure that Mr. Meese’s zeal for the prosecution of crime in the streets will extend to crime in the suites? (Those phrases are favorites of Dale.) How can Mr. Meese enforce the law equally when he believes in selective enforcement of the provisions of Title IX? (the Grove City decision)

John liked that format, but Dale and Ed didn’t – they wanted the Senator to make more forceful statements: "I believe the Attorney General must enforce the law equally, but Mr. Meese has said that he agrees with selective enforcement." So that's fine – I'll go in tomorrow morning [Saturday] and rework that. I finished at 6:10 and was nearly cross-eyed from thinking about Meese all day.

* * *

I have yet to see the Senate floor, to hear a concert at the Library of Congress, to get off ‘The Hill’
(except to go to Meeting). Weekdays I get to the office at 9, leave between 6 and 6:15, spend an hour and a half over supper and McNeil-Lehrer, then usually put in three hours at my C-64 writing up my notes for the day before getting into bed. WETA and WGMS both have classical music, but WGMS is a commercial station, with commercials almost as bad as WCLV, and WETA tends to lapse into deplorable poetry or abrasive contemporary music when I need Haydn or Brahms. I don’t get outdoors to run or wander around and explore, and I have not found any fellow spirits. The Quakers are all so old, so married, and so single-minded; terribly good but not much fun. I don’t have any money to spare, nor will I have in the foreseeable future. I will get my first full paycheck next week, but it will not be enough to pay Betty what I owe her for rent. The second check will not be enough to pay the January heating oil bill for the house in Kent and the property taxes on my house, to say nothing of the allowance I promised Seth, or having anything to live on here. I just try not to think about it.

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**FEBRUARY 1985**

Sunday, February 3, 1985

Today is Gertrude Stein’s birthday -- not necessarily remarkable, except as a pleasant relief from the birthday celebrations of Great Men, as if, for example, Mozart’s first cry had been in E Major, a 32 bar opening statement in sonata-allegro form. Still, any old occasion is worth celebrating, and I have always liked her statement, "Hot or cold, I do like weather."

Sunday morning, cold and bright. I spent the night wrestling with chills, fever and sore throat. They seem to be gone after 12 hours in bed, and I am only a little weak around the edges. I shall walk over to William Penn House for Meeting presently, after I have run the vacuum cleaner over the house for Betty. It is something I don’t particularly want to do, but since I already owe her a good bit of money I can hardly refuse. She asked if I would be willing to houseclean for $5 an hour; I only make about that much in the Senator’s office. There was a misunderstanding, because she apparently expected me to work in the house on Saturday morning, a time I had hoped to spend on letter writing – this letter, in fact.

Friday all day I worked over the Meese appointment statement. The wording of this is critical, because I must convince first Ed (Domestic Policy) and Dale (Press), then the Senator and finally the other Senators, because it is hoped that if Glenn is out front in rejecting Meese some freshmen and moderates will be persuaded to join him. I worked until after 6, and just couldn’t get it ready for Monday, so decided to finish it Saturday morning. Unfortunately Betty was resentful that I would not be able to work Saturday. She has been very kind and helpful, and has been feeding me because I haven’t had money to do more than buy lunches. But I have a lot of trouble not being able to plan my own time and set my own priorities. And maybe I’m out of practice at living
with anyone else, or never did it very well in the first place. In any case, I don't like being treated like an adolescent (in fact accused of being one: she said that I had never grown up because my mother didn't make me clean house every Saturday morning). I guess it wouldn't have gotten to me much, except that in one sense she's right: I am 54 years old and can't earn enough to pay my living expenses.

I really don't have a lot of sense of the job yet, partly because no-one around me has any very sophisticated notion of the parameters of their jobs. They seem to me to have rather closed conceptions of what they do and why it works, and give little thought to the possibilities or options that might be available. It also seems that "Senator Glenn" is a collective construct who exists only in the words written by his staff. I don't feel good about writing his convictions when I don't know them; I don't know how I can be convincing when I don't know how convinced he is -- or if he is convinced. I see that other people write for him and it works, but I also see a Senator who is respected and ignored. I could (maybe) become a cog in that machine, and no-one would know the difference, but I suspect that's a waste of my skills, and I'm a pretty poor cog anyway.

But it is interesting things to do. The Floor Statement I wrote for the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1985 (to clean up after the Grove City Supreme Court decision) went through, but it got some paragraphs added. It has not been given in the Senate yet, but will be next week, probably. I got praised for the congratulatory letter I wrote to the Chinese Association of Greater Cleveland. I got to go listen to the Meese hearings, which only convinced me that not only does Meese have feet of clay, a good many Senators do too.

Seth seems to be doing well, says his classes are easy, (!) and is trying to find someone to rent the two upstairs rooms. I guess there has been a lot of snow and cold there; I hope the heating oil bills don't wipe him out. He says all the animals have become very attached to him and the houseplants are fine and he is having no trouble keeping house. I guess I'll see when I get there on the 16th.

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February 4, 1985

Budget day. The charcoal-gray paper bound books – the fat full text and the slimmer summary – appeared on desks all over the office this morning, and crowds formed around the photocopy machines as staffers made copies of the sections each would deal with. I had time to skim the Post, Times and WS Journal summaries of the budget, but not much else. I needed to work on a letter of congratulation to a "Sports Committee" in Belmont County that was having a tribute for four athletes on Thursday, which the Senator would not be able to attend, and the Meese statement, for which John and I had a deadline of 6pm.
I called the organizer of the Sports Committee at his office to find out who got the letter, and what should or should not be said. I was instructed to send the letter to him, at home, to say that the athletes were a model for all young men and please don't mention the Chamber of Commerce – even though the original request had come on C of C letterhead. I wrote the suitably sentimental prose, holding my nose, because the ‘tribute’ was a billboard on I-70, and changing "young men" to "young persons." I printed it up and left it on Dale’s chair. (Anything that requires attention is left on chairs, for the very good reason that on desks any sheet of paper with marks on it is protectively colored and disappears.)

I then tried to corner John and set up a time to confer on the Meese statement. He was still working on it, so I went back upstairs to my desk and tried again to call Doug in Sen. Metzenbaum's office to see if we could document a statement Meese had allegedly made to the effect that a protestor in Berkeley in the 60s "deserved to be shot." The answer was finally that we couldn't. They had tried, he said, to run that statement down last year, and hadn't been able to. So we had to scratch that. John brought me his part of the Meese statement and I read it, marking typos, writing some clarifications and improving the diction.

At 12:15 I left the office to go to Dennis Eckart's office, to the Post Office in the basement of Dirksen, and the cafeteria for my bowl of soup. The cars to the Capitol were crowded and there were a large number blind and handicapped people with white canes, guide dogs, crutches or wheelchairs. People helped them on and off the cars and elevators, and in the cafeteria lines. Nobody I asked knew why they were there.

In Eckart's office I tried to find Mary Beth, who was in a staff meeting; instead I talked to Dennis, who said there was a very good chance I could ride back to Kent with Sandy (his wife) on the 14th, and I should call him on Thursday this week.

I found Len finishing his tea at a table in the cafeteria and sat down with him. We talked about the lack of foresight, or even any direction toward a coherent policy in the Senator's office. He said it wasn't like that in all Senate offices; we agreed that if the Senator didn't provide direction someone else usually did, but that often momentum and strength were lost in jockeying for control. I observed that I was surprised, coming from academia, at how little seemed to be known about group processes and simple algorithms for getting things done. He thought I meant that it was done better in academia, and we laughed: of course they don't do it better, but some people know better. I said that in talking with Ed and Dale about the Meese statement I had suggested that if we made a list of all our arguments before we tried to ascertain their relative merits we might save time. They had liked the idea, but didn't do it particularly well. We then shifted to talk about health insurance, and finished our lunch about 1:15.

When I got back Alina asked if I wanted to see the Senator's budget statement. Was this what Dale had been working on yesterday? Well, no. Dale had worked on one, but found the Senator
had written one himself, and this was it. I took it to read, and I was impressed. I thought: now this is more like it; this is the kind of mind I could work with. I showed it to my fellow fellows, Joel and Carl, and they agreed.

The letter to the Belmont County Sports Committee was back on my chair. Dale wanted another sentence about the great playing days of these athletes being etched in America's collective consciousness, so I went down to the computer terminal to put it in. Ron was using the terminal, and as he finished up I asked him if he had seen the budget statement that the Senator wrote himself. "Oh no," said Ron, "the Senator didn't write that. Ed wrote it."

John had agreed that we would get together at 4PM to pull together the Meese-Piece. I did a few more revisions on both his part and mine, left the corrected sports letter on Dale's chair and took the Wall Street Journal to John's desk to wait for him. Ed and Ron both came looking for him, but John didn't turn up until 4:20. Then we sat at a terminal and made changes right on the screen, talked about the summary I had written; he went off to another terminal to format his part while I made the agreed changes in mine. We both messed up the pagination when we shifted to double-spacing, but I won the race because I knew the paper length was 66 lines. We took our printouts, xeroxed four copies and gave one each to Dale and Ed at 5:55. John said pessimistically that there wouldn't be anything left of them after those two had taken their cuts on it. Tomorrow morning all four of us will meet to make the final changes, and Ed has requested a briefing with the Senator for tomorrow or Wednesday.

* * *

February 7, 1985

I work in a white marble castle, spacious and graceful, always fresh and bright -- perpetual daylight and pleasant air. From any of the three entrances one comes into a great lobby, eight stories deep, with large square skylights far above. Smooth marble and glass cliffs rise above the pink marble ground, and lighted offices with people working at desks can be seen.

There are two elevator lobbies, each with six elevators, one marked with an understated sign reserving it for Senators only. Behind each group of elevators is an open curved marble stairway, carpeted with the same toast colored carpeting that covers all the other floors. In the corridors and offices the carpeting is laid in fitted squares, which, with the metal plates underneath, can be lifted out to reveal the sprawling serpents of telephone and computer wires. Each Senator's office is based on an odd numbered floor, and the Senator's own office is two stories high, with outside windows. The remainder of the offices are only one story high, and there is an inside stairway connecting the upper and lower floors.

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Beneath the building are two more levels, labeled G and B. On the B level, both in Hart and Dirksen, which are connected, are all the services that keep the Senate city alive. The Mail area, as big as two football fields, with trucks, carts, wagons, bags and crates of mail, and presently, piles of building materials for renovations in progress in Dirksen; the Senate Document Center -- endless shelves of piles of documents; the Computer Center is mostly software specialists. The Stationary Room is a store for offices and staffers with everything from souvenir Senate ashtrays to leather briefcases, ball-point pens, computer disks, boxed notepaper, etc., all at cost and tax-free. The cafeteria is not as big as the KSU Student Center Cafeteria, but with four lines -- dinners, soup/salad/sandwich, carry-out only and salad bar. Senate Bean Soup is 65¢ (and very good), cheeseburger, fries and a drink, $2.80; portions are generous, hot is hot and cold is cold; trays have the two top corners beveled so that four trays will fit on a square table. There is a smoking side and a non-smoking side; any meal can be carried out, and many people do that.

In the basement there are also a Sundry Shop with candy bars, cigarettes, magazines and greeting cards; a Post Office, a hairdresser, barbershop; an outpost of the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress where staffers can browse, and stations in each Senate building for the subway cars to the Capitol. The cars are little electric trains with six benches for passengers and a driver in the middle who swivels to face whichever way the car is going.

Senate hours are 9 to 6, and most staffers arrive between 8:30 and 9. Everyone must go through security, but staffers can choose not to go through the metal detector. All staff have laminated ID's which are issued with both bead chains and clips; most wear them around their necks. They are generally tastefully dressed, healthy, trim, youthful people behaving decorously, so when one shirt-sleeved young man turns around at the front of a crowded elevator and says "Now here is your standard elevator-threatener. Did you ever notice how people stiffen up when someone doesn't face front in an elevator?" no-one smiles. But no one seems threatened – he has a Senate ID just like all the rest of us.

The first order of business for most people is coffee and newspapers. Every suite has a kitchenette on each floor with coffee makers and refrigerators. The Washington Post and Washington Times are there when we arrive; the New York Times and Wall Street Journal arrive before 9:30. Ohio papers get there several days late (except for the Plain Dealer, which comes in the same afternoon). We rely on clippings by telecopier from Columbus and Cleveland. The Senator's schedule for the day is xeroxed and distributed to the Leg. Aides and press desk.

People cluster and talk sports, family, what's on their desks, what the Senator said or didn't say, what 'hits' we got in the papers. Letters arrive – 'Dear Colleague' letters from other Senators asking for co-sponsorships, letters from constituents, requests for services or information – and are distributed to correspondents or aides to answer. The ones that come to me are mostly requests for congratulatory letters for VIPs. (I made the mistake of writing a good one the first
time, I guess.) The activity I see people doing is writing, at typewriters, computer terminals, or by hand on yellow legal pads. Everybody writes -- letters, statements, memos, briefing notes.

The second most frequent activity is telephoning. At this time I don't have much sense of what phone calls are about. The rest of the time is spent in talking – on issues, around issues, or in the playful talk of sports, jokes, and storytelling – none of it trivial, little of it serious. These conversations take place at desks, around the copier or coffee-maker. Only the Senator, the Administrative Assistant (Kathy), the Domestic Policy Advisor (Ed) and Press Secretary (Dale) have offices with doors that close.

Coming from academia I keep being amazed by the availability of materials and services – two closets full of notepads, pens, pencils, mailing labels, paper, tape, staplers, paper clips, ribbons. There are two photocopy machines in good working order, telephones on every desk, with WATS lines; Selectric typewriters, CRS materials, several computer terminals. I am also amazed that the people who work here think this is the way the world is. Government employees are competent, dedicated and hard-working -- they know what they are doing and why it is important.

In the Glenn office everyone is bright, articulate, friendly, well-educated, and middle class. There are more men than women, perhaps 10% are black, 2% oriental. There are very few overweight women (and they are mostly younger, whereas the overweight men tend to be older). Senators have higher status than Representatives, but there doesn't seem to be much difference between House and Senate staffers. There seems to be little social life after office hours – people live scattered all over metropolitan area. Office celebrations are frequent, mostly birthdays, with cake or pastries and coffee.

I go to work about 8:30 and get home about 6:30. Most evenings I spend about 3 hours writing to my friends, and usually have things to finish on Saturday mornings. I try to get in another 8 hours of writing on weekends, and a museum or concert. In order to get tickets to the Library of Congress chamber music concerts (right around the corner for me) I would have to go downtown on Monday morning, which of course I cannot do.

The weather has been colder than I anticipated. Though there are pleasant places to walk around Capitol Hill, it's not much like running or skiing on the hiking trail beside the Cuyahoga River. Grocery stores on the Hill are sparse, have limited selections and high prices. I miss Kent, my friends and my house a lot.

* * *

February 9, 1985

I get a little wedge of second-hand sun about 10:15AM when the sun strikes the bathroom window
and reflects into my room, lighting my desk and computer keyboard. Later there will be a slice of
direct sun leaning in on the desk for an hour, then the cheerless brightness of winter day until night
comes, and the dark is thinned by a the sodium-vapor lamp in the alley.

I always expect that people will see the world not quite as I do, and I am certainly as aware as
anyone of my own idiosyncratic little convictions, tools and scripts for holding the world together.
What I never expected was how much those convictions, tools and scripts depend on familiar air,
sights, sounds, silences, on known voices, walking-places and resting-places, on things that fit my
hands and grasp, and on the reliable pleasures of paw, fur and gentle eyes. Neither did I think that
I was so bound by the rhythm of my activities – the alternation of reading with experience, writing
and reflecting on it. But all these dislocations came together last week in what I can only call
homesickness. It didn't help any that the furnace back home broke down and ran out of oil, and
Seth and I together did not have enough money to pay for fixing it. Nor was I helped by the very
busy week, with an added 4 hours in the office Wednesday evening for the State of the Union
address.

By Friday evening I was dead tired and too tense to rest. I lay on my bed and listened to the
Beaux Arts Trio playing Beethoven at the Library of Congress (not two blocks away, but I had no
ticket). When it was over I cried myself to sleep. Saturday was worse, because I was physically
exhausted and the old ‘ache-all-over’ problem I have had came back.

But I went over to the Madison Building to read newspapers for the Senator’s trip back to Ohio next
week. Then I walked over to the Safeway for some breakfast supplies. I could hardly stand when I
got back but patched myself together with aspirin and hot chocolate, and worked a couple of hours
for Betty.

It was a cold, pretty day, and I thought a little run down to the Reflecting Pool in front of the Capitol
might relax me, or maybe get those magical juices running in my brain. It didn’t work – a
bright-eyed bird (rather like a catbird) who watched me as I watched him brought tears, and
tiredness overtook my legs before I got down the hill. I walked back to my room to try “Prairie
Home Companion”, but it only made me realize how homesick I was.

I spent a bad night. I just couldn’t sleep with the idea that I must get a permanent job here and
give up the hope of returning home this summer. I was afraid I wouldn't even be able to come
back to Washington after being home next weekend. It wasn't until I started this letter that I
realized that part of the problem was that I had not written anything this week except a piece of
boilerplate, the purpose of which was to conceal the political agenda of a Senator's office.
So I am resolved to do better. I went to Meeting at William Penn House, which I like better than
the Florida Ave. Meeting, went to the office to help Dale get the final Meese’s Pieces – Floor
statement, Press statement, and Press Release – ready for Monday morning, and then down to
the National Gallery until the aspirin wore off and I had to come home.
Why do I find Rodin so overheated and grubby? I only stood about 10 minutes of him before I had to go off in search of the Chinese porcelains to wash off. They are fine – wonderful glazes like sky, like flesh; honest difficulties and graces in the birds and trees, and a freshness untroubled by any ideals of Great Art. The Audubon Birds are quite impressive, even allowing for the fancy of the artist. One of the paintings, showing quail attacked by a hawk had a note that said that the artist had been criticized for the anthropomorphic expressions of the quail. One wonders what expressions they should have had when seen by an anthropo – after all, I don't suppose a live bird would recognize a picture of another bird, even one of its own species, even drawn by the famous Audubon. What curious ideas we have about ourselves and the arts that amuse us. On the way out of the building I stopped to look at an exquisite unintentional sculpture -- a squirrel poised, one paw against its white breast, on the edge of a plastic bag lined trash can, breathing and quivering a little, but unmoving, regarding me coolly. Maybe it was a permanent exhibit – when I looked back across the water jets it was still there, still in the same position.

I read an entertaining article in the February Atlantic about economics, with some pretty damaging remarks about the unrealistic "ceremonial models" used by that strange tribe of men (I am proud to say that most women don't take economics seriously) to describe the world. Pity someone doesn't take on Weinberger and the Pentagon. The ceremonial models by which they determine that security or deterrence requires $X billion, and no less, are just as insubstantial, circumstantial and mythological as the economic ones, and their faith that these determinations are fact would be awe-inspiring (or risible, or both) if it were not so frightening. We are, after all, not much advanced beyond the savagery of Europe in the 13th to 17th centuries, when an accusation of witchcraft was sufficient grounds for torture and execution. English law that required evidence of wrongdoing or damage prevented much of this in England and America. (There were lapses, but the total numbers of witches executed in England and the colonies was only a fraction of those in Europe.) The Pentagon need only say that the Soviets have p missiles, q capability and r intention, therefore we need y systems at x dollars to be able to kill z Russians. It is not really different from the Nazis saying that the Jews had p resources, q abilities and r intentions, and therefore they needed y solution at x cost to kill z Jews. I am not opposed to myths or self-maintaining systems (I am one of the latter myself) but I have a lot of trouble with systems that maintain themselves on the lives of others.

There is another self-maintaining system here that bemuses me -- the snake-swallowing-its-own-tail of Congressional offices, press secretaries and reporters and newspapers. The first thing that Congress-people and staffers do every morning is read the newspapers: Washington Post, New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, and the clips from the home state papers. If it doesn't get in the Big Three papers it can be ignored – and essentially didn't happen. Every action taken by a Representative or Senator is informed -- in fact managed -- by considerations of how it will read in the papers. I have no doubt that the news appearing in the papers is managed with an equal awareness of the effect that a particular presentation will have on legislators. I don't suppose that the calculations of either group are very accurate – there is a lot of slippage, for which we must be
suitably grateful. And the other mitigating factor is that no-one (with the possible exception of Ronnie Reagan) seems to have any sort of Grand Plan or even a well-thought-out agenda. Everyone is swatting the mosquitos that bite them, and no-one is draining the swamp.

I watched and heard John Glenn speak on national TV (McNeil-Lehrer) words I had written about the Meese confirmation. Although the four of us who worked on the statement worked hard to convince Glenn that he should oppose Meese, most of the convincing we had to do was of the necessity of making an early public statement, not of Meese's unworthiness.

* * *

WETA is not an unmixed blessing. They offer much more variety than WKSU or WCLV, they do not have the offensive "made possible in part by a grant from Sleaze Associates, purveyors of selected swamp properties to the discriminating buyer ..." announcements, but they occasionally commit atrocities like Respighi's Birds performed by a koto ensemble. (We spend 200 years getting out from under the harpsichord, only to revert to this?) They also dig up specimens that I am collecting into a list of Truly Tiresome Pieces -- like Max Reger's Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Mozart.

* * *

February 11, 1985

My words! On national TV, in the major papers, in the Congressional Record. (next week) Of course I didn't write all of them – or even most of them, but I did write about half of what McNeil-Lehrer used in their news brief. There were four of us who worked for two weeks on the Meese statement: Ed, Dale, John (the Leg. Aide in the area of Justice, Civil Rights, Law Enforcement) and me. John and I attended some of the hearings of the Judiciary Committee; John had been through last year's hearings and had no patience with Meese's bungling: "He's a crook."

I was surprised and dismayed at how dull and spiritless Meese was – he seemed to have no remorse, no sense of having done wrong, or even of having been wronged, no eagerness to do better or enthusiasm for the job, only a sort of dogged determination to stay out of trouble by following the rules and listening to his advisers.

There was no doubt that we all opposed Meese, and we all wrote drafts with the intent of making it clear to the Senator and the public that Meese should not be confirmed. We wrote, talked, rewrote, talked more, rewrote each other's' statements, and finally Ed took all the drafts and worked them into a single statement. Dale rewrote that, and I wrote another paragraph I thought was needed that said what an Attorney General should be. I said we didn't need an ethically pure computer, but a human being who...Ed and Dale didn't like the computer – it was replaced with "a Superman, a Solomon or a saint". But they did like the rest of it and with some minor
modifications ('human imperfection' instead 'human fallibility') it was what you heard on the news Monday night.

After the Senator agreed to the statement last Wednesday, a press conference about the Meese appointment was announced for Monday at 11AM. We were all enjoined to secrecy – if word leaked out that Glenn was going to reject Meese and it got to the media, no-one would come to the press conference, and the statement would lose its punch. I was a little skeptical – surely the press corps would be canny enough to know that Glenn wouldn't call a press conference to announce he was going to vote for Meese.

* * *

Friday it was learned that Glenn had got the seat on the Armed Services Committee that he had been working for. There were press calls all afternoon who hoped also to get a hint of what the Senator would say about Meese. There was still work to do on the ‘Meese’s Pieces’. The original was in the form of a Floor statement: full of phrases like ‘Mr. President....”, ”Colleagues”, ”We, as Senators...” which had to be taken out of the Press Release text, and a short version had to be prepared for the Senator to read at the Press Conference, because the Floor statement was five pages single-spaced. I did the first cutting, Dale did the final short version, five double-spaced pages. I also did the final cleanup of the full text, including some last minute changes. Then I made a press release version, formatting it on the computer in proper style, but I fell back on a scissors-edit to put it on a Press Release heading instead of trying to figure out how to get the computer to do it.

The briefing on Meese was scheduled for 1:30PM Wednesday. John and I were already, but Dale said wait – the Senator would read the statement before we would go in. Then Diane (the keeper of the Senator’s tall door) said we should go in. Dale had in the meantime disappeared and Ed was nowhere in sight. John and I went in and sat down in the chairs opposite the desk; the Senator continued to read, Dale came in and sat on a chair to our left. Ed followed and draped his long frame over a couch just behind Dale. All four men wore red neckties with blue spots or gold spots -- different shades of red, different spots, but definitely representing a common sense of correctness.

The Senator started with a mild statement: "I swore I'd never oppose another presidential appointment ... but it's a good statement, an excellent statement. ... Have we been getting much mail on this?"

"Not a lot here," confesses John; but "the Ohio papers have" offers Dale.

"More letters," the Senator asks gloomily, "than there are against seal-bangers?"

No. "The average voter doesn't care about Meese."
"Is Meese a seal-banger?" -- there is a twinkle in Glenn's eye. We banter a while about seal-bangers, then: "How does it look on our side of the aisle?"

The Senator picks up the phone and says "Senator Cranston, please...This is John Glenn, is Senator Cranston there?" He asks if the 'traps are out yet'. After he hangs up he says "Not much news...Inouye will confirm, no other announcements ..."

Glenn still hesitates – he thinks the President should have his man, just wishes he'd chosen someone else.

"But," he looks again at our statement, "I just don't want to see this kind of person as Attorney General. So, okay, I'll go with it."

John and I leave; John is not happy, feels that the Senator wasn't agreeing for the right reasons, didn't really understand why Meese was so unacceptable. (Later he will admit that we got pretty good support after all.) I wondered if I did it right in the Senator's office. I tried to say one thing, and got interrupted as if what I was saying were not germane.

Dale and I did the final statements Sunday afternoon (although there were a couple of sentences added in the briefing just before) the Press Conference. This morning Alina telecopied the Press Release to Columbus and Cleveland, and asked me to take it down to the Senate Copy Center on the 2nd floor and get 100 copies.

The Copy Center has eight copy machines that any Senate staffer can use, and one giant machine, about four feet high and six feet long. The operator put the 5 pages in a space at the left end, added a whole ream of paper, punched buttons: one side, 5 pages, collate, staple, 100 copies, stack even, start. The pages flicked, the light flashed, new pages whished into a rack at the right a staples cut from a roll of wire, fashioned and placed, and a finished copy dropped in the rack every four seconds. They were still hot when I got back up to the 5th floor...

At 10:25 Alina and I went over to the hearing room in Dirkson where the Press Conference was to take place. There were already four TV cameras in place and a small bouquet of microphones on the lectern. Cameramen wore sweaters and jeans, the reporters wore tweeds; all had green ID tags around their necks. There were toolboxes, handcarts, cables, power-packs, cassette boxes, microphones, earphones, lights, rolls of duct-tape. Alina moved the flag from behind the desk to a place just behind where the Senator will stand. The camera crews talk shop: "They did the whole 60 Minutes with those babies ...they can sync them up without any problems ...this one is a stop and a half slower...you'll like the new Sony..."

Alina doesn't want to give out the statements too early -- they might read them and leave, she says. But by a quarter til the hour reporters are asking for them, then sitting down at the long
tables reading them and marking them. Some ask apprehensively if the Senator is going to read the whole thing and are reassured. Dale, Ed and other people from Glenn's staff arrive and Dale tells me to give the cameramen copies of the shorter speech version: "They'll need it to plan their shots."

Finally the room is nearly full. There are five TV cameras and the cluster of microphones is nearing 20. Glenn comes through the door behind the desk, comes around it to the lectern and begins: "I've called this press conference..." He reads carefully in what seems to be a not very assertive voice. He sounds serious, convinced and unconcerned.

The questions are very mild: "How active will you be in persuading your colleagues?" "How many others will vote no?" "Have there been calls from the Administration pressuring Senators to confirm Meese?" "What do you think of the professional qualifications of Meese?" "What does the Meese nomination say about the quality of candidates the President puts forward?" "Is this a Democratic Caucus issue?"

His answers are equally mild, but firm. "I will work hard." "I don't know." "I have heard of calls but I haven't received any." "Better than his ethical qualifications." "It doesn't speak well for the administration." "No."

Then he says "I may be on the losing side, but I think we could have a better man." He repeats that he is sympathetic to Meese and the President's wish to have his choice, but he feels it is his duty and responsibility to advise and not consent to an appointment he feels is wrong.

One of the senior reporters says "Thank you very much, Senator Glenn," and it is over. A few reporters gather around him to ask him about the Armed Services Committee. Another asks about a missile that flies very low. Glenn says "No, it wouldn't work. You have to remember that the earth is round..." and he makes hand gestures to show the problem. Suddenly we remember that John Glenn has seen the Earth as we see a globe.

Alina and I walked back to the office with Glenn. I commented on the mildness of the questions and the lack of interest. The Ohio press corps is not very sharp, it is suggested. Sometimes the White House sends their own people over to ask hard questions, but there was only one reporter who seemed very hostile – "back on my left side" – but no one could recall what question he had asked.

Dale met us at the office door and said that someone had asked him what was in it for the Senator to oppose Meese. Dale said he had replied "Nothing. The Senator has nothing to gain by doing this." I said yes, he did -- he gained a voice for justice for the people -- but my words got lost in the melee. A little later Ed teased me, by way of praise, I think, about hearing my words on TV, and Dale came to me and thanked me for my work on the statement.
There is a spider in my room. It comforts me unreasonably, because it is the only other living thing here. It lives mostly on the east wall, in the corner of the ceiling, occasionally coming down to my tray of cups and water-pitcher to see what the warmth is. It is a pale, soft-bodied creature, rather shy, and not demanding much. Sometimes I see a dirty streetwise black-and-white cat come into the alley. It is not friendly and will not be approached, and I have nothing to feed it.

I budget $2.50 a day for lunch, but try to spend less, so I can buy stamps, and an occasional book. A cheeseburger and bowl of soup is $2.40, and with that I can get through the afternoon pretty well. On soup and coffee (95¢) I get very hungry, because I have only cereal with wheat-germ for breakfast. My favorite supper is broccoli with cheese, two pieces of bread and margarine, and an apple. I don't dare spend more than $25 a week on food, supplies and recreation. My rent is more than a third of my take-home pay, and I haven't yet been able to send Seth the $200 he needs to keep the house running. He paid for the furnace repair, and he has been going hungry, too.

I suppose being hungry has been part of my homesickness; that, and not having the TLS (which hasn't caught up to my change of address) or anything much to read. I am going home tomorrow on the bus (the ride with Sandy Eckart didn't work out) This afternoon I went over to Troyers bookstore on Pennsylvania Avenue to find something to read, because I knew that with nothing to think about on the bus I would feel more homesick. I leave here at 8AM and get into Kent at 6:30PM. Seth says there is a lot of snow and the university has been closed for several days.

February 21, 1985

"I call on all of us to stay here all night, or all weekend if necessary, and keep this before us until it's dealt with. Meese will have to wait ...Let's get something going for the American farmer. Let's get out the cots and sleeping bags ...."

The speaker is a Senator I don't recognize, and there is not another Senator to be seen, except the presiding Senator, who is reading, not listening. The pages sit and fidget with fingers or locks of hair. Joel and I hurried over at 5:30 because there was an emergency Democratic caucus called at 4:30, and all the staffers believed that a compromise farm bail-out had been reached and would be acted on, with the Meese confirmation following immediately.

At 5:30 the recess for the caucus was extended until 6:15. At 6:15 the Senate went back into session with only a handful of Republican Senators present. Barry Goldwater read a long speech about the communist threat if we didn't pass the President's budget. I kept remembering Abelson's 'Ideology Machine', a computer program that could write plausible Goldwater speeches.
After Goldwater, Strom Thurmond, who had been wandering about the floor, returned to his desk and said ‘Me, too’ at some length, *extempore*. Another Senator read a long harangue saying that we’d never get good men into government because of the way all those dreadful Senators treated Meese. Senator Mathias countered with a dignified, if somewhat tortuous, defense of Meese, to the effect that Meese would be all right as Attorney General because the Senate had made very clear to him what his duty would be once confirmed, and though he would vote for Meese, he respected his colleagues who felt they could not confirm him.

After that all the Republicans disappeared; there was a Quorum Call that only got as far as the ‘B’s and was interrupted. Thurmond continued to circulate, Kennedy walked through, Glenn came in one door and went out another, Metzenbaum walked to his desk, then turned around and went out. A Democrat (I think it was Exon) started talking about the urgency of the farm crisis, then another Quorum Call, which went nowhere.

A Democrat rose to ask "Why isn't anything being done?" [to save the family farm] ... "You might think that since I voted against Mr. Meese in the Judiciary Committee that I am speaking now to delay his confirmation. No, Mr. President..." Mr. President was still not listening, and no one else was there. It was 7:45 and I seriously doubted that there would be any further action.

I left then and went down to the subway. The cars were running, about one passenger each, mostly going back to the office buildings. Glenn was in his office, preparing for an interview. It had been an anxious day for Dale. He had been working to get Glenn’s name in the national press, and had got a promise from Ken at the Washington Post that if the Senate had not confirmed Meese by recess Wednesday night (yesterday) the Post would carry Glenn’s (i.e.: our) Meese statement as an op-ed. The Senate had recessed at 7:15 Wednesday evening, but Glenn’s article wasn’t in this morning's Post and Dale was angry, frustrated and gloomy. It was mid-afternoon by the time he located Ken, only to have Ken apologize and say that they goofed. It would run tomorrow, he promised, unless the vote came yet today. (There would be no point in running it after the confirmation.)

The Senate has its own protocols, scripts, rhythms and folkways. Senators operate from absolute security. They may lose the next election, but while they are Senators they can do as they please (though there is a story that John Glenn was once ordered not to roller-skate in the halls of the Dirksen Building) and every statement and action will be taken seriously, (or not) according to tacit rules kept in place by hundreds of traditions and habits. Old timers like Strom Thurmond move very easily, but I suspect that it is less that they "know the ropes" than that the ropes know them, and they cannot do anything unexpected. Given the resources available to Senators (staffs, Library of Congress and Congressional Research Service, personal services and amenities) one might expect a high level of discourse and decorum, a broad tolerance for diversity, a high sense of honor, or at the very least a paternalistic sense of pity (if not true compassion) for those less fortunate than they are. It is not immediately evident from the Gallery.
Sunday night. After four days of desultory filibuster they confirmed Meese and got on with the farm-credit problem. It is tempting to be cynical about the Meese vote. Of all the appointments that the Senate confirms, the Attorney General is the only one in which the person appointed might take action against a Senator. I'm sorry that I think that most of the Senators have done very much the same sorts of shabby things Meese did, and didn't want to be on record as opposing him, because "not a crook" is good enough for voters, usually. So the only ones who could oppose Meese were people like John Glenn, who has been quite honest and forthright.

But it is sobering to walk through marble halls, under crystal chandeliers, past bronze statues; to sit beside damask covered walls beneath molded ceilings; to see everywhere the Federal eagle wings spread, eye bright, made of brass, marble or gilded wood, and hear only the cooing of pigeons and squabbling of sparrows that live around the dome of the Capitol.

John got hold of a videotape of "The Silent Scream." "We need to preview it," said John, "so we can recommend that the Senator see it, or not see it, and so when people write in and ask, we can say "yes, it should be shown in schools" or "no, it should not" ..."

And so John, (judiciary) Josh (health), Joel (education) and I rode the cars over to the Capitol. The Senate Recording Studio is in the basement of the Senate side, a whole warren of sound-insulated booths and studios, and a small theater with about 25 comfortable chairs, velvet curtains, a screen and a large TV monitor. We settled in and the attendant ran the tape for us.

The movie is a rather lame theater-piece masquerading as a documentary. It is shockingly bad science and depressingly bad language. Only an already convinced true believer could swallow the narrator's assertion that the blur of black and grey streaks on a TV monitor represented the "screaming" of a fetus. (I wasn't even convinced we were looking at a fetus being aborted -- it looked more like a radar weather map to me.)

But finally I found it morally lacking. The viewer is offered no hope, no means to take action personally to prevent the badness of abortion. It is tantamount to showing student drivers movies of people being scraped off highways without the redeeming message that wearing a seat belt can keep that from happening to you. The agenda of the makers of the movie is apparently to persuade people to go lobby their Congressmen for an anti-abortion law. I rather doubt that that will happen.

Some of the things I do are...er...improbable. Tomorrow first thing I have to write "What My Mother Meant To Me In Getting Where I Am Today" (capitals in original). Not, of course, my mother – John Glenn's mother. Sigh.

It has been hot this weekend. I went to the National Zoo on Saturday, which entails the longest
escalator ride I have ever had -- two and a half minutes. Once you have started your descent your principal reference is the plane of the railings, the ceiling and the flat surface between the two escalators, so that the people coming up on the other side are all leaning forward, neatly parallel and sober, but slanted.

The zoo was filled with wildlife, mostly toddlers amusing themselves with pebbles and bright bits of chewing gum picked up from the edges of the paths, or sleeping in their strollers while their parents looked at the animals. There were tiny pretty deer grazing over dead grass; a female elephant held a length of tree trunk, worn quite smooth at one end, in her trunk and rubbed it repeatedly with the side of her face, sparrows slipped deftly in and out of the aviaries, the pandas lolled becomingly and munched bamboo and apples. There were hordes of people and it was hard to find a place to sit on a bench. I started home early, but even so I had to stand in line 10 minutes to get a fare card. I resisted the temptation to get an ice cream cone -- $1.80 to get there and back was enough of an indulgence for one day.

* * *

February 25, 1985

It is getting harder to do this. My little TV is fading fast -- diagonal stripes ride sedately up the screen, crossing a horizontal set hurrying downward. I can barely read the screen, and that only because I still have some grasp of what I am writing. What you see will be fading, too, because I need a new printer ribbon, which is approximately $22 distant.

The first few weeks I was here I went to the cafeteria and bravely started talking to strangers, who were polite, even friendly. Only rarely was I able to join people I knew from the Glenn office. After six weeks no-one comes to me and says "When are you going down to lunch?" or hails me from a table on the non-smoking side. They aren't hostile, just pre-occupied. Their jobs are demanding and they demand a high level of performance of themselves, and there isn't much left for anything else. Most of the staffers are married or have partners; most of the women sustain themselves by dressing well -- shopping and choosing; they read newspapers and glossy magazines (Washington Woman) and talk about restaurants, movies, sports, bargains.

I sat down at lunch last Tuesday with Ed and Dale, who were already halfway through lunch. They were planning a 'roast' for a retiring staff person on the Foreign Affairs Committee that was to take place that evening at a Japanese restaurant. I was sworn to secrecy -- unnecessary, since I was not planning to go because it cost $14 -- almost double my lunch allowance for a week.

I had just returned from Kent (school board meeting Monday night) and Dale asked me when my flight had gotten in. I said I had come back on the bus overnight.
"Do you have some scruples about flying?"

"No, I'm just too poor."

"Well, but you get reimbursed for these trips, don't you."

"Yes, but I don't have up-front money for tickets, and I don't have a Visa or MasterCard."

They changed the subject.

But I can't. It is so difficult. I reach the point where I don't want to talk about it because I'm afraid people will think I am asking for money. So perhaps I shouldn't write this at all, only I feel entitled to record what it is like.

I'm not malnourished, but I'm hungry most of the time. I have coffee and cereal with canned milk for breakfast. Lunch most days is Senate bean soup and a small salad ($1.45) or a couple days a week, soup and a grilled cheese sandwich ($1.50) or soup with an egg salad sandwich ($1.85). For supper bread and cheese or fruit and cheese or sometimes fresh broccoli with cheese. Some days I break down and buy a 35¢ Hershey bar and I frequently catch myself figuring out ways to get an extra donut or piece of cake when someone brings them to the office. I felt guilty about spending $1.80 to go to the zoo recently. I have stopped reading the Weekend section of the Post -- there is no point in knowing about concerts, plays or movies I can't afford to go to anyway. There is just nothing left to live on after I pay the rent and send $250 back to Kent for expenses there each month.

Several weeks ago Betty took me to meet a couple who live ten blocks east, John and Caroline Webber. John is British, a composer and organizer of a tiny orchestra that plays new works by local composers. John plays piano better than I do (which is still not much) but is not really a pianist. They both play flute, and they own a nice cello, though neither of them plays it. After dinner we organized some informal playing – duets, trios and trio sonatas without keyboard and it was surprisingly satisfying musically. It is a nice little cello, well suited to the things we played, and a good full sound all over the range. The bow was mediocre, but baroque music isn't very demanding on bows. Betty fell asleep on the couch and snored gently for the two hours we played.

John Webber is not socially very apt. He was too busy to greet his guests before dinner was ready, left the after-dinner conversation to plod through some Bach inventions at the piano, asked his wife to interrupt what she was doing to fetch something for him, and finally disappeared upstairs without a word. He asked if I would play in his orchestra, offering to pay. I said I would think it over. I don't mind, in principle, but the thought of rehearsing other people's music of unknown quality, or the alternative – not rehearsing it – I found equally unpalatable.
Now I have learned (and perhaps this was Betty's motive in introducing us) that they have a spare room to rent, which I may be able to take April 1. The cost would be much less, and I would have a room and a porch. I could still walk to the Hart Building. I am hopeful that it may work out.

* * *

Now hold on, you! (You know who you are: one of the very few who WRITE BACK to me.) I didn't say Respighi's *The Birds* was a Truly Tiresome Piece, only that performed by a koto ensemble it was. I like *The Birds*. I even like *The Pines of Rome*. I think Respighi is inventive, gracious, lighthearted, and not long-winded, which is more than I can say of a whole lot of Germanic and Slavic composers. Compare, for example, with *Capriccio Italiane*.

And why Vivaldi? My experience has been that wind players and pianists never like Vivaldi, and tend to claim that he wrote the same concerto 400 times. Given that turning out a stream of new concertos for orphan girls was a condition for his writing music at all, I think that he managed it with (as above) inventiveness, grace, lightheartedness and succinctness is quite a feat of creativity. I do agree that Variations are often not very interesting to listen to. The composer has all the fun there, and there are some spectacularly good Variations -- Beethoven, as you mentioned, Brahms and the Rachmaninoff Paganini rhapsody. However, Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Theme Rococo* is a charter member of Truly Tiresome Pieces. (To non-musicians: one advantage of these group letters is that you get to eavesdrop on other conversations.)

I am trying to write about everything that happens around me in Washington. My past experience at journal-keeping in the past has been helpful -- mostly the catalog-of-events lists. I try to sketch some scenes in words, but I have not tried drawings -- it seems inappropriate among colleagues in a Senate office. Yet it is the little details or snatches of conversations or snapshots of the surroundings that make the best stories.

The other thing I miss is the matrix of current reading that always informs my perceptions. Now that my TLS subscription has caught up with me that is somewhat relieved, though I got an anxiety attack when the renewal notice arrived. It isn't due until the end of March, but it's a lot of money -- $70 -- and I can't live without it. If it is any comfort to you (O responder to my letters) I find 90% of my writing pretty mundane, too, but I like it anyway.

* * *

Philosopher's Corner. I keep being puzzled by the arrogance of successful men who write books or have political power and think they know the way the world is. Take the Supreme Court decision today that gives the accused the right to a psychiatrist for his or her defense. Why not a priest, witch-doctor or astrologer? Courts are supposed to decide whether a defendant broke the law or not, and I don't see how a psychiatrist can help do that. Even if I believed (and I don't) psychiatrists could do anything beyond manipulating accepted myths about human behavior, I don't think they have anything to contribute to determining whether someone did some action or not. Psychiatrists might collectively work for better rehabilitation of those convicted, or more humane treatment for the mentally ill, but they mostly don't.
Now comes (as they say in legal briefs) Solzhenitsyn with his ‘freedom in a democracy is given an individual conditional upon his [sic] religious responsibility to a Supreme Complete Entity’. (I think that's a fair paraphrase.) How does he know? Since when do we have to have a S-C-E out there? But Solzhenitsyn comes close enough to be tantalizing. Try this: freedom is given to an individual conditional on that person having a moral center – a personal set of beliefs and values for his or her own life and for all life: society and Nature, now and in the future, regardless of any theology or S-C-E. And paradoxically, a person who has such a moral center is free, even in repressive political systems, and one who is denied the opportunity to develop and display a moral center is not free, even in a free country. This is why free secular public schools are so important, and why Marxism cannot produce a society of free people: the moral center of communism is not in the individual but in one or another collective. This is also why we must prevent the imposition of a sectarian moral decision about abortion on women.

* * *

27 February 1985

Ed usually brings the agendas around about 15 minutes before the Legislative staff meetings. It is a skeleton list of who will talk about what. We gather in the conference room, which seats about 12 people; latecomers have to stand.

This week's meeting was different because both Ed and Dale have stopped smoking. Ed has a behavior-modification theory to assist him; Dale chews on a brownish lump that looks like a cigar stump. Pre-meeting talk is all about the Grammy Awards:

"Tina Turner got everything."

"Well I don't like her music"

"Did Bruce Springsteen get anything?"

"Yeah -- best album"

Ed takes over and says that Dale wants to be first; "I'll make this quick," says Dale, "The Senator, as I guess you know, is going to Cincinnati on Friday. There will be a 10 minute press conference on Ethiopia when he gets off the plane. For those of you who don't know, this black pharmacist, Bob Valentine, spearheaded a movement that got 6,000,000 pounds of medical supplies for Ethiopia. He's going with doctors and a lot of others -- Valentine, that is, -- first to Rome and then to Ethiopia. How we got involved was ....Ernestine got their visas. Then the Senator goes to the nuclear arms plant at Fernald. There has been some release of radioactive materials there. He'll announce four initiatives, two of them proposed legislation, done by Len. The third one -- plans
aren't quite complete yet on this one – is a visit to Keystone General. The Senator -- that is, Phil --
got a defense contract that probably kept them from going under."

"The second big thing, I guess most of you know that Alina getting married and going back to Ohio
to...to...(Ron: "marital bliss")...yeah, to marital bliss [embarrassed grin]. Anyway, starting next
week, Marty will be here – she worked in Rep. Jerry Patterson’s office and on the Glenn campaign.
I think she has strengths where I'm not so good and it will work out well."

Ed: What about the next newsletter?

Dale: April.

Ed: But...

Dale: This one won't take so long because we know what we're doing.

Ed: [looks skeptical]

Dale: We've done really well with the Meese op-ed. The PD ran it, and we're getting a lot of mail
in support of the Senator on this. How much, John?

John: A lot. Even California. From all over.

Dale. We're getting to them. Let's keep it up. Start thinking: Press. Glenn seized this and got a
good ride.

John: Well, it worked because of the respect the Senator has.

Dale has to leave; some parting shots are taken at him: "Sew some buttons on that shirt or get rid
of it." "He's had that shirt for years." Dale leaves, his cigar stump still in the corner of his mouth.

Kathy and Mary Jane tell us about the retreat they attended last weekend, the Democratic
Campaign Weekend, designed, they said, to scare Democratic Senators facing re-election in ‘86.
Kathy is the AA (Administrative Assistant, and highest ranking staff member in the office.) She is a
fair-haired, well-proportioned woman in her mid-30s. She wore a black knit pant-suit with a
cardigan jacket with silver buttons, and a purple cowl-neck jersey. "And it worked," she said,
"Senator and Mrs. Long decided not to run in '86. The theme of the conference was that ‘86 was
going to be worse than '84 for negative campaign practices.

Mary Jane: I can't accept that negative campaign tactics are necessary.

Ed: Why do they think they are?
MJ: It works. Some of the Senators tried to avoid them -- and not attack opponents -- and they kept going down in the polls, and then when they changed tactics they bottomed out and made a comeback.

MJ held the floor for a long time, telling stories about Hunt – his committee was all New Yorkers: Bill Bradley – we'll have a copy of that tape for the next meeting: Carl Levin – he ran a picture of his opponent in a Toyota plant.

Kathy said that pollsters report that (1) People don't like negative ads and (2) they believe them. She also said that pollsters don't want to give away secrets. One pollster – (Dottie Lynch) said a priority of senators in the next election should be work-training for young women, which aroused the ire of Glenn: "Say that in Youngstown."

MJ puffed out her cheeks and did an imitation of Fritz Hollings: "Well hell, John, let me tell you about yer race. Hell, you ain't got any problem. Yer best asset's yer wife Annie. Trouble is, people think yer ass is up on your shoulder. Have Annie send out potholders."

Finally, they quote figures. The average expenditure for running for Senator in 1980 was $1.8 million; in '84, $2.9 million; projected for '86, $3.5 million. MJ says that campaigning is now a market for consultants, and they bring negative campaigning; they only want to win for notches on their belts. If we had free media coverage it would be a battle for press secretaries; with paid media it's a battle of consultants.

We finally return to business: we have to get someone to do research on our own voting record, and do it early; we should hire a campaign manager and fundraiser yesterday. But Kathy is interviewing someone today, and they should have some decisions by next week.

There followed a discussion of the merits and dangers of the Democratic Leadership Caucus – fears that Robb and Gephardt were using it for their own agendas (presidential aspirations), fears that the Democratic Party will self-destruct, because "...everyone who is in position to do so has his own agenda"

Ed: Is the same thing happening to the Republicans?

MJ: Not really. They have a figurehead in the President.

More talk about possible campaign leaders for the Senator -- Peter Hart, George Jenkins, Cannell.

Finally we move on to the rest of the agenda. Celia presents the 'top ten', which is the three items that received the most mail in the preceding week, and how many letters went out in response to them. The top ten this week were farm-credit crisis, budget deficit, taxes. Ed reported that the tax and budget letters had been redone and that the turnaround time for Dear Colleagues was still two and a half weeks -- "and be sure you give me a copy." John had redone the issues clarification list
again (tells who handles which issues). Dan spoke in defense of Mary Ellen, the new Leg.
secretary: "We need your acronyms now and Mary Ellen needs hard copy of everything you send
out, because if you alter it to use again, the original is lost [in the computer file]. And if Mary Ellen
is too busy to do anything for you, that's me talking – I'm seeing to it that she has a chance to do
what she's hired to do. (Mary Ellen is sitting right across from me.)

Ed: "We need the master-file for the justification of votes." He goes on to say that the budget
briefs were of varying quality, and distributes a chart comparing Reagan's budget with the one
developed by the staff for Glenn. No-one proposed lower budgets than Reagan's, except for
Defense. Then there was discussion of the farm-credit amendment to the African Relief bill
currently on the floor. Dole is trying to set agenda, trying for control. "They had the votes for
Zorinsky [amendment] yesterday and Dole switched."

It is Carl's turn: "I've got an 8-page memo here," he begins. But he never glances at his notes and
gives a concentrated and incisive rundown: "The credit system is in much worse shape than the
farmers. The farmers are going to survive. Not more than 5% of the farmers are going to go under.
But the banks and the whole credit system is in serious trouble. Thirty percent of $175 billion in
debt may be bad. That's way more than the Continental Bank had. Some regional banks may
-crash -- it's the third crisis in 10 years, and there's the foreign debt crisis breathing down our necks.
But what's really scary is what happens when oil goes below $20 a barrel. There's only one
outcome-- depression. ....Zorinsky? It's a bank bailout."

Ed: Are bankers the dumbest people in the world?

(Several other make nominations for that honor.) Carl is undaunted "It's a rural, natural-resources
credit crisis. With oil prices declining it's hard to tell how bad it will be, and when."

Ed: OK. That's pretty upbeat there. What else?

Ron: Death benefits are up again. ACC and SAVE.

Ed: Are they in your budget?

Ron: No, it's not cranked in – we don't want to let existing programs go until we're sure they can't
be saved.

There were a few more items -- Celia said they were looking for another secretary for the AA.
Kathleen couldn't do both the Ohio scheduling and be the AA's secretary. We need someone who
can type 85 wpm and won't turn into a LC (Legislative Correspondent) after three months. By then
most of the staffers had slipped out – there are letters to answer, phone calls to make, Dear
Colleagues to write.

* * *

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MARCH 1985

Monday, March 3, 1985

Phyllis Schlafly wore a red dress, elegantly fitted, with a shawl collar finely drawn into a V in the flat place between her breasts, a string of small discreet pearls and larger pearl earrings, her hair satiny and rigid like spun sugar, her voice harsh and determined:

"....the arrogance of a school setting itself up to impose values on children...."

128 Dirksen; a briefing on the Hatch regulations sponsored by the Eagle Forum. They had coffee and danish pastry, a table by the door, as usual, with a sign-up sheet and handouts – including a free copy of “Child Abuse in the Classroom.” (cover: small print: ‘Excerpts from’; large bold type: OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS.)

There were a fair number of staffers there, a couple of nuns, a mother with a toddler carrying two teddy bears. (I wondered if Bennett thinks the kid should divest itself of the luxury bear.) Mostly the audience was pale, slightly funny-looking people who didn't smile.

I arrived just as the questions from the audience began and the moderator said that because Monica Harrison of the Department of Education needed to leave shortly, they would take questions addressed to her first, and would questioners please identify themselves.

Ms. Harrison was scarcely given the opportunity to answer, however. Mr. Lawrence, a "Maryland Concerned Parent” on the panel took it upon himself to answer for her, until one irritated staffer shouted him down: "Could I have Monica answer this, please?"

The staffers all identified themselves, most of the "public" did not. They told the same stories, repeatedly (even in the 45 minutes I was there) and they were the same stories that were told in excerpts from “Child Abuse in the Classroom.” But the most impressive (and depressing) thing was that the questions were never substantively answered. A question about what constituted Federal funding would trigger a rerun of the loop with the gospel according to Schlafly, (to be found on page 24 of the book). Efforts to get more information, probe or interpret were futile. Schlafly is hung up on "psychiatric testing' and 'values manipulation’. I don't know where her notion of psychiatry is coming from, but I doubt that any psychiatrist would recognize it (except as a neurosis or phobia).

I finally left, lest I say something rude. The people there seemed to have such narrow horizons, such limited experience, such mindless assurance that they are right and that anyone who doesn't see things as they do has horns and a tail. And the old saw about political scientists who think that 'data' is the plural of 'anecdote' describes them exactly. The unshakeableness of their beliefs would be admirable if there were not such hatred behind it. And arrogance?
...the arrogance of the Eagle Forum in setting itself up to impose values on children ...

I can't say I wasn't warned, by the crow who lives on the steeple of the African Church. The crow was breakfasting in a silvery-grey beech tree on the grounds of the Supreme Court, and cawed at me in notes of blistering scorn as I jogged by about 7:15AM Saturday morning. I ran across the street anyway, and on the other side scuffed the sole of my right sneaker on a bit of broken pavement and went sprawling. I tore the left knee of my only corduroy pants and a good bit of my knee under it. Luckily I was wearing gloves, and my hands were only bruised.

I limped home, washed my knee and spread A & D ointment (the only thing I had) on it and crawled back into bed. I finished reading Ringworld Engineers, a tiresomely long book about an interesting idea. I don't think Niven liked any of his characters, and I'm not sure he cared much for his readers either. Then I started on A Division of the Spoils, the last volume of the Raj Quartet. It was unmistakably well written but undeniably long and detailed. I'll watch the TV series, thanks.

After lunch I set out with my quilted bag that has a shoulder strap to get some bandages for my knee, and groceries. I walked over to Pennsylvania Avenue where there is a Kresge's -- (a real old-fashioned Kresge's but the bags you get say K-Mart). They didn't have any first aid cream or liquid, and the only bandages they had that would have fit my knee would have wiped out my food budget. Then I walked over to the Safeway and got bread, canned milk, cheese, broccoli, lettuce, 'Citrus Sunset' tea, and a little turkey-ham for sandwiches and walked home again, my knee stiffening up and my shoulder beginning to ache. (The ground is so hard here. Even in places where you can find grass to walk on the ground beneath it is hard and unyielding.)

The first issue of a gift subscription Science 85 arrived on Friday and was consumed immediately. Severe indigestion followed an article titled "Why Do We Like Music?" by M. Mitchell Waldrop. I don't like finding fictions in a science magazine, especially not scientific fictions, though I'm willing to allow useful conceptual fictions, as long as they are suitably identified. Which Pythagorean theories about music are not. And M. Mitchell Waldrop didn't. (The lapses in grammar and punctuation are to show how distraught I am.)

Why do otherwise sensible and knowledgeable humans check their good sense and reasoning abilities at the door of the concert hall? How the hell does Howard Gardner know that what babies babble sometimes is "song"? And why should M. Mitchell Waldrop believe him? What does brain damage to a composer prove? (Except that different activities are processed in different places in the brain, hardly news.) And a ‘music receptor’ in the brain? Why? Why do we need a ‘music receptor’? Does a brick cease being a brick if it is used as a doorstop? But most of all what outrages me is the assumption that everything humans do is located within the brain of an individual. Music, at least as we know it, is social.

Finally M. Mitchell Waldrop poses what he/she thinks is an unanswerable question: "What evolutionary advantage did music give our ancestors? That's so easy, I guess, that scientists can't be bothered with thinking about it. Music, along with storytelling, drama, dance, poetry, and
painting, was an information storage, retrieval, and processing system for groups -- families, clans, tribes. The abilities we need for music probably evolved during an extended period of evolutionary time spent as nocturnal animals, when our ancestors learned to hear, locate, distinguish and interpret sounds in time.

Beauty? That's harder. I'm not willing to say that it is entirely in the socius, but I suspect that the foundation for it must be; that each of us must learn from others that beauty or a response to it is possible, and what the parameters are before we set out on a personal quest to construct what we want in the way of beauty. That is why I say that there can be no self-taught musicians. A teacher is essential to model and talk about the musical experience so that the student knows what 'beauty' looks like.

What I can't figure out is why we are so easily seduced by 'meta' events...why, having music, sculpture and poetry, we want beauty; why, having drama and patriotism, we want to be heroes. This last bothers me a good bit. I have no trouble at all with artists who die of starvation in garrets for Beauty, but I have a lot of trouble with generals, Presidents and Secretaries of Defense (and their counterparts in the USSR) who want to blow us all up for the beauty of being heroes.

The pair of articles that followed on AI (the first, unpromisingly by the same M. Mitchell Waldrop,) didn't have any surprises. As above, people in AI seem to expend a lot of energy looking for a sort of 'meta' intelligence that humans have and computers don't, or do too. I find Dreyfuss' 'intuition' a sort of gutless dualism, and unequal to the burden he puts on it. I keep wondering: aren't we in trouble right away by assuming that there is some timeless and universal thing that is 'Mind' or 'Intelligence' (shades of Spearman's 'g'!) and this thing can or cannot be reproduced by a computer. What if there are only 'minds' and 'intelligences'? Then it would be only those few processes these minds have in common -- logics, math, grammars -- that we could expect to build computers to do. Which leads me to the question, "What would we have to change about a human being to change her into a computer?"

Enough. Probably more than you bargained for. I expected Washington to be sparkling with funny stories about politicians, but I have so far heard only one, about Earl Long, sometime governor of Louisiana (brother of Huey, uncle of Russell.)

A state legislator promised to support Gov. Long if Long would help get him elected. The legislator was successful, and the time came when the Governor called in his chips and asked the legislator to vote yes on a certain bill. The legislator balked, saying "I told you I'd vote with you when you were right, and against you when you were wrong." Whereupon (the tale goes) Long grabbed him by the lapels and shouted "I DON'T NEED YOU WHEN I'M RIGHT"

* * *
Today it was farmers wearing baseball caps that said AGRICULTURE USA or INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER, with green or yellow ribbons around their string neckties. They wore short jackets and jeans with their belts just under their bellies, and buttons with SAVE THE FAMILY FARM or its equivalent. They were on the cars and elevators:

"We asked for Block and Stockman, but they wouldn't come"

"My brother in law was going to come but he stayed home to buy a new combine -- not a new one -- a burned out one we are going to rebuild the way we want it."

"I grow corn, wheat, soy, milo, anything I can sell. I got 300 acres in Indiana and some in Arkansas too."

"I used to drive a truck. Now I'm thinking of giving up farming and getting another rig."

They are all convinced that if the government just hadn't...everything would be all right.

I hobbled (knee worse today) over to Rayburn twice today to listen to the hearings of the House Education and Labor Committee. The Rayburn committee rooms are broad, with a double tier of desks for Members. (I counted 32 nameplates.) Federal-blue curtains and patterned carpeting.

In the morning I heard a doctor from Harvard telling about hungry children in this country. He was quite eloquent, speaking about how we treat Food Stamp applicants like criminals, with signs threatening prosecution for missteps on the walls of the offices; how a $5 mistake by a welfare worker in favor of a poor person can cause the loss of benefits for an entire program, while a loss of $5 for a poor family is taken as evidence of good management; how lack of adequate nutrition for infants can cause permanent cognitive or physical disability, and finally that it is not a budget problem – not a resource problem -- but a priority problem.

The room was sparsely filled; only about eight Members were there, with a dozen aides. I returned in the afternoon because I wanted to see and hear Secretary Bennet in person. The room was jammed 10 minutes before the start of the hearing at 1:30.

Rep. Hawkins opened the hearing on time, with only four other Members (and seven aides) present, and asked if Bennett had a statement to make. Bennett didn't. Hawkins asked a couple of questions: how come vouchers, since the only time they had been tried they weren't much of a success? And how come tuition tax credits, since they wouldn't be much help to a family without tax liabilities? Bennett's answers were party-line, unemotional: so families have a choice – $300 could make a difference for a poor family.

Hawkins: How come you want to give elementary and secondary students choice but not
post-secondary? (now 13 Members, 17 aides) Bennett's answer was vague, but means that $300 is only a drop in the bucket for college.

Hawkins: Who will oversee the private schools and see to it that they meet standards?

Bennett: Well, I suppose it would be the local school authorities -- in fact they could convert their Chapter I funds to vouchers. (His aides let him down -- local schools couldn't do that.)

Rep. Jefford asks about the impact of tax reforms like the non-deductibility of property taxes.

Bennett: We can't say.

The hearing continues -- they recruit and examine wildly improbable scenarios as if they were dealing with the real world. Finally Hawkins turns the chair over to Ford, who launches his inquiry by pointing out that the committee had asked 140 education and government organizations for higher education legislation proposals -- where's yours?

Bennett: We're working on it.

Ballard: (Bennett's second in command) We don't want to give it away.

Then Ford goes for the jugular: "President Reagan started all this off by saying 'It defies common sense that there are students from families with over $100,000 getting Federal aid.' Is this true?"

Bennett: "Yes, last year we had 13,000 [students from families] with incomes over $100,000 getting financial aid."

"How does that work? Can you explain?"

Bennett, innocent, obliges. After the second time he says 'expensive private institution' Ford turns playful: "Do you always use the word 'expensive' before 'private institution'" and the whole room, full of financial aid officers from colleges, laughs and claps.

Bennett retreats and asks his other aide, Mr. Dingeldein, to answer the question. Dingledein demurs.

But Ford isn't satisfied: "Is that the reason you want us to pass the President's budget cuts, to get those 13,000 students?"

Bennett: "Well, no, we have to get the deficit down."

Ford shakes his head: "David Stockman's computer has neither heart, conscience nor brain. Where did the magic number $32,500 (for the cap) come from? Was the decision made to get a budget outcome or an educational outcome? Where is the money we would save? Is it from many
students or high interest rates?"

To the answer that it is some of both, Ford says: "Oh, I see: Fifty-fifty rabbit stew – one rabbit, one horse. (laughter)

Dingledein tries: "Well, it's interest, but the prime rate is down now...

Ford: "Is it prime rate or T-bill?"

Dingledein: "T-bill".

Ford: "That much? T-bill rate is that much higher than it was five years ago?"

Ballard: (small voice) "Yes it is, but ...

Ford: "So we cut student loans and Stockman says 'Behold! we've saved money!'"

Then Ford starts a new line: "How much would we save to have NO student loans this year?"

Bennett: "Relatively little, because we have $35 billion outstanding we have to make payments on."

Ford: "So how much would we reduce the deficit this year if we cut off all student loans?"

The DOE experts confer, and can't calculate a number. Ford can, and asks if they would agree that it would be in the neighborhood of $400 million.

"OK".

Ford remarks that he is surprised that they had to have him tell them. "And how much, he continues, would we save by adopting your recommendation?" ($32,500 cap)

"$120 million."

Ford: "That won't reduce the deficit. What about that $35 billion?"

Bennett: "We can't touch that because we have contractual obligations to the banks."

Ford sums up: "If it's an obligation to a bank we have to pay it, but an obligation to kids we don't have to honor. These cuts would save just a hundred and thirty million blood-soaked dollars, but will cause a tremendous burden on poor and middle income families. I'll tell you what, Mr. Secretary, if they'll freeze defense, we'll talk. But until they do, this committee isn't going to buy these cuts."
There was a quorum call recess, after which Mr. Atkins took the floor. He asked about the 13,000 wealthy students: How did they get financial aid? Who established the criteria? What about the needs test?

"Are there statutory limitations that require the Department to offer them financial aid?"

No.

"Then you have total discretion to establish the rules?"

Yes.

"Then the reason those 13,000 students got financial aid was because of your regulations, not because of the law? Isn't it unfair to hold up this image of 13,000 as waste that Congress must cut, when it's you, your regulations?"

Atkins then asks the committee to instruct the Department of Education to adopt an emergency regulation, a cap of $100,000 on family income to be eligible for student aid.

Bennett agrees "We'll work with you."

But there is something interesting going on here. Some of the better minds of the Reagan administration have got at least an inkling that what is wrong with the country is structural, and not to be rectified by applications of money to weak spots. The Republicans are wrong to think that a 'return' to free enterprise and Ronnie's old-fashioned values will make things better, but they are not wrong that it is our values and priorities that are messed up. People turn to violence to save the unborn, preach mayhem against the children of Nicaragua, and will not raise taxes a penny to feed hungry children (the ones with the Right to Life); people try to profit by speculating in farmland, and want to be saved when land values drop. Our President protects the highest priorities of people who matter: privilege and pocketbook.

The priorities of the administration are clear – first and highest: personal wealth, (no tax increase) second – wealth for the military and their toys and toymakers (Defense – but note that even Defense is not worth raising taxes for); third – a balanced budget (which is not a priority but a merit badge). It is a morality of sorts, because a morality is nothing but an expediency writ large. And it has a certain consistency. But the underlying mechanism is a zero-sum game in which the gains of the rich must be the losses of the poor. It is not illogical in light of the only common values we hold as a nation - - those displayed by the advertising industry for our passive consumption.

We use a number of metaphors to talk about change -- 'Band-Aid solutions', 'cosmetic changes', or the one I like best: 'knob-twiddling', because it suggests an inner structure that limits the kinds of change we are able to effect. The Reagan creed attacks the inner structure for what it is NOT (motherhood, family, flag, work-ethic success, praying, god-fearing, etc., etc.) It is an unhelpful
approach, given that he intends to impose it from the top-down.

Democrats seem only to be holding holy wars among those who believe that you can't change the inner structure, you shouldn’t change the inner structure, there is no inner structure, and the knobs are really working – "just let me get my hands on them and I'll fix it all".

Meanwhile, back in Washington one day later, *The Washington Post* reported Bennett's appearance without mentioning the general rout, or the specific issue that it was not Congress who permitted students from high income families to get financial aid – it was the D of Ed's own regulations. *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* didn't report it at all, nor did I see any AP or UPI stories, so I guess the truth is now that what I described above never happened.

Hosannas for the miracles of modern journalism.

* * *

Friday, March 8, 1985

I have a true, if embarrassing, confession to make. I have suffered for weeks with a barely legible, woozy TV set monitor for my C-64, only to discover that one of the connectors had come loose. When I secured it I got a nicely resolved, sober, readable image. In honor of the this discovery I named last night's document 'ofuck', which I repent of, but do not intend to change.

Hardly anyone can claim to write John Glenn's words wholly, not least because he often changes things as he is speaking. This doesn't surprise me – a Senator makes very few decisions about what he or she does or says. I'm not sure I could tolerate that much loss of autonomy. I expect I would change words or do things differently just to prove to myself that I could, that I was still alive. Beyond that, every public statement of the Senator is scrutinized by several people for implications or consequences for certain policies or goals, so that a final statement is a tuned meld of the words of at least three people. So I had an unusual opportunity this week to write something that went through just as I wrote it, with only John Glenn's extempore additions.

Don't look for it among the speeches of John Glenn, however. An enterprising teacher from Vantage Vocational School in Van Wert called the office to ask if the Senator would kick off the school's Right to Read Week Readathon to raise money for the restoration of the Statue of Liberty. It landed on my desk, and I wrote a 300 word piece on reading as a red-white-&-blue virtue -- right, obligation and opportunity and made all the phone calls necessary to set up the phone call from the Senator for Monday.

I was allowed to sit opposite his desk and officiate when the call was made on Monday morning. I went in as he was reading through the script and waiting for Diane to put the call through, saw him
drawing lines across the page. After a moment of dismay I realized he wasn't crossing them out, but underlining them, and making some scribbled notes about additions to be made. The call came through and he read, quite effectively and with Senatorial dignity, the piece I had written. His additions were minor -- a few phrases in one paragraph that sounded all right, but turned out to be difficult to integrate grammatically when I tried to add them to the text for the hard-copy.

* * *

Last night, through a couple of happy defaults, I got to hear the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center. One of Betty's friends had an extra ticket, and offered it to me when Betty chose not to go. Marjory even took me to the concert, for which my feet were grateful (there is a lot of walking to get from Metro stations to where you want to be in Washington).

Rostropovich conducted (or 'steered') and Leon Fleisher played the Ravel Left-Hand concerto. I haven't heard Fleisher since Oberlin, and he has matured well. The lyricism is still there, but there is an added dimension of reflectiveness; the power is tempered: black and white have become strong and soft greys. It was quite a becoming performance. Once Fleisher got control of the orchestra it became a festival of light.

I'm sorry I don't like Rostropovich's conducting much. The Corsair Overture of Berlioz was untidy and too fast, with a lot of slap-dash and posturing. After intermission, the Shostakovich Tenth Symphony. One has to admire the fortitude, patience and endurance of the Russian people. (Some Americans weren't up to the mark -- there were some defections.) There were some excellent wind solos, but also some dreadful moments -- a long sustained piccolo note, doggedly flat.

The hall is very ugly -- large without being spacious, pretentious without elegance, the style styleless and the sound very mediocre. But the lobbies and halls are very handsome, which only demonstrates, I suppose, the fragility of our sensibilities.

Or it may be my provincialism. It has occurred to me that this was the first time I had ever heard a major symphony -- other than Cleveland -- in its own hall. I don't think, though, that I am wrong that the National Symphony is a second-rate orchestra -- first rank of second-rate, I'll grant. I'm disappointed in Rostropovich, but not surprised. He's amiable, earnest, sentimental, and he flaps around a lot, but the orchestra mostly runs on autopilot, so he looks rather silly.

Sorry, non-musicians, I'm not finished yet. How do I get to hear some Luciano Berio? The TLS recently had an article naming him as an important contemporary composers. I was just feeling pleased that WETA had played something by Michael Tippett, another composer I had not heard, although I knew about him, also from the TLS.

* * *

I will argue that we are on very dangerous grounds to include intentions in our deliberations about law, crime and justice. There is no calculus of intent, and there is a difference between justice and lawfulness. I maintain that juries and courts should determine only whether or not a person did an
unlawful act, and should not consider intent. Also, that the same punishment should apply regardless of intent. Intent is connected to justice, desert, retribution, punishment and justification. We are in terrible trouble over Reagan & Co.’s belief that the Sandinista government intends to spread communism and that our intent to save the world (or whoever) from communism justifies bombing and killing. They also believe that Central Americans seeking sanctuary from the horrors of war only intend to get rich, and that as long as we don’t intend to do it, it’s all right to stockpile enough nuclear weapons to blow up the world several hundred times.

Somehow we have to rethink our entire structure of justice and laws. People (and nations) will commit crimes, make mistakes, have accidents and conflicts of interests. Societies will agree that many of these things must be illegal, and must further agree that killing, violence and abuse will not be used against those convicted of illegal action. It seems so easy, and so distant.

* * *

Alina, the assistant press secretary when I got here, is gone – fired – but I’m not sure why. "Personal reasons" doesn’t explain much, or maybe all. I only know that I couldn’t get to know anything, that every time I went down to the press office I felt like I was intruding, and nobody wanted to explain anything to me. What is amazing is the change in just one week, even given that there were some messes to clean up (and reconstruct: Alina had deleted all her computer files and I had to retype several documents). The atmosphere has changed. Dale waves me to come in to the office, and I am included in the storytelling and joking sessions. The new assistant, Marty is a veteran of some years on the House side. She seems interesting and friendly, and likes to go to lunch.

I have had some unusual assignments this week. I set up TV and press appearances for Lyn Glenn (the Senator’s daughter) in Cleveland and Columbus. I also did some telephoning to officers of women’s groups in Ohio (AAUW, BPW) to find out where they were politically for Dale, who was writing a speech for the Senator’s trip to the state this weekend. These women may be Republicans, and they may seem to be staid middle-aged middle-class conservatives, but they want ERA, pay equity, support for education, reproductive rights, and peace.

In recent days we have had farmers, education groups and college administrators, all saying “Don't cut us.” Staffers are a little cynical: 70% of the members of NEA voted for Reagan, and staffers feel like retorting: "Don't come to us. You buttered your bread, now you lie in it." I expect they will do it better next time.

If there is one.

* * *

On March 31, I am going to move into the back bedroom and porch of John and Caroline Webber’s house, out on F Street NE, just off Maryland Avenue. It will only be $200 a month, instead of $275, and I will have five windows, a table for the C-64, and a cello to play on. They have a dog and cat, and there is a pretty little weeping beech tree in the tiny garden beneath the porch. I’m also going to play the April concert with John’s New Music Orchestra.
So what am I doing in Washington?

There are a lot of tempting answers, all truthful, and all moderately fanciful. My best description is that I work at construction in Senator Glenn's office. There are 40-odd people who work there, endlessly constructing, deconstructing, modeling, remodeling, decorating and displaying the Senator's position (beliefs, values, goals, priorities) and words (floor statements, bills, press releases, op-eds, letters). We also manage his schedule, (interviews, public appearances, speeches, briefings)

Our raw materials are words -- words highly refined, of course, by tacit assumptions, argued ideologies, shifting interests, consensual values and contingent knowledge. We converse -- with one another, with staffers from other offices, and with constituents. We read -- the current newspapers and magazines, reports, legislation, briefings, materials provided by lobbyists and constituents. We write -- memos, briefings, floor statements, legislation, press releases, letters -- and we rewrite each other's writings, interpret and re-interpret the Press, and constantly negotiate, reassure and reinforce one another about "what really happens" on Capitol Hill.

No day is normal, but most begin at 9AM, by which time most staffer are in the office. Three copies of the three major newspapers are in circulation, being read, clipped and photocopied; someone will be briefing the Senator for a meeting, hearing or press conference. The first delivery of bundles of mail have arrived in the mail room and been sorted first by the size of the envelopes, so they can be fed in batches into the letter-opener, which slices an eighth of an inch off the top of each envelope. The contents will be removed, stapled together, date-stamped and sorted by topic into the boxes of the appropriate legislative correspondents.

Most of the computer terminals are already in use. There are only ten, and more and more work is done on them. We fellows don't have one, and I must use piracy, charm or squatters' rights to get to use one. Some days I have letters to write, like graciously declining an invitation to the Senator from a VIP for some ceremonial occasion. Less important people's letters are answered with ROBOS -- (form letters on a specific topic, run off on high speed computers in the basement, some 4000 a week).

I also make floor statements into a press releases, edit op-ed pieces written by other staff members, write drafts of statements on current topics and write short 'remarks' for the Senator for phone calls. Sometimes I go to hearings that are of interest to the Senator. I make phone calls to the press to read statements, or tell them about a press event.

In addition to all this I scan the Ohio papers for local news, editorial concerns, and letters-to-the editor that would be of interest to the Senator or staff. I am only now, after seven weeks, getting the hang of the job.
All over the Senate office buildings are clocks with six small white lights and one red one on the perimeter. The red one is lit all the time the Senate is in Session, the others light up with the ‘bells’ (an irritating buzzer) that indicate what is happening -- quorum call, caucus, vote, etc. There are also squawk boxes all over the office that enable us to hear what is happening on the Senate floor. Most of the time that is nothing at all.

There is a constant stream of visitors to the office, with assorted axes to grind. This spring – farmers, Right-to-Lifers and public school and higher education people. They are met by aides who specialize in their particular issues.

The Senator’s day is closely scheduled; his schedule is printed and distributed every morning before 9. Each public appearance, interview or meeting is preceded by a briefing. He himself is very good-natured, bubbling with ideas, and affable. He is quick to understand, listens closely and makes suggestions to the aides he knows and trusts. The schedule cannot allow quite enough time for him to move freely, and Diane, his personal secretary, has to keep him on a fairly short leash to make sure all the obligations are met.

When the Senate is in session the office stays open after 6 PM until they are ‘out' for the evening, with the aides who may be needed still on hand. Other days things wind up between 5:30 and 6:30, with some people still writing at their desks, some in pairs gaming with the numbers on dollar bills (‘Liar’s Poker’) some reading, some calling friends or relatives on the WATS lines.

I watch. I want to know how consensus about ‘what really happens' is constructed. It is not particularly difficult to know, in a partisan office, what that consensus is, and it is also easy to observe that our version of ‘what really happens’ is not the same as that of other offices. I am more curious about the processes, and what the processes contribute to the outcomes.

* * *

March 20, 1985

At the bottom of the op-ed piece on the MX missile in today’s Washington Post it says “The writer is United States Senator from Ohio, and a member of the Armed Services Committee.”

rrrrrr. Well, maybe that's right: the person of a Senator is only, in the familiar metaphor, the tip of an iceberg. ‘United States Senator' is a staff and a past, which functions as a structure and process not unlike a person.

‘United States Senator’ decided a week ago that it wanted to have an op-ed in the Post before the vote was taken on the MX missile, and activated the appropriate systems to produce it. Dale told
me to go see Phil (military aide) about what should be in it. I left a note on Phil's empty chair before 10 AM and heard nothing the remainder of the day. So at 6:30, with both my coat and a notebook I went down to his office.

He was there, and at first we tried to find a time the next day (Thursday) to confer on the piece. He had no time until 4 PM, too late, so we settled down to talk then. Phil reviewed the points to be made, the advantages of the small mobile missile favored by Glenn and the arguments and objections that had been parlayed in the discussions last year. We discussed some things to be used or not used, and agreed that I should write a first draft and we would go from there in the morning.

John Glenn was in the office early Thursday, writing an opening for it. Dale came from a briefing with him and said I should see the Senator before I wrote any more, but before I could go, Phil brought me two xeroxed pages of Glenn's handwritten sentences. I took them, along with all the Dear Colleagues, floor statements and talking points from the last round of MX missile debates, my notes from talking with Phil, and the outline I had drafted at home the night before, and got started about 8:30 AM.

The first task was to build in some recognizable parts of the Senator's own prose. I worked on a yellow legal pad for half an hour, then commandeered a computer terminal and did the two opening paragraphs, went back to the legal pad, then back to the WP. I put a finished first draft on Phil's chair at 11:15. I made a couple of phone calls and wrote a letter, and sat down with Phil again to confer on things he wanted added.

I went to lunch with Marty before typing in the changes, and we dawdled a little, so I didn't get back to the terminal until almost 2:30. I finished that draft about 4:30, but Phil didn't have time to look at it until after 5:30. About 6:15 we started on the third draft. Mary Ellen (Phil's secretary) had gone home, so I could use her terminal. He wanted to add several things about the small mobile systems, more about the contradictions in the administration's position, and a good many more technical terms.

There is a whole world of weapons-words, so large and diverse that people operating within it lose all sense of the values and beliefs of the outside world. John Glenn is a practicing Christian, a moral and compassionate man, very well informed and reasonable, yet the register of death and destruction is totally masked by words of deterrence, warheads, strategic defense. Both sides of the debate over the MX missile seem to think that their method of killing Russians will be the most effective way of preventing war.

I made the changes Phil wanted in the text on the WP first thing Friday morning and had it ready for Dale when he arrived at 9 o'clock. He didn't think the Post would publish it in that form, and suggested some things that ought to be changed. I tried things out on Carl and Joel, who share my office, and consulted with Ron (education) to try to clarify the ‘bargaining chip/not bargaining
chip' contradiction. Dale was busy writing the Senator’s speech for Wooster that evening, and everyone else was tied up with the savings & loan crisis.

Dale promised to start the final review at 1:30, but a briefing on the S&L crisis went overtime and we started at 2. Marty went to get some lunch and bring a sandwich back for Dale and I used her terminal to enter the changes we made as we went along. The Press was by this time onto the S&L crisis, and the phone was ringing every few minutes. Dale chewed on his cigar stump and answered the phone between comments on the article, and after Marty returned with his sandwich, he gestured with it and argued with Marty about Affirmative Action. I was getting anxious about time -- Dale and I were to leave the office at 3PM to go out to Dulles to fly to Wooster with the Senator, and at 2:50 we were only half way through the text. He kept saying we had plenty of time, that we didn't need to leave until 3:15.

At 3:20 I sent the completed article to the printer and scurried upstairs to get my bags and go to the bathroom. I made one xerox copy (the downstairs copier will snatch and copy instantly anything that gets in range) for Marty to give to Phil, and Dale and I flew downstairs with the other copy. Dale intended to phone Marty from Dulles or from Wooster, after the Senator had approved it, and have it delivered to the Post that evening. (Friday)

It didn't quite work that way; we were half an hour late getting to Dulles, and there was no time to show it to the Senator before takeoff. I was not returning that evening with the Senator -- I was going on home for the school board meeting on Monday night, and wouldn't return to Washington until Tuesday morning.

I learned then that Glenn had decided on a different emphasis, and had made a floor statement on Monday, including, Dale said ruefully, the 'Safeway Truck' proposal we had all tried to keep out of the arguments. All of that got written in, and it ran in the Post Wednesday morning, despite the fact that the MX missile was approved by the Senate late Tuesday. Even that wasn't smooth -- the text as it was delivered was 150 words too long, and rather than let the Post editors cut it, Marty did it over the phone. The final version still contained substantial parts that I had written or worked on.

The final text is a fair representation of the beliefs of both 'United States Senator' and John Glenn. "What the Senator believes" is a construct of his personal experience, the information that reaches him, and those who participate in conversations about it, the vocabulary and repertoires available to them, and some basic assumptions about the way the world is -- including in this case, that John Glenn knows what is good for us, militarily. It is not thinkable, by him, that nothing military can be good for us, that killing and damaging one another is bad for us, regardless of the ideology of the actors.

Yet, if the reasons were wrong, the action was right, and it was done with steadfastness and conviction.

* * *
I don't think I ever imagined living in a time in which J.S. Bach's birthday would be celebrated by an editorial in the Washington Post. But it is so, and we should blow a kiss to...public education? Thomas Edison? The recording industry? TV? The Great Society? Certainly not to conductors, star soloists, impresarios or critics.

If I were rich, mobile and at leisure, I would be sitting in the Kennedy Center tonight listening to the B-minor Mass. As it is, I am sitting in front of a cheap word processor, writing, while my 9” x 12” radio copes, more or less, with the same work, recorded in Stuttgart. What survives? The architecture, the harmonic relationships and proportions, the melodic workings, the pacing and drive of motion, Bach's easy familiarity and confidence in the resources of the musical environment, phrasing, intonation – all the firmware. The soloists don't have all that much to lose in this recording, but there are losses for me in the sound of the instruments: the sense of bones in the continuo, of spaciousness in horns, of light on water in the oboe sound, a trumpet sound that raises the hair on the back of the neck.

But I should be writing – answers, if nothing else. Tonight we need to visit several small planets, at close to light speed.

Dingledein. How could I forget a name like that?. But I did, I sat through the whole hearing, wrote about it, and never once remembered that you had told me that he was from Kent, and that I could ring him up and use your name. I have now done so; he was on his way out and promised to call me on the morrow. *

* My friend Don Anthony had replied to the earlier letter and reminded me about Dingledein. Nothing ever came of my contact with him, but it was pleasant conversation.

Aside: Have I ever said how much fun it is to call someone, especially back in Ohio, and say 'This is Caroline Arnold in Senator Glenn's office...' and hear the significant pause?

When I was in Kent for the school board meeting I was invited to speak to a couple of American government classes at the high school. Afterward, one of the seniors asked me if I had ever been asked to write anything I didn't believe in or anything I knew to be untrue. It is unlikely, of course, that I would have been chosen, or that I would have taken the internship, if I had been of Republican persuasion. I told her without much elaboration that I hadn't, because I didn't want to raise the whole question of 'what is truth?'

You may know Stanislaw Lem's tale of "Trurl's Machine" that insisted that 2 + 2 = 7 (one of the stories in The Cyberiad). The humor is, of course, not the truculence of the machine, which does not graciously accept correction, but that of Trurl and his friend Klapaucius, who risk life and limb
for the truth that $2 + 2 = 4$.

I'm not willing to go with "truth doesn't exist". But I want the right to wholly reject the notion that truth exists 'out there' somewhere, to be read directly off reality by anyone sufficiently intelligent, disinterested, pure, pious, or whatever. Yet most of our education is dedicated to the proposition that Nature is pure, and only man is vile, that truth is solid and unambiguous, only people get it wrong because of stupidity. We give the young to understand that opinions are grubby misshapen versions of truth, but facts are clean and neat and can be found at the back of the book, or are in the possession of middle-aged men with graduate degrees. And we tend to think of scientific truth as something mined by research at the Frontiers of Science by courageous men.

* * *

TV interviews are done in the conference room, which has a large table in the middle, and 6' high bookshelves filled with red-bound volumes of the United States Code along two walls. The camera stands like a rigid three-legged spider just inside the door from the reception area, and is tended by a mustachioed young man in coat & tie and jeans. The interviewer, Doug, has a yellow legal pad with writing on it -- "My ad-libs" he quips. Two little microphones on tie-clips lie across the corner of the table; there are two tall tubular stands holding bright lights shining down on the two chairs.

Doug has submitted his questions for the interview, which is to be about space and space research, and the Senator is being briefed in his office by Dale and Len. Presently Glenn comes striding into the conference room, shakes hands: "Hello, Doug, good to see you," and sits down to attach the microphone to his tie. "Is that high enough?"

"Yeah, that's about where mine is. How's the sound level?" "Talk some more," says the cameraman. Glenn recites numbers for a few seconds. Then "Okay. Any time."

Dale, Marty, Len and I are perched on the other end of the table or on stools on the other side of the table. The camera is very quiet; the questions are unexceptionable. Glenn emphasizes that space research was dedicated from the first to finding out what human capabilities were in weightlessness, acceleration and conditions of pitch, roll and yaw, to safety and control of spacecraft, and describes with humor the gimbel-rig to test responses under extreme conditions, the Snellen chart used inside the capsule to check eyesight, in case the eyeball deformed during weightlessness.

We didn't go into space, he said, to get the drop on the Russians, though we were all shocked to find out they had gotten ahead of us. He had always believed that we had to keep space free of military development – in fact, just before President Kennedy was assassinated; he had proposed that our astronauts get together with the Russian cosmonauts and press for space exploration to be an international effort. Who knows what contributions will be made to life on earth through researches conducted in space?
"Profitable? No, space research is very expensive, and I don't expect that it will be commercially profitable, but we shouldn't expect it to be. We don't ask that our Interstate Highways make a profit, they serve people in other ways."

Glenn is guarded about Senator Garn's flight, justifies it by saying that Garn will be a better chairman of his committee by having this experience. But he says Reagan's "Teacher in Space" is not a good idea: "We can't send the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker into space -- those places are needed by researchers and scientists who have a real contribution to make."

Did _The Right Stuff_ help or hurt his presidential campaign? Probably neither. Glenn wished they had made a true-to-life documentary about the first astronauts: "they were real people, not caricatures." The truth was dramatic enough. There was a kernel of truth in the movie, but it could have been much better."

Finally he is asked how he feels about the future of the country, and he responds hopefully: "We're only just beginning to explore space -- young people today have wonderful challenges -- things will be discovered and invented we can't even dream of and..." Dale slips a notepad and pen off the table and writes in big letters R W E QUOTE and holds it up behind the camera. Glenn finishes his sentence and says smoothly: "No-one has said it better than Ralph Waldo Emerson, who, when someone asked him when the best time to be alive was, said "This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it."

They end the taping there, but the Senator stays, so the cameraman can move the camera to a different angle and get about two minutes of shots of the two of them talking (with the sound off) that can be edited into the final version. While the cameraman puts on his 6-battery belt pack and moves the tripod, Marty pushes a pen and a photo of Glenn in his space suit across the table and asks him to autograph it for Doug. He does so. The cameraman asks Glenn to talk, no sound. With an impish smile, he obliges: "All of you, those of you who can read lips, just remember that I'm going to run again in 1986, and I need you to work on my campaign. And if you are reading my lips, send a postcard to this station telling me you understood me...Okay?"

The camera moves behind Glenn, it is Doug's turn to talk: "Do you think anyone can understand that? How about just telling them to send money?" Doug talks another 30 seconds and the camera stops. Glenn grins. "The last time I did that in Columbus they got four postcards from people who 'heard' me." There are thank-yous and handshaking. Glenn goes back to his office, followed by Dale and Marty. Len goes back upstairs to the committee office, and I stopped by Celia's desk. (Glenn's new personal secretary) There are ten copies of _The Right Stuff_ stacked on one corner. "Someone sent them and asked if he would autograph them, and he did."

Back in the Press office Dale was smiling. "The quote was perfect -- that'll make a terrific ending. Good interview." Marty noted "I thought when we took the questions in that the Senator didn't like the questions, felt this guy was hostile." I asked if Senator Glenn had the quote memorized or if it
was on the notepad in front of him. "He has that one memorized," said Dale, "and there's a story about that. He found that quote at Bobby Kennedy's house right after he was killed. Glenn had gone there to be with Bobby's children, and he had gone into Bobby's study. This book of Emerson was open on the desk, with that passage marked, and the Senator memorized it right then."

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Rainy Saturday. The city is still, hard and close; the ground is wet bricks, concrete or paving stones, unevenly puddled. In the tiny front yards are daffodils, forsythia, hyacinths, hollies, rhododendron, box, tarnished ground covers or coarse dirt, with artificially pink or yellow dog-turds. I walked to the Safeway in my nylon raincoat, with the new backpack Seth gave me, to get groceries. Although the raincoat was wet all over, the wet didn't come through until I pulled the backpack straps up over my arms and onto my shoulders. I bought vegetables, cheese and fruit, resisting oranges at 33¢ each and asparagus at $1.49 a pound. It is wonderfully easier to manage 30 lbs of groceries in a backpack than in bags. I got home fairly dry and not too exhausted. I washed a load of clothes and hung them all over railing of the stairwell. (Betty doesn't like to use the dryer.) Then I made a sandwich for lunch and settled down to stay indoors all afternoon.

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March 25, 1985

Nothing has impressed me more in Washington than the fact that everything works (a photocopy machine that breaks down is repaired within hours), supplies and services are there when we need them (there are two photocopy machines in the Glenn office, and a copy center with multiple machines three floors down) and people in every job are expert, task-oriented, helpful and friendly. What this bespeaks, I think, is that there is a general consensus that what we are doing is important and right. It also reveals an environment of plenty -- we don't have to compete for existing supplies -- and a population of people who like what they do. I find myself wondering what it would be like if the whole country lived like this -- believing that what our country does is important and right, with necessities available to all, and individual satisfaction with jobs and lifestyles. I hasten to add that I am not proposing such a utopia, because I doubt that it would be. But it might be interesting to consider how our notion of consensus, allocation of resource and vocational freedom falls short of the American Dream, and how Reagan and his supporting cast misread and misplay both consensus and 'free-market' economics.

At present, Mr. Reagan believes that there is consensus for his budget and his ideological beliefs. I doubt that. In times when there is a wide and real consensus about what should be done Congress can and does act very quickly to create legislation and the budget to do it. Wartime is an obvious example. We are tempted to believe that it is bellicosity, or the influence of the military-industrial complex that drives war, but it seems more likely that it is the presence of a common cause -- a consensus about an action or outcome that is desired or feared. Reagan
believes that there is a consensus for his philosophy. I think there are some consensuses out there, the most important one probably that people want lower taxes. This seems to be a generalized desire -- more important than a balanced budget, more important than education, health, or even defense. The people are not clamoring for higher defense spending. That is the subject of a hard-sell by the administration.

It seems uncharacteristic of both the American people and their leaders to have so little concern for the future. We seem to have raised up a generation careless of their responsibilities for the future. They will choose endless cost to their children rather than raise their own taxes. The children of the ‘50s and ‘60s are a NOW generation more than a ME generation. It is easy, and maybe simplistic, to observe that the specter of nuclear annihilation has obscured their view of the future, and left them unable to imagine it at all. It might be equally easy to argue that it is the “tis not hereafter” belief that keeps people from thinking that a nuclear holocaust is possible, plausible, or probable.

In consensus, those who take risks or make sacrifices participate in the public decision by joining the consensus knowing the cost. When we agreed we should enter World War II we knew (to some extent) what our losses and risks might be, yet there was at least enough consensus that Congress could act swiftly. Today we have a situation in which those asked to take risks and make sacrifices are not part of the consensus. The consensus is among economically competent or affluent adults. The risks and sacrifices are demanded of the young, the old, and the poor.

That’s scarcely new, but there are differences. At the beginning of World War II we had fairly unsophisticated notions of planning or forecasting. Prevailing world-views contained assumptions about Fate, Heroism, Patriotism, Obedience, the Wisdom of Great Men, and the innate worthlessness of the poor (especially blacks). Public decisions were considered stable -- monuments instead of vectors. It seems likely that the comeuppance of the Reagan Dream will be when it is revealed as a white marble castle rather than a direction on a road.

Consensus in a nation of 230 million diverse people may be impossible; it is certainly unstable, and will be constantly shifting. It is conceivable that it may be unworkable, or even paradoxical, insofar as what we can all agree on will be something that doesn’t matter, and what matters will be what we can never agree on. For what future shall we plan? For whose future shall we plan? Can we do planning in a nation in which some people don’t participate? Is planning possible in conditions of constantly shifting consensus? Can we have a farm policy, a foreign policy, a defense policy, a science policy, an education policy, built on the shifting sands of consensus? There may be a Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle operating here: if we want to nail down a foreign policy so we always know where it is, we sacrifice knowing its velocity and direction; if we give it a speed and a vector, we may not be able to locate it when we need it.

So far, Congress has not acted swiftly. The Senators dragged their feet over the Meese confirmation, the farm credit bill was argued longer than anyone predicted, the MX missile is two
weeks behind schedule, any serious work on the budget is nowhere in sight. Consensus? Ha! Meanwhile, back in the Senate office buildings, life goes on. PTAs request autographed pictures of Astronaut Glenn for Celebrity Auctions, graduate students request interviews with Glenn "not more than an hour of your time," visitors from Ohio stream through the office and some get photographed on the steps of the Capitol with their Senator, camera-laden news crews turn up for photo-ops, news releases are put out for the Riding Page or phoned to the Ohio press corps, we take endless 'clips' from the papers: anything with Glenn's name, anything about S&Ls, Marvin Warner, the MX missile, SDI; phones ring, the copier chuckles constantly. A prim note, pinned up over the copier with a red ribbon, tells us that we are allotted 8000, or 235.29 copies per person, per month.

At the staff meeting the interns get ribbed about having their picture taken: "They should get Carl with one foot up on the copier, and Joel meeting with the Young Nazis, and Caroline throwing blood on the MX missile". There is also an announcement, greeted with incredulity, that there will be a high-school intern in April and May. How did that happen? Well, the Senator talked to this kid's father and told him to have the kid write a letter and he did and... There is a lot of grumbling because everyone is crowded for space now; fitting in another desk and sharing responsibilities with a high school student doesn't sit very well.

At the gathering places -- the downstairs copier, the legislative correspondents' computer terminal, the coffee closet -- the talk is about Elaine's disaster. Last Thursday she got home to her apartment on the Hill and found it robbed, cleaned out, clothes and all. Celia organized a fund, and in spite of jokes about collecting over $4.23, over $400 was raised for her.

The weather has turned hot and the cherry trees have burst into bloom in one day. Most of them seem not to be cherries, but what I would call flowering plum - prunus. They are quite pretty and delicate, both close up and massed in the distance, but there is something rather artificial about them – perhaps it is the absence of leaves. People say Washington is a 'spring town' and at its best then. I suppose that's true, but I miss the space and sprawl of spring in Ohio, the generous greenness, overgrown undergrowth; I miss wide tree lawns and houses that stand decently back from the street, the hollering of birds at first light, and night-silence.

But I am beginning to see how I might be able to stay on. I have friends now, people who tell me that I do things well, that I should try to stay on, that I am needed on the Hill. But they also say no one should live on the Hill -- it's a terrible place to live. I think I can think about that now.

I am going to play with John Webber's New Music Orchestra in a concert on April 21, using Caroline Webber's cello. I am moving this weekend to their house, which also has a Steinway grand. Their house is ten long blocks out from the Hart Building, and I very much need to get my bicycle down to Washington to save both time and my varicose veins. If anyone is driving to DC and has room for one well-behaved, middle-aged bike, I would be grateful...

* * *

59
I was carried off Friday evening to a party to celebrate the publication of two new books by the Washington Writers Publishing House. I would have ducked it, but it seemed ungracious to Betty, who knew the people involved, so I went, and suffered. The rooms in which it was held were very crowded, and although there were empty chairs, it was impossible to get to them through the pairs of people conversing. They would greet each other with a kiss, then, standing too close, fall to discussing intently what their lawyers had said, or should have said, or hadn't said.

There were large green jugs of Chablis, stacks of plastic wineglasses and platters with bricks of cheese and a cohort of crackers. I made the acquaintance of Ellen, who thought she didn't belong there because she wasn't a writer. I told her I felt I didn't belong there because I was, so we toughed it out.

After we were thoroughly saturated with cigarette smoke, and overheated until my feet were swelling we were summoned to the living room to hear the winners of the poetry competition read from their own works. We managed to fight our way to a couch on the back of which I could perch propped with both hands (which excused me from having to applaud) and which afforded an arm for Ellen to sit on. The poetry ranged from competent to appalling. The competent will have its own rewards; I have a use for the appalling.

The thesis of this particular poem was man's inhumanity to dog. It told about a dog running behind its master's car and that every time the dog got close to the car the driver speeded up.

Now wait a minute: How did this observer know that the driver was speeding away from the dog? The driver might report that he slowed down when the dog fell behind. I wouldn't object if the writer confined herself to reporting the relative speeds of dog and car, or if she had described her feelings at seeing the scene. But I found myself irritated by the arrogance of the writer in assuming that she knew what the driver and the dog were thinking, and that her reading of the event was right and universal. Writers tend to feel entitled to tell us 'what really happened' neglecting to notice that there are as many versions of an event as there are observers.

On good days, when I do not have to spend hours doing clips, mailing out autographed photographs or recipes for Annie Glenn's Ham Loaf, or reading news releases over the phone to reporters, I write 'what the Senator thinks.' There is a certain folksy set of phrases that everyone in the office uses in his utterances, and I am learning to use them. There is also a tendency (which I resist) among staff to leave no noun or verb unmodified. We are all careful about possible consequences of what we write for him, and often engage in search parties for the right word or phrase. Do you extend sympathy to someone who is ill, or is that only for the bereaved? We decide
that prayers, not sympathy, are offered to the afflicted.

There is also a certain nervousness about how all the decisions we make about what the Senator will say fit into the larger context. How can we recommend more funding for biomedical research, education, besieged farmers, Star Wars, etc. and still find enough to cut to trim the deficit?

* * *

In the evenings I sit at my C-64 in the enclosed porch I use as a work-room. When I turn off the lamp I can see out the windows – five sodium vapor street lamps, three back entrance lights, back walls of the houses on the next street, three rows of garages, a few narrow fenced strips of grass. It is cold tonight, and the windows are closed, but even so I can hear voices, the hum of traffic, the roar of jets taking off from National Airport.

I like my new home. John and Caroline Webber have books and music all over the house in full wall bookcases, boxes and piles on the floor. They read, discuss politics and music, drink tea, enjoy TV and are easy about housekeeping and meals. We share dinner in the evening, splitting the cost three ways, and Caroline and I do the shopping and washing-up. There is a large shaggy dog, Daisy, who is gentle and slow. It takes me about 20 minutes to walk up Maryland Ave. to the Hart Building; I enjoy the walk despite the traffic and litter, and in the evening it is a pleasant way to unwind. It is a lucky move, I think. I don't know how I happened to land here -- and that there is a very good cello for me to play on is so improbable I am almost tempted to believe in guardian angels, or djinni.

I have frittered away most of the evening watching Easter Parade with Fred Astaire and Judy Garland on my tiny computer TV. It is a mindless script – I could predict almost every line before it was spoken -- but the dancing was wonderful: easy, graceful, smiling and altogether winsome. I wouldn't have missed it for anything.

Friday evening. I took a half-holiday today. Everyone was supposed to take Friday or Monday off, but I had to make a couple of phone calls and go to the credit union, so I went down and stayed until just after 1PM, reading the papers, talking to Marty and reworking Dale's version of a speech for the Aging Committee field hearing in Toledo on the 15th. Only half the staff was there, mostly wearing jeans and running shoes. Kathy was in her office discussing drapes and decorating with Celia; Marty showed a friend the Senator's office, (he wasn't there) Ed visited with Rose (the receptionist), then went out across the street to make the Stations of the Cross for Good Friday. I'm surprised at how many staff are practicing Catholics.

By the time I left the day had turned hot, about 80°. I walked up E. Capitol to 7th St. and over to Kresge's, intent on getting rods to put up curtains so I could have a modest amount of darkness to sleep in at night. I also went to Safeway for some groceries, then walked home. I rearranged everything -- moved the bed out onto the sleeping porch and the C-64 into the inner room, put up the curtain rods and hung old sheets and a towel on them (until I can afford curtains) and I am
much satisfied with the result. The black windows and glaring sodium lights are softened, and there is a pleasant breeze.

Good. At least we are to be spared intermission talk in this broadcast from the Library of Congress. It is to be "The Seven Last Words of Our Saviour on the Cross". Fond as I am of Papa Haydn, I would not walk across the street, much less across 14 blocks of brick sidewalks to hear this work played live. From a opera that contains such varied delights I am annoyed by these seven dull and gloomy pieces. I have no doubt it is the recurring occasion and not the charm of the music that keeps it in the repertoire. Like Eric Satie's "Curtain of a Voting Booth" that gets played around election time. But that is quite an amusing piece, exemplifying that cardinal virtue of music – brevity. Perhaps it is my irritation with Easter that is leaking over into my musical sensibilities. I've always felt good about Christmas, uneasy over Easter, which seems so petty and self-centered. It's hard for me to get worked up about a public execution 2000 years ago, supposedly for our salvation, when we have not learned to stop doing that sort of thing to one another either because of it, or in spite of it. And I have to gird myself with forbearance to deal with 'Jesus-died-for-our-sins-but-now-I'm-going-to-Heaven-Hallelujah!' especially when it is celebrated with highly conspicuous consumption and orgies of confectionery. It's too near 'I've-got-mine-to-hell-with-the-rest-of-you'. Christmas, at least, is a celebration of children, parents, friends and our mutual dependence and obligations.

* * *

John Glenn, ranking minority member of the Special Committee on Aging, will be appearing at a field hearing on issues of aging in Toledo on April 15. He will make an introductory speech and be photographed by and quoted in the local newspapers. His speech is, of course, written ahead of time, and since the Congress went into recess Thursday, the briefing had to be held before he left Washington.

Wednesday morning Dale buzzed me and asked me to come down to the Press office. I found him chewing his cigar stump, brandishing a sheaf of papers and cussing. "We have to have the Senator's opening remarks ready for the briefing at 1 o'clock, and I can't use this -- it's nothing but a -- a -- piece of shit. I don't know what I am going to do about these people. I have half a notion to send this in to him [Glenn] just like this, so he can see the quality of work that comes out of that office. I've got a call in up there [the Aging office] -- some of these sentences don't even make sense. Anyway -- what I want you to do -- see, I've made some notes on the back page -- see what you can do with it. And lighten it up -- see if you can find a quote or something. The damn briefing's at one, and it's already ten-thirty."
I stayed long enough to hear him talk on the phone to Mona, who had written the draft. He told her it wouldn’t do at all, and that she didn’t seem to understand it, and that he didn’t know what to tell the Senator. It seemed pretty harsh.

I retrieved her draft from the terminal and printed it on the printer back by Ron’s desk, talking to him about what I was trying to do and borrowing his book of quotations before going back upstairs to work on it. It was pretty inadequate – the cadences weren’t right for speaking, it was full of long convoluted sentences, it contained too many percentages and numbers, and it was not ordered into a beginning, a middle and an end.

By noon I had the introduction, which I rewrote completely, and by 12:55 I had redone about a third of the text. I then learned that the briefing was postponed until 5:30, so I went to lunch. When I got back there was a message to call Mona. She said she had attempted a rewrite and was told she should call me. She sounded very anxious so I asked her to come down and see me.

When she got there I tried to reassure her; I looked at her revision and praised it, and asked her if she wanted me to go ahead and complete the new draft or if she wanted to do it and then go over it with me before she took it to Dale. She chose to have me write it, and went back up to the Aging office feeling a little better about herself (I hope). Her second attempt wasn’t much better than the first, though it must be said that while she got her instructions from her boss, (Diane) she was expected to meet Dale’s standards.

I went back to grinding out words on the terminal, from 3 o’clock until 5:32, when I sent it to the printer. By then the briefing had been postponed again, until 8:30 in the morning, then 9:30. I made a copy for Mona and gave one to Dale. He liked it, made some minor changes and asked me to make enough copies for the briefing. I left to go home at 6:50.

The next morning Diane wanted some additions and Dale wanted another laugh-line in the text; the briefing was postponed again until noon. I went off to the terminal and made the additions. Peggy (systems administrator) came by just as I was signing off to say she needed to reboot (the mini-mainframe computer from which all our terminals worked) and asked “Are you finished?” I said yes, it’s being printed.

But my printout stopped in the middle of page 3 (out of 6) and I went upstairs to rag her for not waiting until my job had got off the queue. By the time I got a complete printout it was 11 o’clock. Dale and Marty were at a recording session with Glenn, and the briefing had been postponed another hour. They all returned about 12:15, followed by Len: the Senator is introducing the first Fernald bill this afternoon -- are we doing a press lease? With Lukens?

Dale got on the phone with a Cincinnati paper that had misrepresented Glenn’s relationship with Marvin Warner. Marty called Lukens' office about Fernald, and got the floor statement and bill from
Len. Dale started to write the news release, but kept having to talk to reporters about the S&L issue. The draft I had finished was on his desk, untouched, and the briefing was in five minutes. I was worried that I would have to go into the Senator's office with Diane and Mona, without Dale's having read what the Senator would already be reading.

Oh, hell, I'm too tired, and this is four pages already. (to be continued)

* * *

April 8, 1985

[At the end of our last episode our narrator was sitting in Senator Glenn's office between Diane, the minority staff director of the Aging Committee, and Mona, the planner of the April 15 field hearing in Toledo, chewing her fingernails over the speech she had prepared, but which Dale, the press secretary, had not yet read, and who in any case wasn't there to defend her, should the Senator find fault with the bad jokes, or.....]

John Glenn picked up the top page of a sheaf of papers Diane had put before him. It was a 'Dear Colleague' request that he cosponsor legislation providing a new tax on cigarettes with the revenue earmarked for Medicare. "I don't like earmarking," he said, "it's a bad way of budgeting. Anyway, where do we stand on Medicare? It's my understanding that Medicare's not too bad now."

Mona: (wide-eyed, pitiful) "Oh, Senator, those reports were based on some very harsh assumptions."

Glenn: "... but I don't like the idea of assigning taxes. Well, if it's necessary to get the tax, which I do think is important; I'll sign off on it." He puts a check after YES on the line 'Do you want to cosponsor?' and initials it.

Diane: Well, it isn't necessary -- you don't have to cosponsor, you can just vote for it."

Glenn: "Of course I'll vote for it. Anyway I'm sure someone will move on the floor to strike the assignment of the funding -- I won't even have to do that."

Diane: "You know it's only 50% to Medicare, the rest to general revenue?"

Glenn takes back the page. "Is that what he's got? But I don't see why; Medicare's solvent now."

Mona tries again with a mournful cry: "Oh, no, Senator, that's assuming that inflation is constant, which it isn't, and...."
Glenn decides. "Well, I'm not going to cosponsor," crossing out the YES check and checking NO, and handing it back to Diane, "but I'll vote for it when it reaches the floor. What's next?"

Next is a bill to prohibit mandatory retirement at age 70. Diane reminds him that he wasn't too crazy about it last year. Glenn reads the page and nods: "I don't know about these tenured professors – there are a lot of them that just shouldn't be teaching at age 70 and they are tenured and there is no easy way to get them out. We need to get young blood into the universities, and some of these old guys are just going to have to give in." Diane replies that it is important to older people not to be forced to retire just because they are old, and if they are tenured, that's a different problem. He grudgingly agrees to support the bill.

Glenn: "Now. Is this the opening statement for Toledo?"

It is. He starts to read through it, and Dale (finally) slips in, sits down and reads his copy of the speech, confirming my hunch that he hadn't read it before.

Glenn looks up at Dale: "Is this what you want? (Dale nods yes.) Well, I didn't see any very clear statement about what this hearing is about. Did I miss that somewhere?"

Dale, Diane and I, more or less in unison: "Page two, second paragraph."

"Oh, is that all of it?" Glenn reads it out loud and says "Well, that certainly isn't very exciting. Why are we doing this?"

Mona: (poor Mona) "Well, the most important thing is increasing public awareness."

Glenn: (acting) "'The Purpose of this Program is Increasing Public Awareness' -- HO-HUM. We've got to do something to get their attention. Maybe we could use a slogan -- something like 'More Golden Olden Years' or 'Make your Olden Years Golden Years' or -- how about -- Lyn [his daughter] gave me a T-shirt that says 'I'm Not Getting Older, I'm Getting Better' -- I could wear that, and it could be the theme of the whole thing."

We look at each other. Well, yes, a really good slogan – if we all think about it – there must be good material somewhere – No one wants to go out on a limb.

"Well," says Glenn, "I think that's pretty good: 'I'm Not Getting Older, I'm Getting Better' – we could bring that in several times. I don't know if that shirt is here or if it's at Lyn's. I could wear it under my shirt -- or maybe over it ..."

He picks up the phone to call Annie to locate the shirt. After a few minutes he says "Wait, let me go to the other phone..." and starts out of the office to Celia's desk. Dale says "Senator, we could go..."
"No, just stay here, this will only take a moment."

No-one is very enthusiastic about his slogan, but no-one can suggest a better one. When he returns we agree to it. "It will lighten it up a bit," says Dale.

We go on to other parts of the Toledo hearing: When will the press availability be, at noon or before 9? Before 9; we know a lot of the news people will leave and not stay for the program. The Senator could wear the T-shirt for the press availability and then change.

Can we work the names of the speakers into the text of the opening statement? Yes, but they are all going to be introduced right after it, do we need to?

Glenn: When will I see this again? Not ‘til Toledo?

No, it will be ready Friday, we'll telexcopy it

Good.

We all wish him a pleasant trip to Colorado to visit Lyn, and leave his office. Dale hands me the speech: "Can you get it pulled together by COB [Close-of-Business]? Do you have all the changes? See if you can put in one more light touch – maybe a good news/bad news line."

Back in the Press office Marty is struggling to get out the news release on the Fernald initiative. "Is the Energy Secretary ‘Carrington’ or ‘Herrington’? I guess the latter, which turns out to be right, though we don’t get around to checking until after the releases have been collected by the Riding Page. What’s the Riding Page number?" I look it up for her in the Senate phone directory. Marty sends the news release to the printer, but forgets and punches L for letterhead. She has to leave for an appointment in Dirksen, so I take over, print the news release on plain paper and paste a PRESS RELEASE heading on top, and make the photocopies. Marty has left the labeled envelopes for the Riding Page; I stuff them and leave them at the front desk, then I do the others, that go out by regular mail.

I got back on a computer terminal and made the changes to the speech that had been talked about, including a good news/bad news line I wasn’t very happy with. Dale was leaving for the holiday, too, and was planning to take my final revision, check it over, and then telexcopy it back from Ohio. I left it on his chair at 5:30 and headed home.

When I got in on Friday, however, there was a new version, typed, that Dale had done before he left. It was mostly my language, rearranged and shortened. Dale's working-in of the names of the participants was smoother than mine, and it was more in the familiar, folksy style of the Senator. He left out my line about women being better at budgeting because they had to stretch their 60-cents-on-a-dollar incomes to meet dollar-plus-inflation expenses, but used all my other rather
lame lighteners. But I had no cause to be unhappy with what he had done – it was a better, tighter speech.

I went over it with Diane, to make sure the new wording accurately reflected the statistics behind it, and later Mona brought another paragraph they wanted changed. It was fine, and it went into his briefing pack.

‘What the Senator Thinks’ (or wants, or believes, or says) sometimes has to be determined in his absence. It fell to my lot this week to write a congratulatory letter for Tony Celebrezze to be read at a dinner of the Cuyahoga County Democrats this weekend. I checked with Mary Jane (the political aide) who suggested some things to say about Celebrezze. I went off to a terminal and wrote the letter, praising Celebrezze for his good works and calling for mutual support and cooperation among Celebrezze, Celeste and the Senatorial self who was writing the letter. Mary Jane liked the letter, but Kathy (the ranking administrator of the office with the Senator, Ed and Dale away) thought there should be no reference to Celeste because of his ties to Marvin Warner. I contended that we couldn't ignore Celeste, especially since he was going to be present at the dinner, and that party solidarity was more important to the Senator than remaining pure and unsullied by association with Celeste. With Mary Jane’s backing I prevailed, and the letter went out as I wrote it.

Now some short tales of the Senate:

I.) I was handed a phone message from a staffer in Sen. Mathias' office asking if Glenn would like to welcome a lodge of Masons visiting from Ohio. Consultation revealed that Glenn was indeed a Mason, and there was little cost and some benefit to responding. I called the staffer back, and she graciously offered to help me out. She told me what to say, and what phrases Masons used, and how to address the leader as 'Worshipful Master.'

II.) John got the wrong ROBO number on about 350 letters sent out last week, so that people who wrote in about the budget got responses about handgun control. The error was caught a day after the letters had been sent, so John wrote an apology letter, saying that there had been a mistake, and that although we tried hard to avoid such mistakes, with over 3000 letters coming in each week it was difficult. Kathy didn't think we should use the word 'mistake' nor should we reveal how many letters the Senator gets. I supported John. I think people would rather have an acknowledgment and apology than a cover-up.

III.) Glenn agreed to record a couple of one minute PSAs (Public Service Announcements) against drinking and driving. The scripts were provided by staff, a tape recorder set up on his desk, and the Senator dutifully read the little sermons. After he had done all three he observed that they were pretty dull, and he'd like to do one of his own. The media people agreed eagerly, while Dale and Marty exchanged 'Oh, no!' looks. Glenn started off by asking how many listeners had seen people who had been in car crashes, with "severed limbs and gaping holes with guts spilling out". Marty was trying to turn away to hide her smile, and Dale was chomping his cigar between his teeth trying not to laugh out loud. Next morning the radio station called back to say they had selected...you
guessed it...the severed limbs and spilling guts.

* * *

The hardest thing for me right now is just staying on top of the rest of my life. The work in Glenn's office goes well; I feel comfortable with the people, I do important interesting things and do them reasonably well. But I mostly have only from 8 PM to midnight in which to live the rest of my life. Each of these letters represents about ten hours of work. But I can't do another four hours of productive work after a long day at the office. I have to have some time to read, watch TV, look out the window or sit and talk with John and Caroline. I get very tired and can't relax; I get slightly sore throats that won't go away, and I don't feel good about myself or my environment. I am tempted to practice the cello but exhaust myself if I do. I looked forward to playing in John's orchestra, but it is not a success. I'm too tired to play decently at 7:30 PM, and the music is neither friendly nor confidence-inspiring. I think I won't do it again. If I stay in Washington I will probably need to lay down the cello permanently. I have also done very little sketching and no poems since I have been here.

I guess Washington is like that -- a place of much art but no singing. I really don't want to live this way, but I suppose I will.

Now a few kind words for my favorite cat, Owen Brown, who died last week in Kent. He was a dirty ginger tom who had lost an eye to cancer in his youth. I pampered him then, and he expected it the rest of his life. He had the habit of leaping right up my front, ready or not, to be held and petted, smug and purring. He also liked to sleep on the kitchen table, steal Gertrude Stein's (my old black dog, still back in Kent with Seth) food, stalk cicadas and eat them, and sit on the doorstep as gargoyle-cum-watchdog.

* * *

April 21, 1985

Mornings are announced by generic birds, chirping relentlessly from the wires over the alleys and small yards behind the house where I live. The mornings are somewhat cooler, but the days have been cruelly hot, from 7AM until after dark. I have put up the new curtains Suzanne sent me by way of Tom Myers, and they are a success. This morning I have them tied back to let in the cool air, and a strap of sunlight gets in too. It lights one side of my face, which is in turn reflected back from the monitor, overlying the letter I am typing. Daisy the dog comes to say good morning, then goes back downstairs to lie on the bare floor in front of the door.

It was the most hectic week yet. Senator Glenn made three Ohio appearances this weekend, the last of which was the first full scale hearing on the situation at Fernald. Radioactive materials have been released, blown, washed, carried or otherwise scattered liberally from the Feed Materials Production Center (FMPC) there for 30 years, and the Department of Energy and its predecessors have not only looked the other way, they have actually awarded millions of dollars of our dollars in
bonuses to National Lead of Ohio (which operates the center) for "excellent" safety and productivity. Workers and nearby neighbors have been exposed to up to 12,000% (yes, twelve thousand percent) of the government's own standard of allowable radiation. Glenn has been instrumental in uncovering this, as ranking member of the Senate subcommittee of Governmental Affairs Committee (GAC) that oversees it.

Testimony to be given at Monday's hearing was arriving all last week. By Thursday the telecopier was in constant operation and Valerie (from GAC) was picking off the flimsy sheets and photocopying them for the committee staff. Len had his desk piled with folders on various aspects of the operation. FMPC is not a very high level of classified operation – they produce weapons grade nuclear materials in rather dirty messy processes. They also produce mountains of reports, studies, comments and journalism, as well as much heat, some light, and even a little sound thinking about the future.

The Senator's opening statement must be scientifically accurate, says Len. I ask him if we can change "factor of 125" to "125 times"? Well, yes, that would be all right. "75 millirems to the lung"? – Shouldn't that be "to the lungs"? No, "to the lung" is a term of art. How much is 75 millirems? You could say about three and a half chest x-rays.

Len says the Senator should not mention closing the plant, no one's talking about closing the plant. Aren't some people are afraid that they might? No, that's only in the Senator's mind. But then, I counter, if we don't put it in, he may add it himself.

Len's super-keen eye catches a typo 'thre' and for a moment tries to make sense of it: What's this 'thre'? Oh, I see, it's 'there'.

There were four of us in the office that Saturday afternoon. I was entering into the computer and editing the OPENING REMARKS OF SENATOR GLENN that Dale had written using Len's data. Valerie was typing and arranging the questions that would be asked, Len going through the testimony making selections for order and emphasis. Dale came a little later to prepare the press packets and get everything ready for the briefing that would be Sunday evening in Cincinnati.

The Hart Building was ghostly quiet and empty, with only the constant hiss of the ventilation system and hum of machines. I had about 160 lines, mostly in Dale's hand, to decipher, edit and enter, then proofread with Val, have it checked by Len and finally print out in two formats -- one large type-face double-spaced half pages for the Senator to read from, and the other single spaced on legal pages for the press copies. It took about five hours. Without the computer it would have taken me three days, I suppose. (And two hours with a better word-processor. The cursor is debilitatingly slow, the cursor keys are not handy to the main keyboard, and you have to exit from the text to reformat, then re-enter to see how it looks.)

I cleared out some of Dale's underbrush of the 'in order to prepare to get ready to make possible'
(exaggeration intended) variety, and excised the ANDs and SOs that started sentences. Dale put them back. Val put quotes around a phrase I had typed, Len took them out again. I learned later that those quotation marks had not been in Dale's first draft, Val put them in and Len took them out before it got to me. I didn't think they belonged either.

* * *

Tuesday, 7 AM

Sunday night I came home after the concert (which was in its way a success) miserably hot and sticky but determined to finish this letter about the interesting events of the week. I changed into a pair of cut-offs and a sleeveless T-shirt, fired up the C-64 and sat there for three hours, sweating, describing how I wrote the Senator's Statue of Liberty speech and what success it had had, and some office events. It seemed like one of the best things I had written yet, but we will never know, because just as I was ready to save it to the diskette I joggled the power cord to the computer and wiped it all out. What follows will be an attempt at reconstruction, but my loss of heart may be evident.

Thursday and Friday were chaotic. I was assigned the writing of the speech for Saturday evening, Dale was writing Friday's speech, Marty was fielding calls from the press about Fernald, Bitburg (Glenn had made a statement protesting about Reagan's bungling of it) and Kindness. (For those of you who never heard of Kindness, he is in this case a person, a Republican Congressman from the Dayton area who has been put up to challenging Glenn's Senate seat.) There were letters and telegrams to get out congratulating various worthy organizations – Hungarian-American Boy Scouts, North Olmsted Band Boosters, Toledo YWCA Peace Site, the League for Industrial Democracy. There were decisions to make about the Senator's schedule: photograph with the confectioners for Secretaries Week? (No, too sexist.) Phone call to students at Darke County Vocational High School? (Yes, that's Kindness country.) Floor statement about the Armenian Martyrs? (no one else in the press shop notices John Glenn's name in the list of sponsors on their letterhead, and I have to rescue it from oblivion.) Will the Senator sign a pledge to abstain from alcohol and mind-altering drugs for Alcohol and Drug Awareness Week? (Big discussion: "No way. The Senator never signs anything not written by his staff." "Sure, if it gets his name in the papers." "No, the Senator is hard on drugs, but this is a 'stopped-beating-your-wife' deal." (Write them a congratulatory letter for their good work, but don't sign the pledge.) How about this request for a one-minute speech about the flag for Flag Day? (Yes. Call that guy in Ohio who designed the 50-star flag and get something [we can use for the speech] – MJ has his number.)

I started by calling CRS and asking for a background packet on the Statue of Liberty. They promised it no later than 5 PM. I got from Dale a book of speakers' resource materials and a copy of the "Pledge of Allegiance ending" Dale said the Senator wanted in the speech, and found some other stuff I thought I could use. Then I spent most of the rest of the morning writing letters and making phone calls. CRS called at one o'clock to say that my packet was ready in the Congressional Reading Room of the Madison Building, so after my soup and sandwich in the
basement of Dirksen I took the subway to the House side. I got my packet, then returned outdoors, crossing Independence Avenue and the Capitol lawn. There were thousands of people – eating lunch on the grass, lined up for tour busses, taking pictures of one another, carrying briefcases or tan envelopes, jogging, walking, talking. Uniformed Capitol Police are everywhere -- mostly men. They are friendly and talkative, give good directions and are very expert in managing people.

Dale wanted a draft of the speech first thing Thursday. I couldn't get a terminal all Wednesday afternoon, and disconsolately scratched notes on a yellow legal pad, musing on my position as a writer with neither a typewriter nor a computer terminal, and remembering Dorothy Parker's jab at Ross at the New Yorker: "I couldn't write my story because someone was using the pencil."

When I finally got a terminal about 6 PM I wrote a couple of paragraphs and discovered how tired I was and went home. I got back at about 7:30 in the morning, and after I recognized that I was stalling on a laugh-line in the opening, I left it blank and went on from there. By 9:30 I had a draft; I wrote HELP in the blank at the beginning and left it on Dale's chair.

I had other things to deal with: another request for letter about the Holocaust, the news releases about the Fernald hearing to get ready for the Riding Page, the scan for the Senator's name in the papers (and hand washing afterward -- newspaper ink is very dirty), getting stuff off the telecopier and taking it around to interested people (Marvin Warner and the S&L crisis is still hot). I was at my desk at 1 o'clock when Dale buzzed me and said he thought the speech was terrific, that he would put a laugh-line in at the beginning and do a little editing, but it was ready to take in to the Senator Friday morning, and I should go in with it on Friday when the Senator reviewed his weekend speeches.

Peggy was already preparing the large typed speech pages on Friday morning when I arrived. Dale showed me his edited version, to which he had added a quip about Annie being dressed and ready in 30 seconds when she found out he was going to spend "An Evening with the Lady" (the name of the Statue of Liberty fundraiser) Dale had changed some of the language into "Glennese" and added ‘So’ ‘And’ or ‘But’ to the beginning of a lot of sentences: "The Senator will add them anyway." (but in that case, why write them?) The Press gets the speech in writing and then writes about it. What they get should get good writing. I think the shift from the oral to the print mode should be done for them, but I wasn't going to argue it.

Glenn was scheduled to leave the office at noon on Friday, but didn't make it: we went in for the speech review at 1:30. He read through and approved the speech Dale had written for Middletown that evening, then he looked at my speech. I said I wasn't responsible for the sexist joke, and he smiled and said it sounded like Dale. When he came to the part about the Statue of Liberty being built by contributions from ordinary people he asked "Is that true? I didn't know that." When he finished reading he looked at me and said "That's a good speech -- a very good speech." I had also
prepared a page of information about the event, and we talked a little more about that. It sounded like a dog-and-pony show, with Miss Delaware singing "God Bless America", a flag drill team, speeches by local dignitaries and the singing of the Sweet Adelines.

Marty went with the Senator to Ohio; Dale stayed behind to finish the opening statement for the Fernald hearing. When she returned she had tales to tell: the speech was a great hit; there were about a thousand people there; the Senator, Annie and MJ really liked the speech -- and Annie said it was so interesting she could have listened all night; the Senator wanted it in his permanent speech file.

Marty has some other tales as well – about how furious Dale had been over the letter I had written him after I had been down to Washington in December, when he had promised me copies of some of Glenn’s speech, but had given me only one -- an insubstantial piece made about politicians and sports stars. I had written back saying that I would reserve judgment until I had a chance to read more of the speeches. Apparently Ed and MJ were so amused by Dale's response they laughed themselves to tears. I never had an inkling, however: Dale has been extremely helpful, fair, honest, and friendly; he has been an excellent teacher.

On Tuesday, when the Senator was back from Fernald, he stopped me outside the conference room to tell me again what a good speech it was, and that he wanted it in his file of top speeches.

* * *

Events are piling up behind this letter. My daughter Alys has been visiting from Santa Barbara, and the only time I have had to work on this letter has been between 7 and 8 AM. Most of you are now rejoicing that Congress did not (in Glenn’s words) "write a check for another Gulf of Tonkin"; some of you will have phoned Glenn’s office the day after Reagan's budget speech to say you liked or didn’t like his budget.

Tom Myers came down for the rally on the 20th, and he brought me a lock for my bicycle, so I can now risk life and limb on the streets of Capitol Hill and spare my legs and feet. For those of you who knew about it, the mole on my back was benign, but it split open after the stitches came out, and I have a hole in my back -- temporary, I hope.

I still get pretty discouraged with life in the city. The heat last weekend was dreadful, and it is only April. Everything is paved, hard, bright and noisy, even having leaves on the trees doesn't help much. I miss my good friends, and familiar places; most of all my garden and all the life in it.

* * *
At 7:30 AM it is already a fine day, with brilliant greens and a deep blue sky. If I were in Kent I would be out in the garden, digging or hoeing the cool brown earth, attended by several four legged friends. I would be planning a Saturday of exploring along Fish Creek, talking to friends, baking something and maybe playing quartets in the evening.

But I am in Washington, and the best I can hope for is a ride to the small grubby K-Mart on Pennsylvania Avenue on the world's most uncomfortable bicycle and an evening celebration of John Webber's birthday.

The Webbers have been very kind and helpful, and I feel more comfortable here than I did in the narrow middle-class luxury of Betty's house, with housecleaning every Saturday morning. ("Make sure you run the vacuum cleaner in long straight strokes -- it looks bad when the surface lies every which way.")

Nothing is going particularly badly. I wrote another speech for the Senator, for the Columbus Salvation Army which is celebrating its anniversary next week. It's not as good as the last speech, because the Salvation Army is an organization of beady-eyed believers, not like the diffuse and disorganized bunch that celebrated the Statue of Liberty.

I got terribly tired when Alys was here, walking and standing to do tourist things with her, and it was hard to see her go back to California after such a short week. But if there is nothing very bad, neither is there much of the goodness I thought life had for me. I spend my time coping, ignoring, maintaining, affirming, denying, defending, enduring and hoping only that this isn't all I can expect for the rest of my life. I used to read, explore, construct, criticize, delight, sing, lament, enjoy the company of friends and animals, make things, get angry or tickled over events, watch the sky and listen to the rain. I suppose that after the memories of that life fade it won't hurt so much.

John Webber is a composer. He believes he is a composer, and in fact spends several hours a day writing notes on staff paper, and a couple more organizing a small band of musicians and believers into the "New Music Orchestra". He knows with great certitude the parameters of good compositions, which he judges by looking at scores. Although he writes steadily, and bashes out Elgar, the Well-Tempered Clavier, Gilbert & Sullivan, Richard Strauss and "Favorites from the Modern Piano Repertoire" on the piano at all hours, I have never heard him try out or play through anything of his own composing. I can't assume that he doesn't know how his music sounds -- I just don't observe him listening to it. His cosmology seems to include the notion that he is a latter-day Bach or Schubert, unknown and therefore unappreciated. This in turn rests on the assumption that genius is within the individual, who is somehow born a composer and manipulator of musical materials, and whose life must be dedicated to fighting a stupid and truculent adversary: 'society,'
As a cosmology this is no worse than many, but it is a complete scenario that offers little scope for alternative outcomes.

My cosmology-of-composing is, as I guess you know, a good bit different. For starters, Bach and Schubert (today's examples) were embedded in musical communities and musical traditions, and these communities and traditions were part of the society at large of their day. If Bach was criticized by his friends or colleagues, it was because they listened to his music and cared how it sounded. If Schubert came to find his music more important than food, health or money, it was at least an option for him. In most present-day Western societies he would be fed, cured and put into job training for computer programming. Eighteenth and nineteenth century composers were all performers who played their music for people and had their musical behaviors modulated by the responses of people who listened. They pushed the contemporary idioms to the limits in their compositions (at least in their youth) but they remained securely rooted in both their musical traditions and community expectations.

So where is the music that will become the 'classical music' of the 20th century now being produced? My bet is not on composers-in-residence subsidized by corporations, free-lance or academic 'new music' sects, frustrated computer hackers, crusading heroes or self-appointed geniuses. The place in our society where musicians are embedded in musical communities and traditions has to be in the entertainment industry. That's where, in our global village, music that meets enough community expectations to be heard and made-sense-of is produced. We could, of course, change this by manipulating public expectations about music through public education. Or try. If we wanted to.

I don't. I do think there is music not of the entertainment industry in most of our communities, and it is possible to compose and perform within them, even though the most powerful music is driven by the mass media. My neighbor in Kent, Bob Kidney, who performs and 'invents' (I can't say 'composes' because he doesn't read or notate music) with the very successful "15-60-75" [the Numbers Band that has been playing in bars in NE Ohio for over 15 years] has made a successful match between his musical imagination and the expectations of his audiences.

I have myself dabbled successfully at composing music for liberal middle-class churches. If I had been able to sustain the cosmology that allowed me to believe I was a genius, I would probably right now be finishing an opera (a specific opera, based on materials I researched long ago) instead of writing speeches and letters to sustain the public image of a famous man.

Intermezzo: Clara Boone comes to wish John a happy birthday, bringing three lovely columbines for him. Clara is a woman of nearly 70, with grey hair dressed in bangs and page-boy bob, an elderly child who pronounces everything carefully and slowly, with a slight lisp. Caroline Webber introduces me, and Clara says "Well, what do you call each other?" I can't resist that: "Caroline. It's other people with the problem."
Caroline explains to me that Clara is Arsis (ahem) a small press which publishes contemporary composers, mostly women, and tells Clara that I am a cellist. "Oh," says Clara, has John shown you that lovely piece by Jane Smith for solo cello?" Yes, he has. "Have you played it?" Not yet. (I looked at it and couldn’t imagine any sounds that interested me enough to invest energy in getting out the cello. But I don’t say that.)

John comes down from upstairs and sits on the bottom step, still showing his little-boy pout over being 36. Clara presents the columbines to him, which he stuffs in his shirt pocket with the question: "What are these? Shooting stars?" Clara leans over and points, teacher-like, to his head and says "Genius! It's right there! All you have to do is set it free!"

Talk turns to another composer who is such a great musician that she can sight-read Milton Babbitt (oh!) and how unreasonable society is about supporting Art, (i.e.: John Webber and Arsis Press.) Then Clara must go -- a Boston new-music group is playing at the Library of Congress and she must talk to the director about getting some of her Arsis composers on their programs. John returns upstairs to nurse his sense of injustice at getting older and Caroline and I go to the kitchen to work on the birthday dinner. I was able to rescue the columbines and put them in water. They revived nicely and I was relieved, remembering that they are, after all, more eagles than doves.

They reminded me suddenly of Columbine, a persona I used to assume occasionally when I was tired of being Caroline. I realized it was Columbine who was watching all this, dumb. Nobody in Washington has ever seen her -- all they see is a tired-eyed middle-aged woman dressed in unfashionable clothes. Even I have ignored her, supposing her to be unimportant or unnecessary to my life. But I suddenly became aware that she is still with me.

I don’t know what I am going to do in July, when this fellowship runs out. Right now I feel I need to go back to Kent, to get things a little bit in order there. If things work out Bob and Kate could share my house with me, and it might be possible to pay the property taxes and get enough free-lance playing to make ends meet. I don’t want to stay in Washington -- I don’t like who I am here very much, and if I should have to live the rest of my life with her, here, I guess I’d rather not. I like the people in Washington -- in some ways it is like a huge Oberlin. Yet it is a community of strangers, with money the only common language; there is no time to invest in friendships. I suppose I could stand living here if I had $30,000 a year, a person to share my life with, and a garden and Fang & Claw Society to come home to.

* * *

May 8, 1985

This week I have been enlightened, or disillusioned, or both. I got to go on a fishing trip, the prey being an explanation of how we agree on what is ‘true’ or what ‘truth’ is for us. Adventures first, however, because we won’t know what we have caught unless we know how and where we are
Having made a success of preparing a speech for a Statue of Liberty fundraiser, I was asked to work on a speech for the Salvation Army Centennial in Columbus. The Senator had a pretty good idea of what he wanted to say, and had a story about his family he wanted to use. The Salvation Army has always been his favorite charity: "In fact, my dad always said the SA did more with a buck than any other organizations -- and it is true. When you check up on the figures you'll find their overhead is much lower than the Red Cross. I want to use this -- why don't we do a little scenario where I ask the local chairman of the [SA] board how he, as a hard-headed businessman, would choose. I believe their overhead is only about 15% of what they take in. That means that 85% of what you donate goes to help those in need.” He turned to me and said “You can get the figures from the Library of Congress. Ask them to send you the financial reports of the five leading charitable organizations.”

That was a good story -- apropos, and well told. Dale and I agreed that he should tell it in his own words and that we should merely script the beginning of the speech, the acknowledgment of the guests, the praise of the Salvation Army – plugging in the statistics from the LOC – a couple of laugh-lines, and the context for his story.

I went right to my phone and called CRS, [Library of Congress’ Congressional Research Service] and the next morning received a packet with an assessment of the financial standing of five national charitable organizations done by the Better Business Bureau. It was a uniform presentation, giving the previous year’s outlays for programs/service, administration, fund-raising, and the unspent balance for each organization. The amount spent by the different agencies on programs/services varied over a rather narrow range between 61% and 68%, and the Salvation Army had the lowest amount for services. Part of this was undoubtedly an artifact of the fact that for the SA, the breakdown was given only for the national headquarters, which is more heavily administrative than the regional offices. But I simply didn’t have the statistics to back up “85% to those in need.”.

I consulted with Dale. We agreed we couldn't use that, and decided I should try to reach the Columbus SA and get their figures. I called the obliging Major: "Yes, here in Columbus our overhead is just about 15% – I don't have the exact figures, but it would be safe to say that." I didn't ask him whether that included the 10% that the national SA literature said each local group sent to the next higher division.

The Major also explained that SA people didn't have careers, they had 'callings' and they didn't have high salaries because they all wanted more to go to the needy. So I worked all that in, leaving out the "hard-headed businessman,” and being careful not to say anything about 85% to services. For a laugh-line I suggested something about Glenn's Presidential Campaign being too big a disaster for even the Salvation Army. Dale changed it to having JG ask the SA for help after the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries and being told that the SA offered salvation, but they couldn't do resurrections, which was much better.
As usual, there was no time to review my draft before Dale took it home and brought back his revision to be typed in speech format by Peggy, the morning of the day of the speech. I had asked if I could go to Columbus with the Senator and Dale had arranged it. Dale and I had requested a half hour on the Senator's schedule for the speech review so we could explain to him why we had scrapped the "85% to services" and the 'hardheaded businessman' parts. We were scheduled for a half hour at 1:30 before his departure for Dulles at 2:15.

I didn't see the typed copy of the speech until late morning, and discovered that Dale had left in the "85% to services" line. When I explained to Dale, he said, "OK, we'll take care of that with the Senator at the review." But we never got our review, and Dale only had time to ask Glenn to go over the speech with me (Dale wasn't going) en route somehow -- probably in the car from going from Port Columbus to the University Hilton.

It was a hot, humid afternoon with fairly strong strong breezes. I rode out to Dulles with Marty. We thought we were nearly on time, but Senator had decided to leave a little early because of headwinds. We ended with 'wheels up' at just about the time scheduled, but the trip took an extra 25 minutes. The first hour was routine, the air was hazy and the ground lost color very quickly as we ascended. We ran into more clouds, and went up to about 20,000 feet. From there it was spectacular -- the clouds were in cliffs and caves, castles, towers, canyons, and arches; in this white skyscape were curved porpoise clouds, long grey shark clouds, schools of minnow clouds, then suddenly we would be inside a blank grey mist. The Senator was enjoying the clouds as he flew the plane -- he would point out to us formations to port or starboard. We landed smoothly, and Joan (head of the Columbus office) met us, bringing her husband Griff with a second car. The Senator, Annie and MJ (who manages the logistics of flying and personal arrangements of these trips) went with Griff; Marty and I rode with Joan. Marty was disconsolate because she had wanted to brief the Senator on the press availability she had set up before the dinner. (Fifteen minutes before we left the office Marty and I were still phoning radio stations and the smaller Ohio papers) I was a little dismayed, too -- I knew Glenn hadn't looked at the speech yet, and I didn't know when he would get a chance to do so. We were late for the press availability, but in time for a live hit with Doug Adair’s 6 o'clock news on Channel 4.

The small room assigned for the press availability had two TV crews, two radio reporters and two newspaper reporters. After the three questions Glenn answered by remote for live show, he went to the lectern with the SA Major and the chairman of the board, and fielded questions – about Bitburg, Home State Savings, the budget, foreign affairs. Marty fretted about local people getting into camera range, but the TV crewman assured her that he had a zoom lens on the Senator and the others weren't on camera. The reporters wanted to ask political questions, but the Senator wanted to give Salvation Army answers.

Annie's mother was there, being introduced to everyone. She thought she knew me, and I talked with her at some length. Marty, MJ and I were given tickets for the banquet, at the table reserved for the Press. We were quite alone there, because the Press all went home. The SA had their own
photographer and Marty got him to take some shots for our files.

Presently we all sang “The Star Spangled Banner” and stood through a long invocation about Jesus. Music was provided by Salvation Sound and the Citadel Band. The room was crowded with middle-aged and older people – most of the younger people were escorting elders. The dinner was very good, efficiently served by the Hilton staff. The program included an appeal for funds that rivaled any prayer meeting, a performance of a ‘Timbrel Salute’ by eight plump women in SA hats, red vests, white blouses and blue skirts, who waved, swung and shook be-ribboned tambourines in time to recorded march-music, a proclamation from the Ohio Legislature, the presentation of awards, and Salvation Sound singing ‘That Old Time Religion.’ I could see Glenn reading through his speech during dinner, while Annie enjoyed the company of the Salvation Army officer beside her.

The first part of the speech went smoothly. Glenn is at ease speaking, and he rolled off the first laugh-line as scripted, substituted the ‘wanted to run for President in the worst way’ bit for one Dale had written, and pulled off ‘Salvation not Resurrection’ with just the right timing. He got a good laugh and applause for that, which pleased him. He grinned and said "That was pretty good -- I think I'll use that one again."

He read the "85% for services" lines Dale had written, then left the text and added "...and I had a member of my staff research this so I know it's true." I cringed. Then, still ad-libbing, Glenn went on: "Now I'm going to ask Don, here -- Don's a hard-headed businessman -- I'm going to ask him how he would judge...." I looked at Marty and she smiled. "It's all right", she whispered, "The press isn't here." (It is a tenet of faith in Washington that if it is not reported in the Washington Post, the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal, it didn't happen.)

Glenn got a standing ovation with cheers when he finished. Afterward there was a great crush of people wanting his autograph. He was amiable and patient; would ask their names and then write TO JOE / BEST WISHES /JOHN GLENN on the offered program. Marty and I helped MJ move him toward the door and finally into the one car that took us all back to Port Columbus. Glenn said he almost ruined the speech by not telling his story in the right order, but he was satisfied with the response. I said nothing: what could I say?

Lane Aviation was dim and deserted when we returned. Annie, Marty and I stopped in the restroom while the Senator phoned for weather and rustled up some packets of M&Ms for the trip back, and MJ went to pay for the aviation fuel – 21 cents cheaper (per gallon) there than at Dulles. I asked how much fuel cost for a trip like this: about $200, she said.

It was cool and the wind had died. Glenn went out and started kicking the blocks out from under the wheels of the small plane to the left. I was startled, because I knew it wasn't his plane. The attendant came out and joshed him about not knowing his own plane, and Glenn retorted
good-naturedly that it was a long time since he'd stolen a plane. We got boarded onto his Beech Baron and waited while the credit card mix-up was ironed out – MJ had used an expired card – then we taxied out a long way east before a quick takeoff.

Columbus became a jeweled field of sparkling lights spread below us, and we were soon out over the countryside, with clusters of amber lights at towns and a thin string of crawling white and red beads marking Interstate 70. There were a few clouds -- thick, hopelessly black blots, and as we went east we started to see distant blooms of lightning far to the north. About 10:45 the Senator called to us to look out the front, to see a red-gold rind of moon coming up over the horizon. I watched it all the way in, growing to not-quite round and pale to a soft amber before it was obscured by clouds. We came down into Dulles very rapidly. MJ said she thought we were too high, and he would have to make another approach, but he merely made a couple of steep zig-zags and we were down on the vast field of blue lights. "Heck," said Glenn, "there wasn't another plane on the field and the guys in the control tower didn't have anything to do. It was perfectly safe, just a little steeper than usual. I figured we were late enough, and I didn't want to take the time to go around again."

We landed about 11.20PM. Marty left, and I waited for MJ to take me back into town. MJ and the Senator saw that the plane was checked out and came into the Page Avjet office and signed the necessary papers. MJ's car was almost out of gas, and John and Annie insisted on following us to make sure we got as far as the gas station before they went home. It was a hot night; MJ opened the roof of her car and we rode in along the deserted highway. She stopped to get milk at an all-night 7-11 store and went on to Connecticut Avenue where, after one failure, she found a cab for me, so she wouldn't have to drive all the way over to Capitol Hill. When I got out of the car she handed me a small cold package – she had bought me an ice-cream bar.

Despite the hour the cab-driver was talkative, with a pleasant accent. I remarked that it had been cooler in Ohio that evening, and revealed that I worked for Senator Glenn. "The astronaut? Oh, he's a great guy. He would have made a great President. But of course I really admire Reagan." We got to 12th and Maryland about 1 AM; the cab driver waited until I was safely inside. I headed for the shower.

* * *

Our fishing expedition seems to have landed, alive and squirming, a Useful Conceptual Fiction. I wish to argue that the Senator's version of 85% of Salvation Army funds to service is 'true', (although not accordance with 'facts') because it plausibly sustains what he – and the people at the SA banquet – wanted to believe anyway. It is a set of numbers that made them feel good, and any relationship with the facts is distinctly coincidental. The figures reported by the BBB are also Useful Conceptual Fictions that are different only because they are driven by different interests. All our quantification in such matters is arbitrary: somewhere a decision is made about whether the salary of an officer of the Salvation Army (say) is a service or administrative expense. A bed or a bowl of soup is unequivocally a service to someone in need of it, but what about the person who makes
them possible. Quantification is, however, one of the more popular ways of justifying Useful Conceptual Fictions – although, having watched all week the Congressional Gong-Show (otherwise known as the budget debate) one cannot help wondering if quantification is any help. Every Senator has a menagerie of UCFs. It seems to me that elephant-hide shows through more often than donkey skin but that may be one of my UCFs affecting my perceptions. Certainly in the last few weeks Ronald Reagan's UCFs have been glaringly apparent -- but the UCFs of the public enable them to believe, as he does, (for example) that the Pope supports military aid to the Contras, even when the Pope says he never said that, and that a Jewish girl said Reagan should visit Bitburg, when she says she wrote that he shouldn't. Reagan's biggest vulnerability now is that he has surrounded himself with people who use the same Conceptual Fictions he does, and there is no one who can identify statements that infringe on widely held UCFs before the President makes them publicly. Some UCFs are so widely and securely rooted that we may never be able to eradicate them -- welfare cheaters, the inefficiency of bureaucracy, the threat of communism, the necessity of war...

...but this has gone on too long already.

* * *

May 12, 1985

I wish to propose a solution to Nicaragua: buy it. We'd easily save what it cost in a few years, and it would satisfy those who want to stop the spread of communism as well as those who want to promote economic recovery. Or maybe we could make a trade and give them Iowa in exchange. Think of all the lessons in democracy the Sandinistas would get trying to govern Iowa corn-farmers, and how educational it would be for our politicians to have to be elected by Nicaraguans.

Omni Magazine wants to know the Senator's favorite joke, and there is a conversation in the Press office about what that might be. Dale recalls one of his best lines: "This administration will go down in history as the one that wanted to sell Yellowstone Park and buy Times Beach" but it's too topical. Then there's the dog joke -- "No, that's too bad." "Why," I ask, "don't we ask him?" "Oh, no," says Dale, "Never. He'd expect us to use it, and it might not be what we want at all. The trouble is jokes always depend on context. Why do magazines have to ask such dumb questions?"

"Well, then," says Marty, "What about this guy who wants to know what the Senator thinks about the flag?" Dale grins, in his element: "Okay -- The flag is more than just a piece of cloth -- go ahead, write that down -- The flag represents the hopes and dreams and, yes, the sacrifices of the people of this country..." Marty and I groan but Dale is undeterred, continues for a few sentences and concludes "....proud of what the flag stands for." I suggest "proud of the ideals the flag stands for." "Yes. Put that in."
In the confusion on Friday morning I was the first to notice that Senator Glenn's name was on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, in a news note about the numbers of callers to our office for and against the President's budget. Dale had orchestrated this one well and we got 'good ink' from it. NBC sent a news team to photograph Rose and Lisa (receptionists) answering phone calls, but they didn't use the picture. That same morning we had the phone call to the high school in Darke County. The students had submitted questions, their teachers had selected ten for which I had gathered the answers. Some I turned over to legislative aides, some I got Dale to answer, and one we actually left for Glenn to answer himself: "If you could re-live your life, would you do anything differently?"

Dale, Marty and I went into his office just before the call was placed. There wasn't much briefing, the questions and answers were on three pages spread out on his desk. Glenn enjoys talking to young people. He tells them how important their studies are, and he tries to stick to the script he has been given, but his natural enthusiasm often breaks through. "I always get a kick out of being asked if I would do anything differently. People often say 'No, they'd do the same things.' But that would mean you were cocky and satisfied with your life. I don't feel that way. I always use pencils with erasers, because there are always things that could be done better. Yet I've had a lot of opportunities. Everyone's life is different, and dependent on incidents over which we have no control. I happened to be at the right place at the right time several times in my career, but one of the things I did right was to be ready when those opportunities came along. I want to stress the importance of education and urge you to study hard so you can qualify yourself to take advantage of the opportunities that will come along..."

There is finally not enough time to answer all ten questions, and Glenn admits that he has taken too much time on some -- the future of the space program, and the problem of cargo-preference for farmers.

* * *

The problem with, and the power of Conceptual Fictions (if you are wondering where the 'Useful' went, it has been judged tautological: my Conceptual Fictions are always useful, even beneficent. It's those other guys -- the ubiquitous and iniquitous 'they' whose Conceptual Fictions are useless or pernicious) is that they exclude alternatives. This may be an artifact of our Western habit of having our Conceptual Fictions designed for us by Great Men. (I hasten to point out that this is probably progress. It is certainly better than having them handed down from God on stone tablets.) Our Great Men become very expert in identifying as dangerous the Conceptual Fictions of other Great Men whose ideology is aimed somewhere in the opposite direction of theirs. Marx-bashing is a favorite sport in pseudo-intellectual Western politics.

Yet the prevailing epistemological assumption of democratic governance in this country is that good government is done by Great Men, elected by the majority. This explains the attitude of Reagan and his cohort: 'You voted for me, now do what I say and shut up.' This is pure Max Weber (Great
Man) and no more disinterested, true, logical, godly or inevitable than the Marxist 'It's good for society, now vote for it and shut up.' This has scarcely prevented the rise of Great Men, though I will grant that in the Soviet Union dissenters seem to be more openly and brutally shut up. (We have more subtle ways of silencing them.) But we should also remember that shutting people up brutally and openly has an ancient and honorable history in Russia, quite unrelated to Marxism. Some argue that ordinary people need (physiologically? psychologically? spiritually?) Great Men to look up to and admire in order to become truly fulfilled human beings. I can only reply that that betrays both contempt for one's fellow humans and the ambitions of little people to become Great Men.

I am going to allow myself a few Conceptual Fictions here, to address the question so many of you ask me, directly or indirectly: What is John Glenn really like?

John Glenn is a very bright, friendly, competent, conscientious, temperate person who has a gentle politeness toward people, who has an impish sense of humor, and a developed sense of moral responsibility. He has too much respect for others and too great an appreciation of alternatives to set himself up as a Great Man, and seems mildly surprised that he is considered to be one. He puts himself wholeheartedly into whatever is at hand, and sometimes forgets that cameras are trained on him. He enjoys the affluence and prestige he has, but would rather spend time with Annie, Lyn, Dave and his grandchildren.

Glenn is very much 'The Right Stuff', doing what seems right, following the rules and not showing surprise or claiming credit when it works. He likes people and trusts them, and chafes sometimes at the short leash his staff keeps him on. While he is very interested in space, science, the military services, education, the environment, health, and good government, and follows developments closely in those areas, it is sometimes difficult to get his attention on other issues, and aides complain that some things disappear from his desk. He is a good Democrat, from a Democratic family; he is strong on civil rights, supportive of women's issues and pro-choice. For all his strong-on-defense posture he is genuinely concerned about stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons and promoting disarmament, and, in his words, in creating 'a gentler world' for his grandchildren.

Yet it is exactly the Right Stuff that defeated him for the Presidency. The goodness of match between his ideals and actions and those of our shared ideals of rightness (such as they are) make him not outstanding but invisible. And his expertise in avoiding risk that make him an excellent pilot and astronaut also make him politically a banker instead of an entrepreneur, profiting from risks taken by others rather than reaching out and taking opportunity by the scruff of the neck, risking whatever capital he has.

There is a current myth that Glenn lacked the "Right Staff" for his presidential campaign. It may be true that his staff at the time was not equal to the challenges of a presidential race, without that being the cause of his failure. I suspect that the most expert staff imaginable would not have been
able to deal with who Glenn is and who he is not. He is interested and well informed on the important issues; he is not afraid to speak his mind, and has considerable charm in public appearances, despite those tired stories about his bad speeches. But he is not enough driven by money and prestige, seeing them as fringe benefits rather than the main fabric of political power.

Finally, staff-and-Senator is a self-reinforcing system, and tends to exclude people whose Conceptual Fictions lie outside the narrow acceptable range. Glenn's most trusted long term advisors are as committed to his Conceptual Fictions and cognitive styles as he is to theirs.

Consider his newsletter. When I arrived in January a newsletter had just been mailed, intended to tell Ohioans everything Glenn had done in his ten years in office, but it didn't show much savvy about what constituents might want to know, or be willing to read. It was a targeted mailing, with labels printed with complete names and addresses, and it was sent to about 1.5 million Ohio households.

We received generally favorable responses: about 40 letters praising the newsletter and less than 20 letters saying "why do you waste taxpayers' money this way." Following this response a second newsletter was planned, and Marty was added to the staff because she had experience with newsletters in a House office. The deadline for the second newsletter was April 1, and Press was asked in every staff meeting how it was progressing. It was finally ready to send to the printers in mid-April, and Sam (the expert in mass mailings) had created a revised mailing list, based on voter registration lists that had been purchased.

But in the meantime, a change in the Senate rules had come along: Senators could now use 'Postal Patron' addresses, sparing the considerable expense of getting up-to-date, accurate lists of names and addresses. At first, everyone assumed that we would scrap the targeted mailings and go with Postal Patron, reaching far more households with a shotgun approach. Then the AA, the Legislative Director and the political adviser started to get cautious. What if Kindness attacked Glenn for wasting tax dollars? What if the rule change was a Republican trick to get the Democrats to spend money on wasteful newsletters? What if we got a whole lot of letters from people who don’t like newsletters? We’d better wait -- let the Republicans get out front on this first. We can still do a targeted mailing, later.

Dale fought hard to have the newsletter sent out, saying that if people did nothing but notice that they got something from Senator Glenn it was a good thing, given that the Senator's standing in Ohio was ‘a mile wide and inch deep’ and it was worth getting a few nut-letters to do it.

But caution prevailed. Dale lost, and the newsletter is on the back-burner, maybe permanently. The Senator concurred with his advisors of the longest tenure.

* * *
May 28, 1985

My son Seth, age 19, has decided to enlist in the Army, intending to become a Green Beret. Why, I ask, do you want to become a trained killer in an authoritarian organization? No, you have it all wrong, he replies, I don't want to be a killer, I want to be a survivor -- I want to be better than everyone. If you're in the Green Berets and you slip up, you're dead, because you weren't good enough.

He's right that we are talking in different registers, so I try something else. What happens when you get sent to Nicaragua to kill women and children? That's not going to happen, he insists, and besides "I know how to get out if I need to."

I suggest that he is joining the Army in pursuit of a fantasy, and this fantasy is a dilemma with only bad endings. If his dream of being a survivor/hero is realized he will be either dead or a killer, and if it is not he will be disappointed in himself, not to mention frustrated and at a dead end about what to do with the rest of his life. It's not a fantasy -- it's the way things are, he says patiently.

He came down to Washington to talk to Phil and Milt, and they reinforced his determination. Milt did suggest that he check with the Air Force recruiter to find out what kind of deal they offered before he signed up with the Army, and also told him there was no reason to sign up for four years -- he could re-enlist after two years, and they'd be just as happy. Then, as luck would have it, in the lounge car of the Amtrak train back to Ohio he picked up a pretty young thing, a helicopter mechanic in the Army. She was being sent out to repair a National Guard helicopter in Pittsburgh.

I am not especially happy about his decision (which in truth he has not made yet, but with the recruiter calling him every few days I have no doubt he'll go). But it is not my decision or my life, and I can't offer him anything better, not even a place to live and tuition to go to college. I'm not even sure it will work out badly, or that he will regret it. He is bright, observant, and charming, when he chooses. He will be a good soldier, at least as long as his fantasy remains intact, and will probably earn rapid promotions. His recruiter says his chances of getting into OCS are good; according to Phil, they are vanishingly small without at least two years of college. So aside from telling him flat out that I wish he would try a year of college in Santa Barbara (living with his father) before deciding and urging him to give himself a decision point after two years, I haven't tried to change his mind.

But I am curious. When does a Conceptual Fiction become a fantasy? Are fantasy worlds necessarily bad? Isn't our whole system of wars and armies, good and evil, battles, heroes, enemies, victories, defeats and patriotism a Conceptual Fiction of great age and tenacity? When the Useful (for the purposes of the Nazis) Conceptual Fiction of the badness of Jews intersected with the UCFs of army discipline, fantasies of war, and that mainstay of human morality, cowboy-western justice (if the bad guys are bad enough any amount of violence against them is justified) the Holocaust was not only possible, it was inevitable.
Without our Conceptual Fictions about the goodness and worth of armies and military strength, and our young men's fantasies of heroism and power, we couldn't have wars. Fantasies of heroism appeal primarily to the young, but they entrain them into a way of seeing the world they are seldom able to break out of later in life, and we see a John Glenn approving terrible weapons and war preparations, unaware that there is any contradiction between these actions and an authentic love and respect for people.

Glenn was genuinely angered by the revelation that the Pentagon had "squirreled away" an odd $4 billion surplus in inflation miscalculations and un-executable programs. I was there, at the Armed Services Committee when he made his first statement about it. The staff knew his amendment to have the money returned to the Treasury would be defeated in committee, but he vowed he would introduce it on the floor, and Gary Hart shouted "And if you don't, Senator, I will."

Yet after he introduced the amendment and heard the catalog of weapons and systems that were to be bought with the money, he backed down, and withdrew his amendment. I heard that, too, on the squawk-box in the office. I was the only press person around that afternoon, so I wrote a news release to describe what happened. I found there was no way to write it that it didn't sound lame, and when Dale returned he agreed with me. We decided not to call it around to the Ohio press, but we used it for those who called us.

The best explanation we had for Glenn's about-face was that he was now satisfied that Congress would be controlling Pentagon spending because of a quarterly reporting system in Goldwater's amendment. But Glenn's general mind-set (CFs, cognitive style) prevailed and pushed aside what would otherwise have been a bold and memorable action. There was a good bit of disappointment among the staff. Dale blamed himself for not knowing that Glenn was likely to do that; it was suggested that the Armed Services aides had undue influence with Glenn. I don't think that's the case. The military aides have more access to him than some others, but that's structural because of his Armed Services Committee assignment, and social, because they are ex-military people, and he trusts them. That trust is probably related to shared vocabularies and CFs, which makes it a self-maintaining system. But I digress.

Today was quiet day: recess, with the Senator in San Francisco. Most of the office talk was on the President's tax reform proposals. We couldn't get advance copies of Reagan's talk, but word came that Rostenkowski's reply would be available from the Democratic Policy Committee at 4 PM. I lost the toss in the press office for who had to go over to the DPC office in the Capitol, went down and took the cars and the elevator up to S318. When I got there and there were half a dozen staffers already waiting.

I quickly got bored with watching CNN and went to the window looking west across the Mall. The sky was very dark, with thunder in the distance. I could see buildings across the river, the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument with its tiny red eyes at the top. The advancing grey rain absorbed them, one by one, and joggers and sightseers disappeared, street lights came on, and I
was looking into the center of the storm.

The speech was finally delivered and was copied and distributed, and all of the staffers went out and down the elevator together, dispersing to the different cars to the three Senate office buildings. I read the speech on the way back. It said just what Marty had predicted it would: "Welcome aboard, Mr. President, you're proposing just what the Dems have been saying all along." Dale wrote a short statement of Glenn's response to Reagan's proposals; there was general agreement that this was not a time for Reagan-bashing: Yes, someone had heard that Metz had written a real Reagan-bashing piece, and that wasn't good tactics, etc.

That evening McNeil-Lehrer had three experts to discuss the merits of the tax-reform proposal. What interested me was the compartmentalization of their thinking. Preceding their discussion the news had reported that a Federal judge had refused to intervene in a hostile takeover of TWA. One of the experts in the tax reform discussion lamented the unfairness of the reform proposal in taxing capital-intensive industries because of the high cost of capital in this country. It did not seem to have occurred to him that the high cost of brokerage (in both hostile and friendly takeovers) might have more to do with the disadvantages suffered by American industry than any tax burden, present or future.

I was in Kent last weekend, clearing out the upstairs rooms and sending six trash bags and four large boxes of stuff to the UU Church rummage sale. The weather was lovely, cool and bright, the trees and shrubs wonderfully green, the air scented with mock-orange. The littlest cat, Jacob, caught a baby rabbit, and Seth and I chased the cat around the house twice before we rescued the rabbit. It survived with only a small cut on one shoulder. Seth handled the bunny with great tenderness, put antibiotic ointment on the wound and made it a safe cage with soft old socks and chickweed from the garden. He pondered its fate, finally deciding that although there were a couple of people he might trust with the small creature's life, it was probably better to release it somewhere a long way from cats and dogs, and let it live out its life in the wild. I was severely chided for calling it 'it.' "The rabbit is a living creature, Mother. It's not an 'it.'" (My son, the Green Beret.)

And then night, sitting inside the screens with the quiet sound of leaves turning in a small wind in the dark, we sat and played old songs, Seth with the recorder, I with the guitar, singing sometimes. "The Ash Grove", "Blow Ye Winds in the Morning", "Wraggle-taggle Gypsies", "Down Among the Dead Men", "Waltzing Matilda", "The E-R-I-E Canal", "Eddystone Light", "Greensleaves" and many more. When my fingers got sore Seth took the guitar and accompanied his own tentative bass voice in the songs of his generation.

* * *

86
Dear Seth,

This is patently a last ditch -- and probably futile -- effort to get you to reconsider your decision to enlist in the Army for a four-year hitch, intending to become a Green Beret.

I admire your independence, and your desire to prove yourself. Those are both necessary to the process of inventing and justifying yourself. The Army is your decision, and I have no doubt that you understand what you will be doing, and what some of the outcomes may be. I also think you can handle it, and that you will make a success of your military career, unless you find that the basic principles of military life are in conflict with your own. This is the sticky part. You have always had a strong sense of justice, and a tendency to ask 'Why?" You have high ideals and are willing to sacrifice a good bit in order to be true to what you believe. The Army will be pleased with those traits (with the exception of asking "Why?") but only as long as your principles and ideas are the same as theirs.

I am enclosing an op-ed piece from today's Washington Post (Richard Cohen - "Next: Rambo goes to Nicaragua"). It is about the movie Rambo which I know you have seen. I know you understand that it is a movie and a myth. What you may not understand is that the Army and Pentagon generals and the President himself do not make that crucial distinction between myth and reality, and they look on the Army and all its guns and warheads as the means to make sure that their reality is the same one the rest of us have.

Getting what we want out of life is a goal of everyone. Most of us aren't able to look very far down the road and see all the possible outcomes of the choices we make (and that is probably a good thing). Mostly, I think, we do not get what we want, and most often our regrets are that we didn't choose our wants very carefully. I have always been a little envious of people who know exactly what they want out of life. Yet it seems that such people never really have any choices -- they don't make mistakes and don't learn from them, they don't change, and they don't get better at living, and by the time they are 50 their lives are over.

I'm proud of who you have made of yourself, in barely 20 years. I'm grateful for the way you jumped in and took charge of the house, making it possible for me to come to Washington. I'm very proud of your mind, your curiosity, and your openness to new ideas. I know you have what it takes to be a hero, or a martyr, though I don't wish for you to be either. I also know you have what it takes to be a human being. And that's a lot harder, because it includes respect and caring for other lives besides your own.

So go for it. I know you have to do it your way, and I hope that your choice turns out to be what you
I haven't read a real book for five months. I don't get enough exercise nor do I eat properly, and I have gained ten pounds. I detest the city, the traffic, noise, heat, smells, and pavements. I get so tired I'm stupid; my legs and feet hurt from too much standing; I can't go out in the evenings because the streets aren't safe. But I'm staying in Washington. My best prospect is Glenn's office, where there is a move afoot to keep me on. I've been investigating other possibilities on the Hill, but right now I think I'll try the Department of Education or one of the trade organizations if the job in Glenn's office falls through.

I am renting my house in Kent to my neighbors who will fix it up in exchange for rent for some months. I'll keep the attic room as a pied-a-terre for my trips to Kent. As soon as I can get a car I will look for a place to live as far out of DC as I can afford to commute from. Rents are very high -- I'll look for a house-sharing arrangement. I hope to know by the first of July where I will be working, and want to take two weeks to get things settled in Kent and get moved down here.

Seth is probably joining the Army, or he may go to California to his father's. My big dog Albert will stay with the house, Isabell and Gertrude Stein will come with me to Washington if at all possible. There are only three cats left, on one of them, Tompkins, only comes home one day out of four. I'm not quite sure what to do with Boots and Jacob.

I like what I do in Senator Glenn's office, and I think I do it well. I don't think they yet have much measure of what I can do, but that's all right -- it gives me somewhere to go. I am only now beginning to see way to work toward better processes within the epistemological assumptions, conceptual fictions and styles of perception of the people who work for Glenn.

So far, aside from establishing a reputation as a person who can put things into words that make people feel good, I haven't done much in Glenn's office. I think the best contribution I could make would be to help people be aware of alternative ways of seeing things. I like working with the Press, but that is primarily a technical job. In fact the press office is referred to as "Dale's Shop". Precision machining, however, is wasted on balsa wood. I think the Senator could handle much harder materials.

We read in the newspaper about the spread of AIDS, about tainted food, about spies revealed, about missing children. Our reaction tends to be shock and horror, and the general assumption that things are getting worse because of ....Republicans/Democrats/secular humanists/Christians/not teaching phonics/TV/eating too much meat ... (choose one). I suspect that there are not more spies, gays, careless food producers, or kidnappers but only that our information systems are identifying and collating more instances of them. I'll bet that before we are finished studying AIDS
we will find there are a large number of opportunistic infections that attack the immune system, and that we all have times when our immune systems are down for periods of time. I've thought for years that epidemics of intestinal flu were infections carried in milk or water. I also speculate that given the prices offered for spying and the creed that profit justifies anything, there are probably nine spies at large for every one caught.

The public imagination supposes that spies ‘betray’ their country, as if their actions in giving information to an enemy were done to support or promote an opposing ideology. We know better. We know that agents and double agents deal in secrets for money, and if they have a secondary motive, it is the danger and thrill of intrigue, of beating the system, or outsmarting everyone.

This is hardly surprising in a culture in which success is measured and identity conferred by personal wealth and power. Communist spies are handy to hate, but they are not much different from the rest of us. The spectacle of Americans consulting pocket calculators to see "what's in it for me" after the President's tax reform speech is not edifying. Reagan has brought out the worst in us -- each of us affirming loyalty only to our pocketbooks, happily chanting 'No tax increase.' At a point in human history when we need as never before to love our neighbors and be our brothers' keepers, we have reverted to 'I've got mine, to hell with everyone else' individualism.

I guess I'm stressed by the fact that although Reagan loses this proposal or that policy, he still chooses the turf on which the game is played.

* * *

The Congress is debating funding for the Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly called Star Wars. I find myself alarmed by this, not so much by ideological or even technical concerns, but because I don't think there are many people on the Hill or in the Department of Defense who have much understanding of either the systems or the software we have to work with. The Pentagon is a vast unknowable and uncontrollable system that includes men committed to goals of war, power, destruction and winning; men who are comfortable in positions of wealth and power, men devoted to playing hero, and most of all men highly expert and finely tuned to segments of systems of which they can see neither the top nor the bottom, men who believe that A, B or C are the only possible answers to whatever questions are asked. The whole complex is driven not by a consensus of values or shared understandings, nor by a competitive testing of ideas in a spirit of inquiry. There is a conglomerate of myths and conceptual fictions, but the only unifying drive discernible is the same individual lust for power, money or hero-status that is being promoted by Reagan. In an open market of political processes we might expect the Pentagon to self-destruct. But instead we are planning to give it the power to take the rest of the world down with it.

The oracle of our day is the computer -- we are all believers, to some extent. The prodigious feats of number-crunching and clever programs that play chess have convinced us that computer will enable us to do anything we want to do, and do it better. The computer-as-oracle has captured the military mind as well, and the generals believe that what generals have done badly in the past, computers running on Artificial Intelligence programs will be able to do better. They think that with
some new hardware, still on the drawing board, and with some new clever software developed by AI wizards we can have a Strategic Defense Initiative that will keep the bad guys from attacking us.

I think not. I am not competent to comment on the hardware for SDI, but I know enough about AI to know that the kind of "smarts" the Pentagon expects of it isn't going to have wisdom or reliability, and it's not going to be able to run wars 'better' (whatever that means) than humans do. It is instructive to consider what one expert said about the most sophisticated chess programs presently in use: "It isn't that computers play good chess -- computers play terrible chess. But humans play worse chess, and that's why computers can beat them, mostly."

The belief that a system can be designed and programmed to conduct a war and successfully destroy another country's people and/or systems is not a leap of technological imagination, it is the ultimate in human arrogance and folly. It is the same old determinist scenario of having control over the processes of a complex system -- a human being, a robot, an army, a chess game or a war. But even if it were possible to have complete control over a complex system (which it is not) we ought to know enough to know that it is wrong -- that the greater the control the fewer the options, and that even God, in the best of our religious beliefs, does not assume total control of the universe. Something is left to chance and choice, there are endless branchings of contingency. The computer revolution may be a final refinement of ways to destroy one another, but it has left unchanged our values and goals. Until we learn new ones there isn't much to hope for.

* * *

It is 10:30PM, cruelly hot, even with two fans blowing on me. Outside the windows I can see a translucent spider walking along an ailanthus leaf, ghastly green in the orange light of the sodium vapor streetlights. But if I close my eyes, with the fans blotting out the city noises, there is a restful grey silence.

* * *

June 8, 1985

The Safeway on 14th Street is huge, with 20 aisles, and bays with deli, bakery, and garden specialties. John and Caroline were away, and I had driven their car with some trepidation -- not because of the car (it's no worse than any I have ever owned) but because of the traffic and streets. DC drivers are very casual about stop signs, red lights, illegal turns and double parking, and there are one-way streets and intersections with no turns, and there are places where you can find yourself on a bridge to Virginia with no escape for two miles. But the trip was without incident.

The front of the store was fenced to prevent carts being taken into the parking lot. Each cart was furnished with a chart showing the location of a hundred or so items. I had a carefully crafted list to provide staples and dinners for Saturday thru Tuesday -- the Webbers would be returning Saturday evening, and I wanted to have dinner for them and enough food so Caroline wouldn't have to shop
right away. I had hoped to have $30, but after buying a book of stamps and having supper out with Francoise, and setting aside something for Sunday and Monday I only had $25.

I made my way around the store, spending a long time over which package or combination of packages of chicken legs would be just enough for two meals, and getting the right proportion of zucchini, eggplant, peppers and mushrooms for a ratatouille. The produce department didn’t weigh produce, that was done at the checkout. Prices were very close to what I had found at the Acme supermarket in Kent last time, but the variety and abundance of the offerings was impressive. I bought milk, eggs, yogurt, cottage cheese, a loaf of bread, a package of ground beef, a pound of margarine, bag of onions, five pounds of flour, a small block of cheddar cheese, a pizza cutter, and the chicken and vegetables. As I always do, I kept a running total in my head, and figured it would cost about $25.

The checkout girl was black, talking cheerfully to the customer ahead of me about an outdoor wedding she had attended and her delight in the trees, rocks and small natural stream she had seen. A large sign about the checkout lane proclaimed ITEM FREE if the electronic checkout made a mistake. The sign was rather fly-specked, as if it had been unnoticed for several years. I was given a choice of paper or plastic bags, and everything was handled only once -- conveyed across a bar-code reader and into the bag. I had figured pretty well -- it came to $24.76, and I got a printed paper tape identifying every item.

I wheeled my cart out the automatic doors and just outside I was confronted by a boy of about 10 who offered to carry my bags to my car for a dollar. When I declined, he volunteered to watch them while I brought the car up. I didn't take that offer, either, but carried the three bags to the car myself.

It was already hot. I blundered around Lincoln Park and over to 12th, came down F Street and found a place to park in the shade of a small maple tree. I carted the bags up the few steps to the tiny front yard, then on up the seven steps to the foyer, unlocking two doors and locking them again behind me. I discovered the house was still cool, and went around closing windows and curtains to keep it that way as long as possible. While I ate my lunch salad I browsed over the cash-register tape and had a few bad moments believing I had been cheated of $2.66 because the cheddar cheese had been entered as 'meat.' I reflected for a few moments on how easy this would be to do with this new system, because few people keep track of what they are spending as they go as I do.

After lunch I mixed the cookie dough and the meat loaf, cut up the vegetables and assembled the ratatouille, practiced my Scarlatti sonatas, then went upstairs and took a nap. Afterward I decided to go out for a ride, bicycled down to the Botanical Gardens and walked among plants and tourists for an hour, then rode back, detouring to go past some noisy fountains in small parks. In the evening I baked the things I had prepared, cleaned the kitchen, showered and collapsed on my bed at 9:10. I arranged myself so that I could put my feet, which were aching badly, up on the wall between the windows. Ten minutes later John and Caroline got back, and I went downstairs to hear about their trip. They loved California; they found an apartment at a reasonable price and
Daisy would be able to go with them; they visited a nude beach. We had dinner, and I finally went back upstairs about 10:30, and it was cool enough to sleep.

* * * 

Seen around Capitol Hill: a small thicket of pink hollyhocks growing as weeds around a stop-sign; a well-dressed young woman sitting on a bench amid the brilliant tropical foliage of the Botanical Gardens, reading an article on Summer Hair Styles in a women's magazine; a man in McDonald's, so fat he had to sit on the bench between two tables because his belly would not fit behind a table, eating two ice cream cones, one in each hand; an elderly black man, speaking to friends with a hand-held sound generator (for laryngectomy patients) with his throat covered with a hand-crocheted doily; a young family sitting on the cool marble floor of the Hart Building atrium, the father on hands and knees drawing a map on a large sheet of paper and explaining it to the woman sitting cross-legged beside a backpack while a baby crawled around her; a black grandmother sitting on a porch in the evening, sharing watermelon with two toddlers.

* * * 

Those of you who have been reading my letters will have noticed that I make many typos. They are not spelling errors -- I am an excellent speller (born that way, never worked at it at all) but a lousy typist, because I don't care much about perfection in typing. What I do care about is smoothness in reading and precision of language. I also have some stylistic concerns: I use commas only when I have a purpose for them, I prefer right-ragged on a typescript. In general my concerns are at the level of sense, and I am willing to trust my readers to read through the roughness of my typing. On the occasions when I must have a fair copy I simply have to have the text checked by someone skilled at proofreading, or better still, have it typed by someone else. It is my private opinion that the ability to read at the level of sense makes it difficult for one to read at the level of correct words, and vice-versa, though the sense-reader will quickly catch typos that interrupt the sense or flow of meaning.

So Friday. While Dale was away Thursday afternoon Brian from GAC brought down a draft of a press release on the Committee recommendations about security clearance procedures. First thing Friday morning Dale looked at it and rewrote it. "It's too long -- I took out all that shit in the first paragraph and tightened it up. How does it sound to you."

I looked at it and it sounded pretty good, much more in the Glenn office idiom. But I doubted that was shorter. (It wasn't. Brian's was 480 words, Dale's 650.) Then Dale said "Since Marty isn't here yet, why don't you type it up on her terminal, and we'll get it out for the 10 o'clock Riding Page." I agreed, mumbling something about typing not being what I did best, but thinking to myself that as an alternative to writing letters ("Thank you for inviting me to attend the Sunshine Club Celebrity Auction..... I sincerely regret that ...) it seemed tolerable. I got started, Dale left, Marty arrived. I was sitting at her desk, so she sat at Dale's and we started talking about a TV program "The Fire Unleashed" which had used some headshots and voiceovers of Glenn. While we were talking the Senator came in looking for Dale, and asked us how it had looked on the program. I said I thought he had come across well, and the strongest part was where he said that the Pakistani actions spoke louder than their words. We talked more, about the general negative tenor of the
show, but allowing that it was hard to find anything positive to say about nuclear weapons. He brought up an idea he is interested in, shooting nuclear waste into the sun. Marty asked what happens if the launch fails, and I asked how such a project could get under way. He sighed. "I suppose we'd have to set up a feasibility study..." Just then Dale came in, and said "Well, why not? It's a start." Glenn agreed with another sigh (he doesn't like feasibility studies), "Well, I should think about that, I guess."

It took me another ten minutes to finish typing the press release. I printed it out and marked a couple of typos and gave it to Dale to proof. He found a few more typos, and changed the order of the words in one sentence, then said "Get someone from Governmental Affairs to check it for accuracy." I set out and found Len waiting outside the Senator's office, he read it and said, "OK, fine." I went back to the press office and suggested to Marty that she print out the envelopes for the Riding Page while I found another terminal to make all the corrections. I changed all the marked typos, printed it out on two pages, copied, collated and stapled 15 copies and stuffed the envelopes for the Riding Page. Then Marty picked up the completed release, and started marking more mistakes. She found a lot, mostly extra spaces or missing punctuation, but some that needed to be fixed -- letters transposed or doubled, or words missing. She thought we ought to redo it, so I took her corrected copy, went back to the terminal and made the corrections then printed, copied, collated, stapled and stuffed again. I was tired of the whole business by then, and getting irritated. It wasn't an interesting or important news release; it seemed unlikely that any Ohio newspaper would run it.

But Marty, perhaps stressed by phone calls she had been fielding about a news release she had sent out earlier in the week that had a wrong dollar amount in it (not a typo – the wrong amount) read it through again and found two more mistakes in one sentence: "...workers with Secret and Top Secret clearances should be required to compete annual updated questionnaires..."

So I did it again, but wondered why. If it had been read five times by four reasonably competent readers and no one had caught those two errors, did it make any difference? And if it is so important to have absolutely flawless typing, why ask me to do it? I also observed that most of my errors -- the extra spaces, and 'compete' for 'complete' wouldn't have been picked up by the dictionary of the word processor anyway.

It was a sport, not a mutation. Nothing changed in the operation of the office as a result of that event. I have some real concerns about being powerless in such an organization. I have been in it long enough to know how things work and how to work them. But most of the staff are so unaware of processes, planning and management styles that we work in chaos. When I suggested that I write a job description of what my responsibilities would be the response was that it would be meaningless because we work as a team. By careful observation I have figured out what everyone does -- i.e. how they spend time, what issues they deal with, what they produce, what kinds of things they know and are permitted to display, etc. The only one I haven't figured out is the AA, who is nominally in charge of the whole office.
With Marty's help I have eased us into a press staff meeting at the beginning of each day, at which we talk about what each of us has pending and what we anticipate during the next few days. Dale is very good -- knows the issues, is very task oriented, and still takes time and care to teach me about things I haven't done before. Although I still have nothing definite, it is now assumed that I will be staying on, and I am treated as an equal. (I have always acted like one.) I feel I have more to contribute than merely writing usable prose and am setting other goals for myself: to be a resource person in computer resources, systems and information management, and work toward better management, to make the Senator more effective. I have observed that Republicans do better than Democrats at getting experienced, effective managers in their offices. I'll bet they use job descriptions, too.

* * *

When we sat down to eat Saturday evening John heaped rice and ratatouille on top of his meat loaf, shook ketchup liberally over it, then ate it in great globs pushed onto the back of his fork with a knife. *Sic transit gloria mundi*

* * *

June 19, 1985

Bob Kidney drove me from Kent to Canton at 1 AM, rain thundering on the roof of the car. The train was on time, rumbling into the station with its brilliant headlight illuminating the sheets of falling raindrops. The stop in Canton is barely three minutes, and the train lurched into motion before the dozen people who boarded had found seats. I managed to get a whole seat for myself, just at the foot of the stairs to the observation dome. My quilted bag, which I use for a pillow, was stuffed a little too tight for comfort with RIGHT STAFF T-shirts Seth had printed for the office softball team, and the seat by the window was quite hot. Even after changing into cooler clothes I had trouble sleeping, though a lot of that was excitement because I believed I was finally within sight of a car.

I had gone to the Huntington Bank, where I have had an account since 1950, when it was the Kent National Bank, and filled out an application with the intent of borrowing $5000. I figured I needed $4000 for a decent used car and another $1000 to get me through the July property taxes and homeowners insurance, moving expenses, car registration and insurance and a few unpaid bills. I thought about being able to drive around Washington, to visit friends, take trips outside the city, and about not having stiff shoulders from the back-pack and aching feet from walking, about not having to endure cigarette smoke from kindly people who gave me rides.

I finally fell asleep listening to the steady rolling rumble and clack of the wheels. I woke at 6 o'clock in a grey dawn, with the hills dark below and light misty clouds above. The restroom in the car I was in was not working, and I had to walk through the lounge car past the smell of fresh coffee to find one that was. It was too tempting. I got a small cup and took it up to the dome. It was excellent coffee, comfortably hot. The dome was cool, and Pennsylvania gradually turned from grey to green, with shreds of pale mist clinging to the hillsides. An hour later I went back to the
lounge car and got a raspberry danish (failing yogurt, which Amtrak's cooler had frozen). When I finished that I tried to sleep a little more. I couldn't, so I got out my day-book and did the figures once again: rent-$300; food/supplies-$400; transportation (gas & Metro fares) $100; insurances and taxes-$200; clothes/miscellaneous-$200. Total $1200. I was counting on having $1500 after taxes -- it ought to work.

The train from Pittsburgh to Washington goes along the old B&O route through the Cumberland Gap. The banks and hills beside the track are lavish and tumbling with green -- polypoda ferns, mulleins already spired with modest yellow blossoms, coltsfoot, sassafras, maples, sycamores, grapevines draping the edges of forests, pink wild roses, moth mulleins with two or three white eyes on the slender stalk, loosestrife, twisty-stalk, jewelweed, tiger lilies. The rain started again about 8 o'clock, spattering the dome windows without cleaning them. About 11 I had a ham & swiss cheese sandwich a la Alaska (frozen on the inside with the edges hot and melted by the galley microwave). I changed into my suit and support stockings. The day was still grey and cool. I hoped it would stay cool and not rain after we got to Union Station.

It wasn't raining, but my hopes for cool were lost. It was hot and humid, and I had about 30 pounds in the backpack, plus another ten pounds of T-shirts in the quilt bag, and my oversized handbag. I walked across the pavement, Mass. Avenue, the squares of park, and around to the Hart Building, arriving at 1 PM.

I let Joel mess with the T-shirts (he was managing the softball team) and I set right to work, tackling the letters on my desk -- congrats for an ADL award to a bank, welcome black dentists to their convention in Cleveland, greetings to the Far East Democratic Women's Club of Columbus on their 20th anniversary, a generic letter of congratulations for graduates of anywhere, a reply to an irate schoolteacher who thought she and her class had been snubbed by the Senator when they dropped in unannounced -- a fairly routine lot.

Although I had said I wouldn't be back in Washington until afternoon, the Huntington Bank had called me at 9 AM. When I found time to call back I was informed that the Huntington Bank would require me to have a co-signer for them to lend me money.

So there we have it. I have been an honest, participating citizen of Kent for about 20 years, I own a house, I have borrowed and paid back a loan of $2000 from the Huntington Bank in the last three years, and they believe I am not a good risk for a fairly modest loan. I can only presume that being female has something to do with it -- it is hard to imagine that they would ask a man in my circumstances to produce a co-signer. I suppose they have some sort of rules that enable them to do this, rules that can be overlooked when the bank wants to do a buddy a favor.

At 6:30 repacked the backpack minus the T-shirts, took off my heels and stockings and put on cotton socks and canvas shoes and set out to walk the twelve blocks up Maryland Avenue. It was still about 90 degrees and very humid. My shoulders ached, my hands and feet felt swollen and my legs hurt. I tried to keep from crying but I didn't do very well.
When I got home Caroline Webber was out, but she had left me a supper of vegetarian lasagna, which I ate gratefully. I took a shower and went to bed, with my small fan making a light breeze over me. I intended to get up early and go over to the East Capitol pool for a swim, but the morning was already hot and oppressive and I knew that by the time I had pedaled the bicycle home afterward I'd be just as hot and miserable as I had been before swimming, and didn't go.

I don't know what I am going to do. I can probably borrow $1000 from the credit union here for the taxes, bills and moving expenses, but I'd rather not buy a car here. If I buy it and license it in Ohio I can save some taxes. A trip home by bus costs $150, by train $200, and flying $250. As a regular employee the Glenn office can't pay my travel to school board meetings. When I go back to Kent my luggage is limited to what I can carry 12 blocks, and I have very limited time (and mobility) when I am in Kent to shop for loans or cars.

I have to go to Kent again next weekend to help Seth get his things packed and stored away upstairs. He is leaving July 5 for California to visit with his father and sister before he goes to Ft Benning on the 18th of August. I wish like crazy I could get a car and drive it back, but that seems impossible.

For the next few months I'm going to have little time to write, so be patient.

* * *

JULY 1985

Independence Day, 1985

It will be 90 today, and despite the precautions I take -- closed windows and curtains, a small fan, cold fresh limeade, minimal shorts and halter -- I will be wilted by 3 PM. If I can bear the heat I will go down to the Capitol at dusk to watch the fireworks.

The Congress is in recess; the Senator's office open yesterday and tomorrow with only minimum staff. Dale and Marty are gone, and I am the ranking press person. Nick, the intern, will not be in tomorrow, so I will have to do the clips (from Ohio newspapers) as well as field phone calls and write whatever letters are up against deadlines. ("The Podunk Ohio Marching Band is going to Switzerland to represent the U.S. at an international youth music festival. ... Please send congratulations.")

Recess days are housekeeping days. The supply closets get cleaned, computer files edited, furniture moved, and forms get filled out -- tomorrow, mine. I am, as of July 1, a permanent (well, as long as Glenn is Senator) staff member, Press Aide at a salary I can live on (just, I think). I have a choice of health insurance plans, of which 60 to 75% of the premiums will be paid by the Senate. I will take an HMO, probably Kaiser, because I don't know any doctors here.
When I was home last time I arranged to lease a new Ford Escort, and I will pick it up when I am in Kent in the middle of the month. It will cost me $160 a month, plus gas and insurance, but it will give me mobility and comfort, and the means to get off the Hill and live out somewhere where there is space, grass, dark, quiet and trees. I have to borrow $1500 from the Credit Union to get launched here -- pay a rent deposit here and the property taxes and homeowners insurance back home, repair the roof of the Kent house (ice damage last winter), and the first half of the car insurance. Weekends in Kent I will spend sorting, discarding, packing and storing; when I am here I will go hunting for a place to live. I want to share a house -- not an apartment or townhouse -- with one or two other people. I hope to find others more or less my age who are not compulsive about cleanliness, neatness or timetables, or "right" ways to do things; non-smokers, non-believers (not necessarily atheists, merely non-believers in any immutable universal truths or ways of seeing) and non-concerned with drinking or drugs (neither fearing nor dependent on them). I need to find people whose self-respect does not depend on being better than others, so that they can respect the space, silence and self of others. This probably excludes men, except those who have been successfully married for years. I also want windows that open, garden space, acceptance of Isabell (the smallest dog), the means to be cool at night, and some amenities -- washer and dryer, off-street parking. I don't give a fig for wall-to-wall carpeting or dishwashers.

Then there is the house in Kent to deal with. Bob Kidney is working steadily at repairing walls, painting, and cleaning the basement. I have already spent hours going over things, trashing about a third of the worldly goods I accumulated in 17 years in my house, giving another third to the U-U Church rummage sale and saving the other third to use in DC or store in my room in Kent. If I had a week to invest I could organize a yard sale, but I doubt if I could make as much as $300, and it is simply not worth it.

I have been quite steely-nerved about tossing stuff out, but there was one item that simply broke my heart. Gertrude Stein was a plain black dog, born to our little poodle-dachshund Lady DuBarry, in 1969. Gertrude Stein [she was always called by her full name] had short hair, round brown eyes and a dachshund chassis and paws. Her litter mates all had curly hair, long legs and poodle perkiness, and were quickly adopted. We kept her by default, but got her a kitten (Boots) to play with. Gertrude Stein got little attention as long as her mother -- the charming and attractive Lady with the brown curls and winning ways -- was alive. Gertrude Stein had had one litter of puppies of her own, about which she was totally bewildered (and hurt that I hadn't been there when they were born). She liked to walk around the neighborhood investigating the smells of animals, trash, garden plants, grass; to sleep in the sun inside the sliding glass doors in the springtime, on the cool dirt in the shade of the Melba apple tree in summer, and on the flat cushion in front of the woodstove on winter evenings.

Gertrude Stein never was much of a hunter, though occasionally she caught a baby rabbit, once brought me a squirrel that had been dead for a month, and one summer killed the resident possum in the woods next door at least four times. (Like this: She would jump up from her cushion about 9 o'clock in the evening and run anxiously from me to the sliding glass door nearest the woods until I
let her out.) There would be excited barking and scuffling, and presently I would go out with the flashlight and discover Gertrude Stein triumphant and proud, standing over the limp body of the possum. I would praise her immoderately, lead her back into the house and reward her with a dog-biscuit. An hour later I would sneak out alone with the flashlight to the killing ground and find -- nothing. The possum apparently brushed itself off and went on about its business until some weeks later when it would venture into Gertrude Stein’s range of smell and we would do it all over again.)

It must have been her sense of smell that survived after she grew deaf and partly blind. She slept upstairs under my bed, near a through-the-floor register into the kitchen. When I would come home late at night she always sensed me and came down to greet me, even though she apparently couldn’t hear me.

In the last year the household systems that Gertrude Stein depended on changed, and she became less and less able to change with them. She couldn’t negotiate the stairs in the dark, couldn’t wait to get outside, couldn’t home in on sounds. She only cared about eating, pooping, and me, not necessarily in that order. When I came to Washington she was alone most of the time, with only Seth there to let her out in the morning and feed her in the evening. She slept most of the time, getting off her cushion to poop or pee on the floor. Seth did his best, and I kept hoping I would be able to bring her to live out her last years with me.

But I finally realized last weekend that she needed someone around all day, that her health was frail (she spent one night coughing up blood) and that I had neither the time nor the resources to deal with her infirmities, nor could I ask anyone else to take care of her.

So last Monday I took my dear old friend Gertrude Stein to Dr. Baker for an untimely, but merciful death. Dr. Baker is a jewel -- always kind and friendly, and she genuinely likes the creatures she treats. When I explained through my tears what had to be done, she understood and made it easy for me. She said Gertrude Stein would be asleep first and that it would be painless, and she offered to bury her in the plot she had out back. She carried Gertrude Stein, very gently into the back room, I signed the form and fled out the side door, weeping.

* * *

Salaries for Congressional aides balloon at the upper levels, but start quite low. The average for a second press person is about $17,500, and most offices don't have a third person. Legislative Correspondents get somewhat less. Salaries are not to be talked about, although they are a matter of public record, published in the Yearbook of the Secretary of the Senate. Top people -- AA s, legislative directors and press secretaries -- draw salaries in the $60,000 range. Benefits are good, but job security is not (Senators only have to run every six years, but House members run every other year) and good performance is no guarantee of long tenure. Young people starting at the bottom can look forward to long careers if they are willing to move from office to office as opportunities open, but this produces very little loyalty and no incentive to make friendships or commitments among colleagues. The low salaries also bind young people into coping strategies that use up their time so that they do not read, participate in musical or recreational activities or
enjoy convivial conversations except about mass culture -- TV programs, sports, fashions, slick magazines, gourmet food, etc. They dress well, live on the Hill in tiny apartments with only one window, eat out, jog or go to jazzercise classes, and take vacations at resorts.

I couldn't live that way, nor could I find a way to stretch that kind of salary to cover what I need to survive. A car and a home outside the city are not luxuries for me, they are conditions for survival. After the first offer of $18,000, I got, finally, the $20,000 salary I asked for, because Dale went directly to the Senator and told him I was worth it.

* * *

11 PM and home again after the fireworks. They were something of a disappointment, because from the pool at the foot of the Capitol we were still over a mile away -- it took about 5 seconds of elapsed time for the sound of the explosions to reach us. The bursts seemed small, only a few topped the Washington Monument for us, and the colors were attenuated by the very humid air.

I rode my bicycle down to the Capitol about 8 o'clock, locked it to a lamppost and walked down the hill to the equestrian statues in front of the pool. I found a space on the lowest step of the west steps at the north end. By 8:15 the steps were all filled, and the thirty feet in front of them half filled with people on blankets or cushions waiting for the fireworks to begin. The orchestra concert was still going on behind us on the Capitol Lawn, but was barely audible over the crowd noise.

There must have been several hundred thousand people there -- from the steps of the Capitol to the Washington Monument was almost solid people -- all very well behaved, walking sitting, standing, lolling, talking, eating, drinking sodas, taking pictures, tending babies, reading newspapers, smoking, listening to radios, waiting in lines for toilets or food vendors.

Everyone expected the fireworks to begin at 9, then 9:15, then 9:30. By then the crowd was restless, clapping rhythmically, singing, standing up to cries of "Down in front!" The space in front of me had filled completely; "The Stars and Stripes Forever" played from a half dozen nearby radios. When a rumor came around that the Beach Boys had only just started to play and the fireworks wouldn't begin until they finished, people started leaving. Some were angry, and I think the mood might have turned ugly had the fireworks not started then. It was 9:55, still very hot and humid, and most of us had been sitting on very hard marble steps or pavement for well over an hour.

There were some nice displays: clusters of spherical bursts on top of visible stems which looked like bouquets of onion-flowers; some very high sequential bursts of many colors above the Washington Monument. The grand finale was bright and busy, but rather low, and it didn't seem very final with the sound coming so late.

Everyone stood up, stretched their legs, and walked away, in every direction. I rode back up Maryland Avenue, in the street, because the sidewalks were crowded with people all the way out to
6th Street.

It is still 80; my hands and feet are slightly swollen -- I can tell by the fit of my ring and shoes. I am not likely to sleep well tonight, because I slept during the hot part of the day. Tomorrow I will go to the office and be cool all day.

That, anyway.

* * *

to Bill Gorden, speech communications professor at KSU

July 6, 1985

Mmm. Good question. Patriotism certainly exists, but not necessarily because we teach it. And certainly our Founding Fathers (and probably Mothers, too) didn't think of themselves as patriots as much as proprietors of their new country. But the whole question of patriotism is fraught with uncertainty, ambivalence and inconsistency. To what corpus should patriotism pertain -- people? real estate? shared values? government? What is the opposite of patriotism? Who cares about patriotism, and why?

The answers you have culled reveal, in a good pluralistic fashion, a ragbag of unexamined assumptions about what is worthy, what teaching does and what patriotism is, as well as some fundamentally different epistemological assumptions about the way the world is. (Don't worry -- I see fundamentally different epistemologies all over the place.) Here are some comments on them.

A. (answers 1, 4, & 5) Most people who believe in patriotism (and 'internationalism' and 'critical citizenship) also believe that it exists in certain rituals (in which they themselves are expert) that children are raw material, and that education is a process of manufacturing – to some God-given set of specifications – uniform ingots of homogenous alloys. To such people there is nothing to say, because to them anyone who does not make those same assumptions is a flawed ingot, not worthy of wasting time on.

B. (2 & 3) Those who espouse psychological Darwinism (it's natural and helps us to survive, therefore with good examples it will flourish in individuals anyway) are several steps higher, but up the wrong ladder. We are not in pursuit of individual patriotic beliefs (especially not in A, above) but in some socially shared understandings about patriotism. But personal patriotism is like giving everybody on a raft a paddle to use as they see fit. On good days they might succeed in getting the raft to go the same way around in a circle; the rest of the time the raft would be in oscillation or at standstill, except of course for currents of which the paddle holders are usually unaware.
C. (6) But to say that patriotism depends on mindlessness, and teaching must be of the mind only deepens the quicksand and sets up a non-negotiable -- but false -- opposition between 'immoral' government/ nationalism and 'moral' ...what? rationalism? utilitarianism? textualism? (for the Bible tells me so). It is a counsel of despair unless we can deal with the paradox of human freedom, responsibility and self-determination interplaying with social knowledge and interest.

My own way to deal with this is to assume that each of us exists -- i.e. that our minds, consciousness and consciences exist -- at the intersection between our individual experience (perceptions, thoughts, will) and our socially shared experience -- knowledge, values. This does not assume that perceptions are independent of the socius, nor that values do not exist for the individual, (those issues are another part of the forest). To me, what the American Dream is about is the location of moral responsibility at that intersection between individual mind/conscience and social knowledge and moral values, instead of locating conscience and moral values in either an individual (a Great Man) or a social knowledge system such as Christianity, Marxism, Constitutionalism, patriotism, science, etc.

Trouble is, we get moral responsibility all mixed up with our local material responsibilities and think that self-interest is a good-enough moral responsibility as long as we can defend it from the other self-interested folks around us.

I want to climb down from the trees for a while and walk around on the ground. First of all, a lot of what conversations on patriotism are about is loyalty, which is bigger than patriotism, and more interesting. Loyalty is a kind of glue that holds things together, but we are pretty sloppy about where we apply it. We expect loyalty among people who live together, and for some that is the only meaning of patriotism. Others believe that the important loyalty is to ideology or religion -- to capitalism, free enterprise, 'democracy,' Islam, Christianity, socialism, humanism, etc. And finally there are those who will sacrifice family, friends, religion, and ideology for their 'principles' -- for their own conscientious moral order.

I think that both individually and socially we need all three. Basic human trust and the ability to live together and love one another are rooted in the first kind of loyalty; I think that an ideology or religion is a necessary step toward developing both the third kind of loyalty and some practical institutions for reaching common goals. I think the mature, self-determining person has all three loyalties and uses them wisely. (I wish I had time to critique Kohlberg here, but I don't.)

Can we teach loyalty? Hell, I don't know. I don't know if we can teach people anything. I know people learn, and I know people do things that are supposed to enhance learning and they call it teaching. I also know from my experience as a musical-instrument learner and teacher that nobody ever 'taught' me anything, nor did I ever 'teach' anybody anything, although I, and my students, demonstrably learned. I'm not sure why we need a category 'teach' -- but we do, and it is of great antiquity. What we have for eons called 'teaching' is what I would call 'programming' and is
something I would specifically never do to a human being.

If I ever get this all worked out in my head, I will write a book. In the meantime, however, there are some interesting ones:

* Exit, Voice and Loyalty, A.O. Hirschman
* The Twilight of Authority, Robert Nisbett
* Black Children, White Children, Zena Blau

* * *

No, there is a place for counting beer cans, and conversations are the way we construct the world. If we didn't construct reasonably predictable worlds out of our conversations about beer cans, there would be too much uncertainty, and we couldn't do anything. It's just that that sort of construction is not what I wanted to do in graduate school. Furthermore, I not only tolerate uncertainty, I like it. Anyway, it is lots more fun to go around knocking down displays of beer cans than doing the serious work of assembling and displaying them.

A long time ago I made a conscious and conscientious choice about what I would be loyal to, and chose what I saw as my moral responsibility: to see in alternative ways and offer those alternatives to others through speaking and writing, to the end that we may all have more options from which to choose. That I landed in the office of a United States Senator is sheer chance, and so improbable that it almost (ALMOST) makes me believe in fairies.

I'm going to beg off trying to talk about job commitment today. I want to do a little more observation before I tackle it. I know I see a lot of job orientation, but I don't think it's the same as job commitment.

Thanks for a stimulating letter, and don't worry about the handwriting. The ideas got through just fine.

* * *

to Alys, belatedly, for her 21st birthday June 26,

July 6, 1985,

When I was 21 I couldn't see what was so special about being 21. I certainly didn't feel any different at 21 than I had a 20, or 16. And I think, fairly, that one isn't different at different ages. In fact, I would say that my experience of myself has been that I haven't changed very much. But that is not to say that my life hasn't changed, or that nothing is different after you turn 21.
Perhaps the biggest difference is that people no longer expect you to change very much. "My, how you've grown!" and "What do you want to be when you grow up?" give way to "You look just like you did in..." or "How much vacation time do you have coming?" I suppose one of the most misleading myths we have is that at some point people become adult, educated, finished and fulfilled. It is the principal cause, I suppose, of that alarming next boundary, when one suddenly looks around and asks "Is this all?"

I didn't have a plan, when I set out to have children, for making my children into a well-crafted product. If I had any belief at all about how children develop in to humans it was that each of us has to invent herself out of whatever raw materials are at hand, and that the important thing is to have lots of experiences and a vocabulary of words for making sense of those experiences. I also never believed there was any 'right way', 'real truth' or any other dogma that should be imposed on a child. I never had much faith in teaching, and still don't, but I have never doubted that people learn. Children, in fact, are super learners ("Me want some F-F too") and are never fooled by 'Do what I say not what I do'.

But most of all, I guess, I tried not to give you answers, or even the questions to be asked, but rather the tools with which to manage. And I always tried to give you a little more responsibility than you were ready for, so you could learn what worked. I'm quite pleased with the results -- proud of you for the person you have created. Congratulations on being 21, and keep up the good work.

*(reference to a family story about Alys, at about age two, when her parents were referring to French-fries as F-F to keep from having to offer her any.)*

* * *

11 July 1985

Dear Gentle Reader,

(Aha! She's up to something -- she never uses friendly-letter salutation.)

Most of you know that these letters have been going to others, more or less wholesale, mostly because it is the only way I can talk to so many of you in the limited time I have to write. You must also be aware that these letters represent a kind of chronicle of my adventures in Washington, and since so many of you have been so kind as to praise them, I feel I owe you an explanation of what I think I am doing.

First (you may know this, but I want it down on paper) I write for myself. That means I write what I think I would like to read, and I measure the goodness of what I write by reading it. I also write what I want to remember of events, because I have learned not only how much I forget, but also
how insubstantial what I do remember is.

I am not, however, oblivious to my audience. You and all possible other readers I can imagine who might one day read these letters, are a carefully crafted construct. Do I write for publication? No. And Yes. I do not write with the intent of selling what I write for money. I also do not intend to use what I write to promote myself or intimidate others. But I also try not to commit to paper or computer files anything that I would be unwilling to have published and read by a wide public.

But that's tricky, and what is harmless today might do damage next year, and what is funny in Washington might be disastrous in Ohio. The responsibility for the content of these letters is mine, as author. Decisions about if, when, how, and what get published have to be mine. And so, Gentle Reader, while you are welcome to let others read these letters, please keep them on a fairly short leash. If you want to quote me, ask permission.

There has been an unexpected bit of spinoff to this letter-writing project -- a number of people write back, quite good letters. I'm always delighted to uncover (or unmask) another epistolist, and suspect that each of you is capable of more than I get from you. Would it help if I threatened to delete those of you who don't write from my address file? It always cheers me to find a letter when I get home in the evening, and to hear about someone else's adventures.

* * *

We were waiting for one more person to review the Opening Statement for a conference 'The Greying of Nations II' that Glenn would be attending in New York. Dale was talking to the Senator about whether Glenn should appear before the House Committee that was considering a memorial to the veterans of the Korean War. Dale thought the Senator should go, but not with a prepared statement, because it might sound too self-serving. (Glenn flew 90 missions in Korea.) John Glenn agreed, said he didn't want a monument to himself, but he thought those who died should have something, and observed that the Vietnam Memorial had proved to be very important to those who survived. But he seemed uneasy about testifying; he finally agreed he should do it, and we turned to the briefing on the New York conference.

Dale and Marty were on other assignments at the time of the Korea Memorial Hearing, and I was revising the 'Greying of Nations' speech, so there was no-one from the press office free to go with the Senator. The Legislative Aide who went with him took a tape recorder and recorded his testimony. She came back alarmed. The Senator had spoken extemporaneous, as planned, and recalled some of his experiences in Korea. He had told about one of his friends, who had been shot in the neck, continuing to try to give directions to his men "gurgling...through his own...blood...until...he died." John Glenn wept, and had to stop for some minutes before he could continue. Nothing untoward happened. There was a respectful silence, and Mary Rose Oakar (who was presiding) said "It takes a strong man to cry."

Glenn had been angry at himself, the LA said, and all the way back through the Capitol had kept
striking his thigh with his rolled-up notes, saying he shouldn't have done it. When Dale learned what had happened he went into Glenn's office immediately. When he came back he explained: "The thing is, the last time he opened up to a reporter he got burned, because the guy wrote a piece and used it against him. It was during his presidential campaign and he accused Glenn of playing his 'war card.'

We were concerned about how the press would handle this event, but we didn't even know what reporters were there. The LA didn't know the reporters by sight; she saw two TV cameras, and thought they were NBC and Storer (wrong, it was ABC and Cox) and a lot of newspaper reporters, but she had no idea who they were. Marty called the TV networks and determined that they weren't going to show any footage of the hearing. Dale called the print reporters and talked first to Judy Grande of the Plain Dealer.

Dale is open but tactful, he was honest about his concern, and found out from Judy which other Ohio reporters were present. He didn't try to tell them what to write, but explained why he was concerned. By the time he went home about 7:30 he was satisfied that the press coverage would be fair and that there had been no harm done.

The articles started coming over the telecopier about 9:30 the next morning. The first was Judy Grande's, and Dale took it in to show the Senator. Apparently Glenn felt better after he saw her article. All the articles were temperately done -- it turned out finally not to have been a very important media event.

So why get upset about it? What is revealed, denied, or changed by a Senator, astronaut and American hero who weeps publicly over a friend killed in a war thirty years ago?

No one can look into another's heart, and grief alone is certainly enough to account for tears, even for something that happened long ago. Yet I am nagged by the incongruity of seeing those who kill grieving for those who are killed. Isn't it the purpose of war to kill? Should we be surprised that our men are killed, when we go to such lengths to kill our enemies? Isn't the evil of war in ourselves as much as in our enemies?

John Glenn is a kindly, Christian person with a strong sense of justice. He is patient, courageous, self-knowing and conscientious. And he is a hero -- a live hero -- who flew 90 missions over Korea, surviving because he killed first or better.

It is terrible that any die in wars -- wars that serve the passions of old men. It is also terrible that we teach our young men to be killers, masking our purposes behind the honor of dying for one's country. To be a hero, one must cause the death of others. The dead are not heroes, they are martyrs.
I'm not disappointed in John Glenn. He accepts himself and takes responsibility for his actions with considerable grace. He is charming, exuberant and witty; he is very thorough and careful in thinking things through. I suppose he doesn't think of himself as a killer; Americans don't think of themselves as killers. But somehow, if we are to survive, we are going to have to recognize that the evil we ascribe to our enemies is within ourselves as well, and that killing is just as wrong for us as it is for our enemies.

* * *

Forgive me. It is brutally hot tonight -- the third day of over 90 degree weather. At night it gets down to about 88 and by having my small fan blow directly on me I can rest, if not sleep. Yesterday (Saturday) I went up to the office for three hours, just to sit in the air conditioning and read. My hands and feet swell in this weather and I generally don't feel good. It has not been a good week -- the Senate Credit Union declined to give me a loan on the grounds that I hadn't worked there long enough and didn't make enough money. They could have told me those things when I applied.

The car, however, is a great freedom, and one I have missed sorely. I went grocery shopping -- it is a real luxury not to have to consider weight, or forego delicate things that would be crushed in a backpack. I drove out to Arlington to an envelope stuffing for Democrats, and to Alexandria to look at house to share.

I like the house and the yard -- it is as big as my yard in Kent, and has the biggest quince tree I have ever seen. I was quite taken with it and the young woman who lives there, and I hope it will work out.

I have been offered a chance to kitten-sit for two weeks while Diane is in London. I am going to live in her AIR CONDITIONED apartment from July 28 to August 10.

* * *

**AUGUST 1985**

(written on a portable typewriter)

August 3, 1985

I never thought it would come to this (remember to strike the keys hard, it's all mechanical) but I seem to be suffering from ills I can only ascribe to separation from my C-64. My symptoms are varied, some psychosomatic, some epistemological and some social. The usually sparse response to my letters had withered utterly, and I haven't received a letter in weeks. But mostly the problem is that I have come to rely on writing to keep the world in manageable order, and without a word-processor I'm not making very good sense of my experiences nor sustaining the sense of myself as observer as well as participant in my life.
To escape the heat I gratefully accepted the offer to stay in Diane’s apartment for two weeks, to look after her kittens while she is in London. I sweated through lugging the computer, disk drive, printer and monitor up to this 2nd floor apartment, only to discover that there was no place to set it up -- the dining room table just looked too frail. There was nothing for it but to get out my old typewriter.

Kitten Scamp is at this moment examining the top of the sheet of paper in the typewriter in great detail, while Daisy crouches inside an empty paper bag on the kitchen floor. They have just been reprimanded for the unauthorized acquisition of a sprig of grapes, but are not noticeably repentant. They are about four months old, and very lively. Diane's apartment is very pure and elegant -- white walls, good prints, polished wood, pretty printed sheets and a bed so firm, smooth and balanced that it is almost impossible to sleep on it. The air conditioner works well, but loudly, and to be comfortable 50% of the time one must be too hot 25% of the time and too cold the other 25%. Luckily today the weather turned mild, and I have the windows open.

I was in Kent last weekend to get my car license plates, then back to New Kensington (north of Pittsburgh) to visit my friend Suzanne. My empty house in Kent had bloomed with fleas, and Bob had used some high powered ‘bomb' to kill them. I slept there one night, in some apprehension, and came back to Washington not feeling good. They are minor symptoms -- headache, runny nose, G-I disturbances, which could be attributable to fatigue, stress, or deprivation of an essential system (like my word-processor).

I am getting problems solved one-by-one -- finding a place to live, learning to drive and find parking places in DC, paying bills – but I don't feel comfortable about living in the city, and I dread moving.

The work at the office is fine -- arduous but satisfying. This week I set up TV, radio and press appearances for the Senator’s trip to Ohio next week, and wrote press releases for events, some of which did not happen as the Senate played budget games and grandstanded for the people back home. Most evenings I didn't leave the Hart Building until 7 PM and by the time I stopped at Webber's to see if I had any mail and pick up things I needed it was 8 o'clock before I got here. Then I would eat a little bread and cheese standing up in the kitchen, take a shower and go to bed.

This afternoon I walked down to the National Cathedral (only a few blocks from here) to the religious service for the Peace Ribbon. It was very crowded, with people standing along the walls and columns, and sitting on steps or on the floor. I estimated that 90% of them were women – something we should not lose sight of. Every chair had a segment of ribbon on it; other ribbons were tied around columns, or hung from screens. During the opening procession ribbons were carried down all three aisles, preceded by a band of squalling bagpipes and thunderous drums. A troupe of dancers -- serene, elegant young women in pale tunics and bare feet – escorted the ribbons.
It was hot in the cathedral; people fanned themselves with their programs. I found a chair at the far
left side, from which I could see only one side of the right hand lectern. There was an excellent
choir, all black, and very nearly the only black people there. We were greeted by the Provost of the
Cathedral and sang a hymn, with real problems in singing together in a place so large, with an
organist so relentless. There were readings about peace from the sacred writings of Judaism,
Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and Native Americans, and messages from two survivors of the
atomic bombs dropped on Japan, one quite long-winded and tiresome. There was a litany of
repentance, prayers, and a sermon of sorts by Justine Merritt, who had conceived and promoted
the Peace Ribbon. She started badly, quoting "that magnificent intelligence, Einstein" and went on
to base her belief in Peace on the 'right brain' and blame all war and all evil on the 'left brain.' What
the hell is this arrant nonsense? Good and evil, war and peace, morality, values are not located in
brains (and neither is knowledge or wisdom, as she herself demonstrated) but in language – in the
register in which we negotiate and construct the social meanings by which we live.

It would make more sense (but not much) to locate the peace movement among women, and war-
making among men. But of course we can't do that, because the prevailing metaphor of truth is
'fact' as perceived by 'magnificent intelligences'. This sort of thinking is total capitulation to the
good guys/bad guys epistemology, from which no resolution is possible, only the escalation of
discord. It is exactly the same game the Pentagon is playing, only with a different cast of
characters.

Yet there is a harsh paradox here. These are good people, who feel powerless against evil, and
who cannot imagine themselves capable of dealing with such a great evil. They need a face for the
evil – a location outside themselves; because it is intolerable to think they could be complicit in evil.
And it is often their Christian beliefs that trap them: for every God there must be a Satan; they can
only think in non-negotiable binary oppositions. And if we are all either Hunter or Prey, then the
only game is to try to eat them before they eat you.

I don't have a ready solution. I think these demonstrations are worthwhile, (even though they are
only made possible by wealth and transportation and communications systems unrivaled in human
history) but not effective in the political arena. Politicians, rightly, don't see any advantage to being
cast as bad guys instead of giving that role to the communists. And so when Glenn was asked if he
would make a statement for NPR about the Peace Ribbon, he asked "Why don't they tie it around
the Kremlin?"

* * *

I had a visit from the FBI this week about the lunch I had two months ago with Thomas Simon of the
German Democratic Republic. The agent was a serious young man, well dressed and coiffed, with
a discreet business card drawn from a fine leather case that also displayed his credentials. Pat
explained that I didn't have to talk to him – he had called on her first because she is the aide for
foreign affairs. I said I had no reason to refuse. In fact, I was a little curious to see if the FBI had
learned anything since 1970, when they came to my house and tried to get me to implicate the son
of my former neighbors in the Kent State student unrest. I am happy to report that their manners
have improved a good bit (probably from watching spy thrillers on TV).

The FBI had a report that I had been visited by a citizen of the GDR, and they were concerned. We all know that some of their embassy personnel are spies, but we don't know which. Would I be willing to tell what I knew about Thomas Simon and some Werner T., whom I had never met. The FBI agent wanted to know my name, address and birth date, how long I had been in Washington, etc., taking notes in shorthand on a stenographers' pad. I told him I been in the GDR for two weeks in 1983, that our group had visited primary and secondary schools, universities, some cultural sites, and Buchenwald. He was very interested, but said it was surprising "in light of Bitburg," thereby betraying a fallacy on which spy games are founded. The Bitburg incidence with President Reagan happened two years after I had been in East Germany, and it is only in hindsight that it could have any significance.

I assured the agent that Thomas was a personal friend [tour guide during the 1983 visit] and that I had never heard of Werner T. I said that when I was in the GDR we heard the obligatory lectures on the glories of socialism but they were rather perfunctory and not very convincing; that our group went everywhere together with no free time, which would have been scant use to me anyway because I don't speak German. I pointed out that the East Germans live in the shadow of the Soviets, with examples of Czechoslovakia and Poland looming over them. Everything I saw and heard at Buchenwald suggested that the Soviets had laid a heavy guilt trip on the East Germans. The FBI man admitted that made sense, but went on to ask who had paid for the lunch. I replied that we went dutch, although in truth, I couldn't remember. It did seem apparent that if I said Thomas bought my lunch it would have been construed as an effort to buy a favor from me. (I wonder if the average FBI agent has any idea that the people they talk to may be of normal intelligence.)

He then tried to impress me with the seriousness of the information to which I was privy by virtue of working in a Senator's office, the craftiness of the communists, and my duty (not freedom) to report anything I knew about the activities of any person from East Germany. I observed that the U.S. is not at war with the GDR, and in fact we have diplomatic relations with them, and that my impression was that more than anything else the East Germans wanted to be friends with Americans, wanted trade and cultural exchanges, and a chance to participate in the community of nations. We left it at that.

I have no doubt that the GDR has an active theater of spying (it is the commedia dell'arte of our age), which they take as seriously as we take our FBI and CIA. The East Germans lack the budget and amenities enjoyed by our spies, but no doubt make up for the lack with extra zeal. But I find it hard to take seriously any threat from a country in which it is not even possible to find out where an overdue passenger plane is and who is on board. (One of our tour group flew by way of Czech airlines from Montreal. It was delayed 14 hours while a part was flown from Moscow. Thomas Simon, our tour guide was unable to find out anything about it; no one he could reach by phone or cable had access to a passenger manifest, no one he could reach in the GDR knew the
The GDR has no significant number of computers, copiers or even telephones; they don't have a free press or investigative journalism, competing newspapers or TV stations; they have nothing resembling a civil liberties organization. But most of all, they don't have a surplus of resources that can be risked (including the surplus of people willing to risk themselves) in a game that is all long shots and risky deals. Socialists don't take chances when they can't afford mistakes. They have little surplus to risk – capitalism generates that better – and so they try to plan for the deployment of resources to achieve the exact goals they set up. There is no learning curve because mistakes are not the means to get better at doing things, but simply wipe out the resources (and often the people) that make it possible to try new things.

Americans have no occasion for smugness, however. It has now become plain that Ronald Reagan & Co. have out-socialized the socialists when it come to the planned economy. The deficit, says Stockman and his ilk, was deliberately pushed into runaway by tax cuts, so that Congress would feel obliged to cut the spending programs the Reaganites don't like. They have, in effect, risked the surplus of the entire nation in hopes of gaining control of that surplus themselves, and making decisions about what is good for everyone, and indeed, making decisions about who is deserving of benefits and who is not. It is an appalling blasphemy against the human spirit, and it is not, finally distinguishable from the arrogance of the Nazis.

Will the Peace Ribbon women rise up and demand higher taxes to pay for social justice, give up their air-conditioned busses and private cars, turn in their TV sets, dress in homemade clothes and eat homegrown food? Should we ask them to?

No, of course not. No sacrifice is valid unless it is made willingly, as a moral choice made from the individual's moral center. Many of the women involved with the Peace Ribbon have in fact made such moral choices, but in the sea of Americans, their number is very small. It is just possible that it is impossible, in a nation of 240,000,000, to allow individuals independent moral choices. I hope not. But it is an immense challenge.

Apologies for the many typos. I am not re-adapting to the typewriter very well, and I discovered I don't have any correction fluid to make this look better. Worst of all, it's not on a disk, so at some future time I will have to transcribe it. Sigh.

After August 15 I will be at my new address on Braddock Road in Alexandria.

* * *
A little band of rookie traffic directors stood on the sidewalk in front of the Capitol, watching while one of their number took her turn directing traffic at the intersection of E. Capitol and 1st Streets. She was a trim young black woman who wore an orange and yellow day-glo vest over her Capitol Police uniform, white hat and gloves. She motioned smartly, authoritatively, and punctuated each change with a blast on her whistle.

Recess is a time when traffic is light, new people learn their jobs, desks get cleaned, files reorganized, otherwise staid staffers appear in jeans, and, as there is no news being generated, the op-ed pages of newspapers are graced with boring or flippant articles. The Attorney General, Secretary of Education, and the President have made embarrassing admissions of their respective ignorance of law, history, and South Africa. Journalists have gloated over revelations of homosexuality in the Roman Catholic priesthood, over the sneaky opportunism of bankers and financiers, over disloyalty, spies, double-agents, and agents provocateur, and over Congressional junkets. Economists continue to make their predictions based on their ceremonial myths of how people relate to money; their predictions don't work, but they don't care because their paychecks don't depend on any demonstrable relationship between their myths and the real world.

It is hard not to be cynical. All knowledge, all causes, all principles, all truths have their sources in interests. There is no political party that deserves uncritical allegiance, no authority worthy of unquestioning obedience, no principle broad enough to embrace all instances. Yet the party in power always seems to assume that they are the sole possessors and executors of the Truth, and are entitled to establish an Inquisition to root out heresy.

Bennett's posturing about prayer being part of American life, for example. Where does he get that idea, one wonders. Do we all break out in prayers of intercession when threatened? (Picture the entire NOAA weather staff on their knees trying to avert Hurricane Elena.) Or prayers of thanksgiving when saved? (Try mass prayers by the residents of Three Mile Island grateful that there was no meltdown.) Did President Reagan call for a clergyman to pray for him when he was wounded? Does every child deprived of the right (sic) to pray in school at least have the benefit of family prayers before breakfast every morning?

And there's worse. How do anti-abortionists and other religious righteous get by with their argument that abortion, or homosexuality or secular humanism, or sex education is wrong because God doesn't like it? Surely, even for believers, it has to be the other way around – that God doesn't like it because it's wrong. Funny people.

The world is indeed in a parlous state, and nowhere are the threats to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness more earnestly argued than in the corridors and suites of the United States Senate. The
Senate doesn't reconvene until the 9th, but staffers and most Senators are back. A little eavesdropping can be instructive: What one issue concerns staffers in every office? AIDS.

If I may be allowed to be cynical a moment longer, I find it very satisfying that it hasn't been possible to blame AIDS on women. It's not the evil temptation of fallen women that gets you AIDS -- it's indulgence in anal and oral intercourse that is most dangerous, and those behaviors aren't all that popular with women.

I don't mean to be flippant, however. I think the AIDS thing is going to get worse before it gets better, though I think we are almost ready (in terms of research resources) to deal with it. I haven't seen much consideration of the provenance of opportunistic infections like AIDS, but it seems likely that every time an unexploited environment becomes available, some organism arises to live in it. Humans have undoubtedly had many such infections, but they died out – the most successful would have destroyed their entire host population, or weeded out all the non-immune members. Because of the isolation in time or space of the relatively thin human population up to very recent times, such diseases were limited in scope. The rapid spread of AIDS has to be primarily an artifact of the present huge human population, and the extent and frequency of travel and trade. We seem to have forgotten that plague and syphilis, and later measles and smallpox were brought to Europe or America by explorers, colonists and traders.

I predict that AIDS will be only the first of a number of infectious diseases that will sweep through world populations. The human race is ripe for biological exploitation, being now almost the same kind of monoculture that produced the potato blight in Ireland 130 years ago. I am optimistic that we will eventually develop a vaccine for AIDS, and suspect that in the process we will learn a lot. I hope that we will also learn some humility about what we can and cannot do, and do and do not know, and that we will learn not to blame people – gays, blacks, women, secular humanists – for events they could not possibly cause if they wanted to. In the short term, I hope the AIDS scare will bring us to our senses about the humble condom, which is probably our best defense against the disease.

Annie Glenn will give two speeches in Columbus in September, and asked me to prepare them for her. Annie has big dark eyes that are always lively, always smiling. Her hair is curly, marbled with grey, and she has a pleasant, tan, mobile face. She is about the office frequently, and today came walking down the stairs by the Press office with a rolled-up rug under her arm. It was a handmade rug commemorating John Glenn's orbit of the earth, and she spread it on the floor while we talked about it. A little later she came to my desk, bringing a peeled orange which she shared with me as we talked about her speeches. The longer one is to be for the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Association of Columbus, and we talked about the tone she wanted to set. It is a little difficult to write something upbeat about Alzheimer's disease, and my difficulties are compounded by needing to write words that are not too challenging for her – a lifelong stutterer who has only been able to speak in public in the last eight years. She still hesitates frequently in speaking, but she is so earnest and charming that one hardly notices.
Writing about a disease has the added drawback that one tends to develop the disease one is writing about, at least in the mind. I am convinced that I am forgetting things more than I used to; I wonder if my clumsiness at coping with the bus and Metro is the beginning of confusions, or if it is just that I haven’t developed the appropriate scripts for the quick decisions that have to be made. (Which side of the bus do I sit on to be out of the sun on this trip? Do I turn left or right when I get off the Orange Line train to get the Yellow Line train to the Pentagon?) I remember that I have had a good bit of stress in the last few months and that many of the little motions and routines (called ‘microflow’ by Cszikzentmihaly) that kept my world in order don’t exist anymore, and I live on a surface I am unsure of.

But that doesn’t explain how I printed a whole set of new return address labels with ‘Arlington’ instead of ‘Alexandria’ on them, and only caught myself when I wondered if I’d spelled ‘Arlington’ right. (I didn't use any of them.) Still, maybe it was because I made the 700 mile trip to Kent and back three consecutive weekends. The drive is physically punishing, starting in the heat, noise, traffic and delays of Friday afternoon, and lasting through the roar and bright lights of trucks on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and then doing the same thing in reverse Sunday evening. Those trips also wipe out the weekend in which I could go to a movie, museum or concert, do laundry, read a book or write letters. I am never at my best in hot weather, feel so wretched that my mind scarcely works at all. And a lot of my dullness is caused by not writing.

The house has air conditioning, and it works. I have the two upstairs rooms -- one set up as a bedroom and the other as workroom, with a bright orange extension cord for the C-64 snaking all the way down to the kitchen for a grounded outlet. The AC to the workroom is pretty weak, so I have a small fan blowing directly across my worktable. I can stick my face into the moving air or back away, as needed. The heat is terrible. We are having another week of hot-hazy-humid, with a temperature range from 75 at 4 AM to 100 from noon until 7 PM. My next job is going to be in Alaska.

There are flurries of activities in the office, but nothing much is happening. Glenn was in for a day, then out again to Ohio. He will be back Monday for the opening of the Senate and a couple of appointments, then off to Chicago that same evening for a fundraiser for his presidential campaign debt. We are hoping to position him out front on South Africa, the trade deficit, the farm credit crisis, and arms negotiations. We didn’t succeed in getting him to sign on with the pro-choice Congressmen’s petition to the Supreme Court. Dale is feeling a little pessimistic, but grins and keeps trying.

The office is being restructured both physically and organizationally; there is a new aide for civil rights and legal affairs, a young black woman from East Liverpool, and a new domestic policy adviser (George) who has organized a staff forum that meets at 8:30 on Wednesday mornings. That’s the best thing that has happened so far.

I am developing some small processes to make things run smoother in the Press office. I have made phone lists for all the regional media markets in Ohio, printed out extra copies of envelopes
for the Riding Page to avert the crisis every time the printer breaks down while we are printing envelopes three minutes before the Riding Page is due; I have started a bulletin board with political cartoons and items about Ohio.

* * *

September 11, 1985

From Isabell, to Seth

dear seth

she doesn't know i have figured out how to work this thing. it's hard to hit the shift key so you will have to do without capitals. she leaves me alone a long time every day but it's not so bad. every morning we go for a walk down a side street that has big oak trees and houses driveways flowers cats weeds gravel bird-sounds and a dry wood scent. it is very hot and dry here and although there is a ravine with a creek with hardly any water in it only some damp stones and a lot of poison ivy. i get a couple of biscuits when we get back and then go upstairs for the rest of the day.

there are two exuberant youngsters who live downstairs called nelson and ginna. nelson is light tan and shaggy. he likes balls apples quinces shoes socks and t-shirts. he destroyed an old t shirt ben barnette gave him. ginna is white with brown spots. her fur is so thin you can see her pink skin underneath and she has floppy ears and big brown eyes. they are both bad almost every day and poop on the floor in the dining room so they get shut up in the kitchen all day.

i have some good spots for sleeping. one is under her bed which is very private because there are boxes and bags under there. another good place is the chair of flat brown cushions in the corner which is right in line with the cool air coming from the air conditioner.

the food isn't great but i usually get some flavoring on mine that nelson and ginna don't get. in the evenings we go out again but not usually for a walk. the yard is very big and the edges are all overgrown with weeds and there are a lot of yellow jackets. she got stung by one last week and so did i but i don't think she knows that. i won't go back there anymore, so she takes me in the front. sometimes i get to go in the car. i was startled by the voices inside the car but mostly riding in the car is boring and noisy.

there are two other woman-persons in this house who like me and pet me and try to get me to go outdoors with them but usually i don't go because of those pesky youngsters.

i am trying to get her to draw a picture of me to send to you. she keeps complaining about how hot it is and how many letters she has to write.

i had better turn this off now because she will come home pretty soon. it really it is pretty hot here
but she will turn on the cool when she gets home. Write me a postcard when you have time and stay away from all those cute Georgia dogs.

love from your faithful
isabell

September 11, 1985

Dear Seth,

I drove to the Hill today, and it was a disaster. It is only 12 miles, but it took over an hour, and I was too late to get into the parking lot, so I had to park out where I used to live and walk back 12 blocks.

I'm sorry you're feeling down. As soon as you know something, call me. It is quite possible Phil or Milt may be able to do something, but they feel it's better to wait and see if it's necessary.* So hang in there and keep me posted.

It is always hard to make good choices, and just when you think you have thought of all possible contingencies, something comes up from behind and wrecks it all. So many things are determined by chance, and so few are our choices anyway, that one almost feels like giving up. After spending 90 minutes getting to work today the computer was down and the telecopier malfunctioned. I had to hike to a hearing over in Dirksen, stay late to finish the speeches for Annie and then hike out to where I'd parked the car. I needed to stop for groceries; it took 10 minutes to get what I needed and then I stood for 25 minutes in the checkout line. I obviously chose the wrong line, but I did the best I could with the information available. Altogether I was out of the house 1 1/2 hours, and I was discouraged, tired and hungry when I got home. It is no damn way to live.

I don’t want to make you feel worse. There are some nice things – I like the house and my housemates. Carole is a young 24, bright and lively and likes to explore and write; Lauren it is a little older and reads sci-fi (we're exchanging Larry Niven). I have started practicing cello again and have lined up some quartets for a week from Friday. I went to visit the Unitarian Church here in Alexandria. They are typical Unitarians with one or two screws loose (I like that) and much better at talking about the loose screws in our society than they are about tightening their own. They are amiable, and if I find some good musicians among them, I'll probably go back.

Your favorite cookies remain the hit of the office. I made a batch to take to a birthday party today, and they upstaged all the other goodies. Isabell is being very good, and gets a lot of attention. The heat wave finally broke yesterday with a series of spectacular thunderstorms which I watched from the bus as we crawled along the Shirley Highway toward the Pentagon.

*Notice how discreetly this is worded. As it says in the Bible: "Go thou and do likewise."

* * *
Before we go into hypertext let's go out into the morning -- a morning washed clean, the sky a cool blue brushed with white, the oaks and beeches tall and dark, striped with sunlight. Isabell and I went through the woods by a path of crunching stones between small pale ferns, poison ivy, beech drops and dogwood seedlings and down to the creek which has been restored by recent storms. The pools and snags were decked with flotsam; if the fish and silvery splinters of their fry were not washed downstream they were hiding. Fresh paw prints of a raccoon showed in the wet sand, and we found flat yellow tulip-tree leaves, bright red leaves of sour gum, berries on spicebush and sassafras, little sprigs of asters and patches of partridge-berry with their little double fruits.

It is all within a few minutes run of my house, and Isabell and I go out every morning. I don't have enough time to go to the creek most weekdays -- we just make a circuit of the residential street down into the valley and back up again -- about a mile. I run most of it, but I am subject to sudden stops to investigate anomalies: Is that a crumpled lavender kleenex in the ditch? No, it's a rose-of-sharon, in spite of frequent mowing.

We get back to the house about 7:30 and I have my breakfast of cottage cheese and a nectarine or peach, and the Washington Post. It is is a bit of a scramble getting dressed. I don't have many wardrobe choices, especially among clothes and shoes that will remain comfortable for 12 hours. It is better now that I have mirrors hung, and a place to fry my curls. The last preparation it is to put $1.45 and a fare card into the side pocket of my only purse, and check to make sure my glasses and wallet are inside.

There are 17M busses at 8:05 and 8:15; I try for the earlier one. The bus stop is about 100 yards north on Braddock Road. Last week I dreaded standing there in the heat of the 8 AM sun; this week the sun has not cleared the trees to the east, and the air it is blessedly chilly. The bus is barely half full when I get on. It fills rapidly after it turns onto Little River Turnpike. The riders are professional types -- healthy, well-dressed in conservative clothing. Most read newspapers or paperback books. There are a half dozen stops before the bus turns onto the Shirley Highway, where it travels to the next exit then gets off and back on again in the HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) lanes. It takes about 20 minutes to get to the Pentagon. The bus platform there has 24 bays, 12 on each side. Busses pull in and leave again in about three minutes; there are more busses parked around the perimeter.

There are three escalators at each end of the bus platform. In the morning two are going down; in the evening two go up. There are always lines at the fare card machines, and lines at the turnstiles to the train platforms. Both Yellow and Blue line trains come through the Pentagon, so there are large signs that light up yellow or blue to show which train it is there or approaching. I scurry through the turnstile, walk down to the right to get on one of the last cars on a Yellow train.

The Yellow train comes up into the daylight suddenly to cross the Potomac, and we see planes landing at National Airport and wrinkled metallic-looking water beneath the trestle before we plunge
back into the dark.

From the back of the train there is quicker access to the lower level at L'Enfant Plaza, where I change to an Orange line train. There it is usually a longer wait for the Orange train, and fewer people on the train. By the time I ride two stops and come up from underground at Capitol South it is 8:55. There are dozen or more newspaper boxes at the top of the escalator -- Washington Post, Washington Times, New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Baltimore Sun, USA Today, Richmond and Philadelphia papers and a handful of tabloids.

If it is a fair day I will walk across 1st Street, past the Library of Congress and Supreme Court and knots of tourists with cameras around their necks. If it is hot or raining I go into the nearest door of the Cannon House Office Building and walk underground to the Capitol, then take the subway train to the Hart Building. It is takes me 12 minutes to walk above ground, 20 minutes underground. Most days I get there about 9:05.

In the evening it is all reversed, except that by then I am tired and my feet hurt. Even if I change into socks and running shoes, my feet are still hot and slightly swollen and tend to blister on the walk back across the Capitol. If I don't leave the office before 6:15 I miss the 6:45 bus from the Pentagon and have to wait until 7:20 for another 17M, or take a different bus and walk a half mile down Braddock Road from Little River Turnpike. It takes an hour to get home, too, so that even if I leave the office at 6 I am gone 11 hours a day. I am physically exhausted and inwardly bruised after a day, just from walking, standing, waiting, riding.

* * *

What we are seeing is a Managed Presidency. Ronald Reagan it is not a mere puppet or actor being manipulated against (or without) his will by the power hungry. He is the public persona of an ideology that believes in Management by Objectives. They are True Believers, and what they believe it is that the world can be managed to produce whatever outcomes we choose. Reagan is one of their triumphs, surely. If a second-rate actor can be made into a plausible President of the United States it ought to be no trick at all to control the economy, raise defense spending while reducing revenues, soothe South Africa, wipe out the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, call the Soviet Union an "Evil Empire" and scare the shit out of them with Star Wars and then have them come smiling to the negotiating table. That's the way it happens in movies and comic books.

Indeed, we all tend to believe that everything that happens is an effect that had an intentional cause. If something good happens to us, though we may speak of luck, we secretly attribute it to our uncommon determination, ambition, intelligence, talent, intuition, piety, beauty, hard work, toughness, positive attitude, etc. When bad things happen we complain that we didn't deserve it – that cause and effect didn't work right – or wonder what we did wrong and search the past for what or who caused our misfortune. Hardly anyone who gets rich, famous or powerful attributes his (masculine pronoun intended) success to chance or random processes. Yet our little successes in planning our lives or achieving some goals leads us to believe that if we just managed properly we could save the world – or the whales, the economy, nuclear power plants, the ozone layer. ...
I have two problems with that. I don't want someone else deciding for me how my world should be saved, and if our plans for the way the world should be were to succeed, we lose the only thing that makes life worth living: the fun of generating new ways of seeing and doing, coping, creating, inventing.

The first problem is that it is a civil liberties issue. The men who wrote the Constitution understood that, even if they couldn't think of women and blacks as human.

I also don't feel very comfortable with the notion of saving the world by devising half-assed Star Wars defenses against the Soviet Union – a huge bureaucracy that can't even manage their own agriculture. And I don't see that killing people we don't like it is very good for them – or even for me, for all that. I especially don't like having someone else decide what it is good for me, or good for us, without consulting me. If South Africa teaches us nothing else, it is that there it is no such thing as a beneficent tyranny. And thank you, gentlemen, but I don't think you have anything to say about abortion. If you think abortion is murder, please go ahead and practice all the chastity you like: it's the surest way to stop it.

The civil rights issues are going to be with us for a while, but I think eventually we'll get better at them. But the second problem it is likely to be more formidable. Musicians will recall that Mozart once made a Handy-Dandy Minuet Writer (he didn't call it that) that enabled anyone to construct a minuet -- an enormously popular form of music in the 18th century. It is was a simple set of tinker-toy prefabs -- choose one from column A and one from column B -- that produced neat little minuets that were musically correct and quite pleasant to listen to, but were basically uninteresting, and, well, boring. It was a joke for Mozart, who knew very well that what made real music was subverting the formula -- using the program as the starting point rather than the end-point of the inventive process.

What concerns me about the Reagan conservatives' vision of how the world ought to be is the meanness of their dreams -- plastic affluence for everyone. Everyone is to have color TV, decorator toilet paper, eye makeup, a choice of soft drinks in aluminum cans, stylish polyester clothes, fast-food; they should live in a spotless apartment with carpeted floors, artificial houseplants, and a microwave oven; they should drive a fast car, built by robots, over six lane highways to their offices. They will also be uniformly happy, say their prayers to the same God, work cheerfully at repetitive jobs, and vote, read and eat what it is good for them. Boat-rockers, visionaries, cartoonists, musicians, skeptics and clowns will be firmly put down. We will see regimentation on an unprecedented scale. Of course we already have regimentation. Consider the bus-full of people who ride with me every day: we are uniformly dressed -- appropriate to gender -- we wear or carry plastic ID cards, we read the Post, the NYT, or the WSJ; we are either Republicans or Democrats; we eat the same foods, talk about the same ball-games, exercise classes or movies; we all sit correctly on the bus, like kernels on an ear of corn; no-one sings, dances, laughs, weeps, prays audibly, writes, or stands on her head.

There is a third problem with the management of large systems which is structural: the larger and
more complex a system it is, the more it is subject to errors and bugs ('bug 'is a computer term, describing an undesired or unanticipated consequence to a programming sequence). And it is simply not possible to design a system that takes into account and provides for every possible contingency that may ever arise in the future of the system. We have already proved this in the operation of nuclear power plants. Another example is rush hour traffic in Washington – in spite of very expert design and predictions and great expenditure, traffic at rush hours crawls at 15 mph. And my alternative to an hour on foot, bus and train is an hour in my un-air-conditioned car. My school board experience suggests that a secondary school should not be larger than 2000 students, and that it is hopeless to try to make rules against everything that you might not want students to do.

Trying to manage people not only doesn't work, it does damage. Our most inalienable right it is the right to be wrong – to make a mistake and do it better the next time: to learn. What Zena Blau says in Black Children, White Children is that children whose mothers impose rules and control the child's every thought and action (in her study they were mothers belonging to fundamentalist authoritarian religious sects) end up with lower IQs – yes, IQ, not achievement test scores – regardless of race: hence the title. Keeping people from learning by making them do things right may be the greatest disservice we can do to them.

Finally – I guess I am getting cynical in my old age – I don't see much evidence that there it is any Ultimate Good out there toward which we are, or should be progressing, or toward which we could go if we knew where it was. All earthly religions I know about are notable for their pettiness, and seem to be based more on how we wish the cosmos to be than on what we observe. My own bias is that the universe is a big collection of coincidences, and that any order we find locally is of our own making – or more properly, of our making shift to survive. It is a random system which continues only because we believe that it isn't.

I didn't mean to get into metaphysics. I'm running tired from 11 hour work days and my unwillingness to give up writing, reading or practicing. I am enjoying Caroline Webber's cello, which responds nicely to my Voirin bow, and I sometimes play until I'm exhausted.

The other good thing about being out here in Alexandria it is that there are stars at night. Over the Capitol the sky-glare it is so bright that few stars are visible.

* * *

from Isabell to Seth

28 september 1985

you wouldn't believe what she expects me to do. yesterday morning she put on a poncho and we
went out into that stuff. it was pouring rain and the trees were bending in the wind and it was still dark so the cars had their lights on. the roar and swish the cars usually make had a fierce hissing sound added to it and there were streams running down the street and big puddles. i think she actually intended to take our usual run in that downpour. i wouldn't stand for it. i put on my best 'beaten dog' look and she gave in. but not before i got thoroughly soaked. we heard on the radio about hurricane gloria and how we shouldn't park cars under trees or try to drive through big puddles but she doesn't seem to be much scared by such things. she even left a window open in our bedroom. luckily i have safe places to sleep. the best one is the chair she says will be your bed when you get here. it is a corner safe from windows.

she is gone a long time every day and i mostly sleep. the other guys stay downstairs. ginna still poops on the floor and nelson eats library books and shoes and pillows and rugs and eggshells out of the trash. the other ladies like me and fuss over me, which i like. the one she calls carole mostly gives me my dinner because she is the first one home in the evenings.

i guess this will miss your birthday. i thought you might be here for it and i saved you some biscuits but then i got hungry and ate them. the food is pretty good here and sometimes i get a chicken bone or leftover stew or a cottage cheese carton with some good stuff sticking to it. maybe there is something you like better than dog biscuits or chicken bones. if you wrote and told me i could talk her into fixing it for you.

she left me a note saying that if i wrote to you i should send you some stamps and here they are. they are pretty but horses are not as handsome as dogs.

i hope you know that.

from your fair

isabell

* * *

**OCTOBER 1985**

October 1, 1985

What I know of Management by Objectives and planning for every possible contingency makes me a little uncomfortable with attempting to manage the public image of Senator Glenn. Now that Kindness (Thomas, Republican of Dayton, Ohio) has announced that he will run against Glenn, there are endless discussions about how our Senator should be 'positioned', how he should respond, what he may say and should not say, what he should do about this statement or that
event. Every single utterance or action is examined in light of what Kindness might do if we...send newsletters to Postal Patron instead of address lists, or if we had a computer file named JEWPRESS. (That seemed like a reasonable name for a listing of Jewish newspapers that had to have a computer name of eight or fewer characters, but it was deemed unacceptable. I changed it to HEBPRESS.) Of course we have to consider all the contingencies we can think up ahead of time, but in the long run what will make the difference is John Glenn's ability to think on his feet, calculate the risks and then take them or not, on the spot. To do that well, he has to be allowed to make the judgments himself, and make mistakes, and learn for himself how things work. Actually he does this quite well, and I think we would do better to spend less time 'positioning' him and more time watching closely and supporting him as he moves in one direction or another.

To tell the truth I watch Metzenbaum with a little envy. He is a crafty old goat – a mountain goat, surefooted in the lofty, rocky terrain of the U.S. Senate. He is often the target of right-wingers who do not understand that he is a moving target with a direction and a velocity. But relatively few people with the autonomy and independence Metz has ever get to the Senate. Once there, every Senator has a staff of very, very bright people whose careers depend on successful management of their Senator to get him re-elected.

* * *

A week or so ago the Post had a front page article about a report of the Carnegie Foundation on Higher Education that said that college students take 'safe' courses and lack 'creativity' and 'ambition'. It also found that college students lack 'civic responsibility' because they get student loans instead of working their ways through school. This is admittedly a bald over-simplification. Aha! the Glenn staff said, collectively, time to dust off the SAVE legislation and save all those poor students languishing under the double burden of debt and civic irresponsibility (or is it un-civic irresponsibility?) SAVE is a program Glenn proposed that would enable kids to earn money for college by working at local community service jobs, with part of their earnings going into a trust fund double-matched by the Federal government. Elaine (newly elevated from legislative correspondent to aide for education and labor) and Patricia (the new aide for civil rights and justice) will redraw the bill (it was introduced last year but never acted on) and write a floor statement, and Caroline will write the press release for it.

I zipped right through the press release, wantonly making up quotations for the Senator. The bill and floor statement took a little longer, until they met all the conditions set by Ron (archivist and knower of rules) George (domestic policy director), Phil (legislative director) and Ed (Administrative Assistant). Then Phil and Ed had to get Glenn to agree to put it in -- introducing it to the Senate and reading the floor statement.

Glenn agreed on Wednesday to put it in on Thursday, then Friday. "Can I send out the press release?" "Well, better not – he might not do it. Besides, it's Friday, a terrible time for news – Let's
wait ‘til Monday, he says he’ll put it in first thing on Monday."

By the next Wednesday he still hadn’t introduced the bill. Phil looked at it again and said "Wait – it doesn’t say where the money is going to come from. We’ve positioned the Senator at ‘no new line items’ in the budget."

Elaine: "No, that’s okay – it’s coming out of Work-Study."

Ron: "Whoa. We can’t let that get out – every university professor in the country would be after our hide – they love Work-Study, that’s how they get their research and secretarial work done."

George: "Does the bill say where the money is coming from?" No. "Does it have to?"

Ron: "I don’t think so. We can find out."

So a week later we were back at square one. The bill is okay, it can go without saying where the money comes from. A paragraph has been added to the floor statement citing the self-renewing nature of the trust fund. I added a similar paragraph to the press release, and threw away the 10 copies I had already printed, ready for the Riding Page.

Thursday: Is it going in today? Senator said he was going to...but at 3 PM he left for Cincinnati, and won’t be back until Monday.

Seth is getting out of the Army. His chest, on which he had surgery when he was 12, has proved unequal to the strains of 50 lb. packs and other stresses, and the Army medics (not unreasonably) don’t want to deal with it. They are giving him a medical discharge that will make him permanently ineligible for military service. It is a bitter outcome for him -- he wanted so much to be strong and able, tough and soldierly. He also wanted the money. He went in under the Citizen-Soldier G.I. Bill (a Glenn bill) that would have given him $25,000 for college after four years of service. He is now on ‘holdover’ status, awaiting the processing of his papers, which he was told might take as long as 13 weeks. He will come to Washington first, then go to California. I’m sorry he couldn’t stay on in the Army – it was his way of making it on his own, and I’m not sure he feels he has any other way.

Thursday night. I am sitting at the C-64 in spite of the seduction of Bach’s St. John Passion and the tiredness I bring home every evening. I guess I’m now established in Washington, because I am studying how I can get away from here. The last year has been hell, and if I had it to do again, I wouldn’t have the courage. It is not because of the job, nor the people, nor even the weather in Washington – though it is dreadful. It is that I have been uprooted from everything I cherished, pruned of the branches that kept me in touch with a world that made sense to me and planted in a parched soil. I have certainly survived, but I don’t find myself a very interesting person any more. I haven’t read a book for nine months, and I fall asleep over the TLS seven nights a week. I write
these general letters and nothing else – not even any other letters. I have found a few chamber-music collaborators, but I pay for an evening of quartets with a week of exhaustion. I no longer sketch or keep up my day-book. Whatever I had in the way of an inner life is gone, lost to coping with noise, heat, distance. I buy 12 hours of relative cool and quiet with two hours of roar, foul smells, hot busses and hard pavements. I live among friendly strangers who are civil, but have little to invest in themselves, let alone others. Martha advised me: "You can't have friends in the office -- you can't trust anyone."

* * *

Excellent! The difference between the 'true believer' and the 'passionate defender.' What fascinates me is that a society of true believers is a totalitarian society, and a society of passionate defenders is a community, and the content of the beliefs have almost nothing to do with the distinction. If I weren't so beleaguered by work and commuting, I'd map that onto Mary Douglas' grid/group matrix. We see the true believer in Meese, who truly believes that he knows what the Framers of the Constitution intended – about wiretaps, for example. And Justice Brennan is a passionate defender.

Middle of September. Last week was very busy, with a number of press releases, press conferences and preparations for the Senator's appearances in Ohio. I made a paper on clean coal technology drawn up by the Energy subcommittee staff into a speech for the Senator to give at Ohio University.

At the end of the week the news of the escaping and recaptured hijackers dominated everything. Glenn 'applauded' the President for bringing down the airplane. The received wisdom in the office is that the Egyptians knew we were going to force the plane down, and we let them take off to save Mubarak's hide. The rationale is that the plane wouldn't have had to land, and the Navy planes wouldn't have dared shoot to force them down. It has a plausible ring to it, and it saves everybody's faces, but I don't believe it. The control over the plane was by jamming the radio broadcasts of every place it might have landed except where they wanted it to go. That seems to be a particularly dumb thing to do, because it showed anyone who wants to hijack a plane how to control it without even being on board.

* * *

NOVEMBER 1985

November 2, 1985

Halloween is taken very seriously in these parts -- one party ended in a street brawl in which two people were run over by a truck (concurrently, but not fatally) and another bashed with a shovel. There was no increase above the mean of grisly murders, though I got stopped one evening on 3rd Street SE and asked if I had been in the neighborhood the night before. (I hadn't. I learned later
that a young secretary had had her throat cut nearby.) There was a free midnight concert at the Kennedy Center, featuring spooky music, and a large cemetery in Maryland held an outdoor children's party. On the Hill some staffers wore witches' hats, or glasses with a false nose attached, and leftover Trick-or-Treat candy circulated in every office. We had a few shy children in comprehensively messy make-up come to our door on Braddock Road for small candy bars.

...but we had a Halloween Party of our own, with people invited to come as "who we might have been." Carole devised a costume from brown bathroom rugs and toilet-tank covers, representing herself as one punctua of evolution. Lauren moved into the future of space travel with Star-Trek pajamas and Spock-ears. We also had a mermaid, courtesy of J.C. Penney, who had dangly earrings on the light-stick principle. The earrings tended to migrate to the ears of other guests. We had about 30 people altogether, mostly between the ages of 25 and 40 -- well educated, skilled, successful people; the married ones still in their first marriages. I took a good bit of pleasure in watching them dance, and talking to them.

Nelson (a raggedy tan gamin of terrier lineage) and Ginna (liver and white hound with sad eyes and silky ears) were banished to the basement and complained audibly all evening. Ginna was probably also suffering from indigestion. She ate a whole round of unattended cheese right before the party. Carole, anxious, asked me if I thought she should go buy another cheese. That was more than I could resist: "Why? Is Ginna still hungry?" Isabell (spelling by Seth, aged 9) attended the party, sitting primly on a chair and accepting the praise and petting of the guests. I was a little surprised she was brave enough to come downstairs. She stays upstairs so much of the time Carole calls her 'Invisabell.'

* * *

Yes, we can stay in bed until 7 this morning. We're going to take the bus and Metro and do not have to leave the house until 7:55. No, you are not excused from the morning run, get your sneakers on. It's lovely, anyway -- the tall tulip trees are golden, oaks tawny and there are still brilliant red maples and dogwoods. The sky is bright, but the streetlights are still on under the trees. There is no sidewalk, and the shoulder is knobby with acorns. Isabell keeps close, making small excursions to investigate trash cans or avoid a cat watching from under a bush. It takes us only 15 minutes to run the full circuit down into the ravine and back up by the road behind the house. On our way back up the driveway we pick up the Post, which we can read over breakfast. Have what you like for breakfast, I'm having a dish of yogurt and wheat-germ sweetened with a spoonful of quince-honey I made from three quinces in our backyard tree, and a half cup of coffee (it's an hour and a half to a bathroom).

Oh-oh -- it's twenty-till, and I have to make some curls....Ready? $1.45 for the bus? Fare card for the Metro? Umbrella? Book? No, I can't read on the bus, and we are on the Metro such a short time it isn't worth it. The bus stop is only a hundred yards up Braddock Road. Traffic is very heavy on Braddock in the morning, with cars whizzing around the curve at about 40 mph, barely a yard from the sidewalk. The bus should be here in five minutes, but one day last week I waited until 8:20, when three busses came at the same time. The bus is half full, several people get off at the
corner of Little River Turnpike, but more get on. Busses go in the High Occupancy Lanes, a good thing, because the regular lanes are bumper to bumper, about 15 mph.

No, we don't really have to walk down the escalator – trains come every two minutes – but we want a Yellow line train, and we want to go to the back end, if possible. Up there on the wall, behind the tracks – see the sign – when the yellow bottom half lights up and blinks it means the Yellow line train is approaching. We have time, but keep walking -- we want to get on the last car so we don't have so far to walk at Gallery Place. Watch out the window, in about two minutes we come up and over the Potomac. The water is flat and silvery this morning, and a small boat with two people fishing is just under the pilings of the highway bridge. If you look back you can see helmeted bicycle commuters on the bike trail along the riverbank. We don't get off at L'Enfant Plaza, but nearly everyone else does, and is replaced by a fresh batch.

At Gallery Place everyone swarms off the train and up the escalators. Damn, we just missed the eastbound Red line train. A westbound train arrives at the opposite platform, stops, and departs leaving only a few people straggling toward the escalators. Now the lights along the edge of our platform are blinking -- our train is here. We have to wait for the hissing flap of the doors opening. "Red line train to Silver Spring. Next stop, Judiciary Square. Doors opening on the right," the driver speaks over the intercom. We'll get off at Union Station -- we have a choice of going up through the Amtrak station or out onto the corner where the taxi stand is. Let's go that way, it's a little quicker, and it's five to nine already.

Careful, better wait for the walk-light here -- Washington drivers don't like to slow down for pedestrians. This is a pretty, tame little park, with friendly plantings – bergamot, salvia, daisies – mostly gone to seed by now. No, as a guest you can't go in this door on the corner, it requires a staff ID. Anyway, it's nice to walk around by the fountains. I once saw someone walking a rabbit on a leash in here. Yes, you have to go through the metal detector. That ugly plywood fence around the middle of the lobby has been up for six months, and the sign lies: work is not in progress on the sculpture that is to grace the whole atrium. I am a good bit less than smitten with the design for the sculpture shown on the poster. If it were mounted in a gallery, I could choose to not go where it is. But when it's permanently erected in a space I must walk through five days a week, I think it's intrusive. I'd probably think it intrusive even if I liked it. Boondoggle -- ah, it's five after nine.

Even so, there is no one in the press office. I suspect Dale is here, but in hiding to write the speech for a luncheon today. My first task is to throw away yesterday's newspapers, reflecting that this is the first task of any information management system: get rid of as much of the past as possible, because there will never again be enough time to deal with it. Rose comes by very soon with today's papers -- Post, NYT, WSJ, Washington Times, USA Today. I've already read the first section of the Post, but I need to scan the "World News" section. This morning I will make sure to check the editorial and op-ed pages of the Wall Street Journal, the International News, and their last page, on which they often have articles about Washington politics. There is an article this morning
on the farm credit crunch, which I clip for Carl. Steffie comes down from the mail-room with a big bag of returned radio show tapes. They aren't supposed to come here, they should go to the Senate Recording Studio. I put them on Marty's chair and get a cup of coffee.

The cartoons on the bulletin board over Printer 003 have been up for several days, so I sort through the pack in my drawer for new ones, saving the more barbed ones, and the Mike Peters (of the Dayton Daily News) one for the Friday clips. I have to lift down the corkboard and put it on my desk to accomplish this. Meanwhile, the phone attached to the teletypewriter rings once and the teletypewriter clacks and buzzes, then hums for a while, whirs and bleats once and there is an article from the Plain Dealer about the Senator's appearance in Cleveland yesterday. I make copies to give to Glenn, Ed, and Len, but I don't put it in the pile for the Friday clips, because the copy is not good enough -- we will have a real paper by this afternoon, and the original makes much better photocopy.

Next I go upstairs to get our mail: a letter for Marty, a couple of DPC bulletins for Dale, two auction requests (undated, mimeographed letters that don't even give the date of the celebrity auctions) a Kent-Ravenna Record Courier, two Mansfield News-Journals, and a copy of the Call & Post (Cleveland). The newspapers are tightly rolled, and I unroll them and spread them flat on my chair and sit on them for a few hours before I clip them.

The phone is ringing and I answer it -- the voice asks for Marty: "I'm sorry, Martha is away from her desk, can I help you?" (I have one line on my desk that is Dale's, but I don't have Marty's) "Oh, hello, Bill Hershey...no, nothing much is going on yet today...Yes, he's back...No, his farm amendment probably won't go in until Monday...Right, if anything happens, I promise you'll be the last to know."

Then Joan from the Columbus office, who is feeling pressed: "Listen, I have to give a talk tonight about women in politics -- Can you get me something?" I tell her "Sure, I'll call CRS right now. Is two o'clock enough time?" Joan says it is, and I call CRS. After seven rounds of 'sorry our lines are all busy, your call will be answered in turn' I get a human being and make the request. "Yes, it will be ready by 2 if you can come over to the Madison Building and pick it up."

Marty has finally arrived and is in her corner of the office, sorting through the radio tapes and having her first cigarette. "Why don't you have them page it over to you?" she asks. I reply that I want a walk at lunchtime.

Dale comes in, fuming, brandishing the pack of 'Legislative Initiatives' we had been working on at the request of Ed. "I spent too much time on this last night. Who wrote these? How is anybody supposed to understand them? Look at this....you can't give these to a reporter -- they can't understand this stuff! See what you can do with them; we can't use them the way they are."
I sighed. Ron wrote them, after researching them with staff and through LEGIS. I had already picked out the most opaque ones and sent them to the appropriate aide with a request to give us a very short description of the bill or amendment they referred to. I did understand that they were destined for reporters, and had had an extended discussion with a senior aide over the word "unmarketable" referring to donations of food.

"Leave it out," I said, "it suggests unappetizing or spoiled food."

"No," he said, "it simply means un-saleable -- reporters should know the difference."

"But, I replied, I don't think we can expect them to make that distinction."

"No, leave it in," he said -- you have to draw the line somewhere, and it raises the level on which they operate if you stretch their minds a little."

Nevertheless, I had left out the word "unmarketable" in the version Dale had.

I said little in response to Dale's remarks, took the pages and put them on my desk. When I had a spare moment I went back to Ron's desk and told him what had happened. It was his turn to sigh: "Don't get upset. I have no pride of ownership, and it's not that important. We'll work it out."

Then I went to ask Peggy what our computer could do. Can we retrieve and print out a list of media events by county from my continuous LOG document? No. You can locate them using the SEARCH function, but you have to assemble it piece by piece. Back in the press office Marty says her friend who knows computers said the Senate really got ripped off when they installed their computer systems.

It is 10 o'clock and Dale has to have a speech ready by 11:30 for the Senator to give at lunchtime. He has completed two handwritten pages and needs me to type them into the computer. (He could use the computer himself, but believes the only way he can write speeches is on yellow legal pads.) Typing is no doubt the thing I do worst, yet I am probably still the only person in the office who can do a document on the computer fast enough and good enough, because I can deal with pagination, changing printwheels or ribbons, managing print queues and other vagaries of the system. I type fast and badly, use the spelling-check to catch typos.

This speech is not one of Dale's better efforts. It is to a business PAC, and he is trying to talk them out of using 'report cards' and other kinds of single-interest tactics in deciding which candidates to give money to. I find his tone patronizing and preachy, and he has put things in like "you're wrong" and finally, after instructing these business people in the ways they should study all the issues and inform themselves, he tells them that then their salaries will have been achieved the old fashioned way, by earning them. I say nothing to Dale, except to suggest a change in one sentence that wanders off from its starting point. As I finish we are up against the deadline. I send it off to Printer...
003, which already has the Orator (large type for speeches) printwheel on it. Dale takes the first four pages as they come off the printer, and there are some blank lines. I call out to Peggy to go put an Orator printwheel on Printer 001, where it will work better, and re-queue the speech, and the day is saved.

* * *

November 4, 1985

Tonight you will have to take pot luck, which is likely to be stone soup. The weather has been blessedly cold, with clear mornings. The return to Eastern Standard Time has given me another fortnight of light to run in at 6 AM and this morning I had the company of a sun-dog on the drive into DC. I tried to convince myself that it was a sign from heaven, but failed. There were undoubtedly at least 10,000 people in Northern Virginia who could see it, and if even 1% of them noticed, the exclusivity is rather ruined.

Still, things are not going badly at the office. People are beginning to rely on me because I can come up with practical quick ways to manage any old kind of knot, and because, now that I am getting the hang of it, I'm pretty good at things.

But this letter is not to be about the office, though I spend about 50 hours a week there. Evenings are a total loss. I am tired, and in any case they are only three hours long -- on good days -- and there are chores to do for the household and for my personal well-being. An hour spent reading the TLS or watching the going TV program ruins the evening for any productive work. On my way to work I daydream about what I will write that evening, or the regimen of practicing I am about to start, or the concert I will go to Friday night. On the way home I think about events I want to write about in my next letter. But it comes to nothing. I arrive home starved and make myself a quick and unwise supper. If I manage to resist chocolate and coffee by 9 o'clock I start having bouts of uncontrollable yawning, and go to bed.

There is nothing in Washington that galls me more than the sybaritic self-indulgence of the yuppies and the Republicans, and their general attitude that they deserve all the luxury they are capable of consuming. This is neo-conservatism indeed -- sleek stretch limousines with uniformed drivers, outlandish gowns whose only style is the price tag, brisk sales of perfume and jewelry (right in the Senate office buildings, which disgusts me), indecent maneuvering by Members of Congress for their free parking privilege at National Airport (while starving Amtrak and the DC Metro system). If I were a Republican I would be ashamed to have Phyllis Schlafly on my side, with her crusade to impose her kinky opinions about sex on all of us; I would be humiliated by dinners costing $1000 a plate and served by black waiters; I would be mortally embarrassed by the half-witted Mr. Meese, who can't even be trusted to make his own honest mistakes. I hope there are some Republicans of stature who see the rot that has infested what should be a well-founded and structurally sound
conservatism. There is a place for ‘character’, for traditional values of honesty, justice, loyalty, trust and integrity, yet I don’t see them displayed in these practitioners of the New Right. The materialism is appalling, and money is the only measure of worth.

And money is made by brokerage, not by production, invention, creation or service. When their dividends drop, Standard Oil doesn’t produce more oil – they buy a copper mine, take over another company, or cream the surplus off their own workers’ pension fund. When Prudential Insurance sees their bottom line shrink they change their investments and drop any customers who cost them money. GE sells its tax credits, and landlords keep properties empty to claim a tax write-off.

I don’t know what to do about it. The rich are quite insulated. They don’t even see the suffering they cause. The rich and self-indulgent are now trying to cut off all funds for family planning, which will certainly cause more misery.

Tonight, the New York Philharmonic, Tennstedt conducting, on WETA. Martin Buchspan tells how Tennstedt got out of East Germany by mistake and never returned. A little recognition of the musical education he had received there would be in order, but it seems that the thing to do now is to say how bad it is in Soviet bloc countries. I think often of my friends in East Germany, and I wish I could go back for a visit. I can’t, of course, politically or financially. I suppose the best thing I could do for them would be to write more about them, but I can’t even do that. Not that I could get it published, anyway.

It has rained all day, with stiff winds. Tonight the squalls pass over every half hour or so, and the windows rattle. Isabell refused to run with me in the rain this morning, so I went alone, in my white Cloak-of-Visibility poncho.

* * *

November 17, 1985

Pale gold mottled with purple. It would make a lovely sunset, but regrettably it is my right leg, below the knee, five days after it slipped down between the Metro platform and the floor of the subway car. I was scurrying to get on a crowded morning train at the Pentagon station; other riders pulled me up, the doors closed and the train went on. My leg was bruised from ankle to knee. I hobbled to the office and tried to ignore it, but at noon I went down to the Senate First Aid room where the attendant gave me an ice pack for it. The only way I could keep the ice pack in place was to put it inside my panty hose.

It has been sore, but no serious damage was done. The worst thing is that it swells whenever I am in an upright position, which is most of the day. Then it aches and itches, and generally makes me feel rotten. It is an odd occurrence because it was almost exactly a year ago that I stepped off a snowy curb in Kent and into a hidden storm sewer opening with my left leg, resulting in similar
bruises. But on that occasion I was spared the abrasions because I was wearing high boots.

You need to understand that the dates that appear on top of these letters are most often the date on which they are started, though I try to remember to change them after the letter is finished. If I can find one evening a week to write I feel I have done well. Mostly I'm just too tired. Seth is here now, with many stories to tell about the Army, and many insecurities about his future, which takes up my evening time.

I feel I am not thriving in Washington. It is not that the work goes badly – though there is scant opportunity to do the things I do well, and even fewer occasions about which I feel that what I have done has made any significant difference in the way anyone sees the world, let alone any difference in the way the world is. Perhaps I am overreaching to expect to see the results of what I do. But I am bewildered and frustrated to be unable to do what I know I can do, and indeed, must do, to keep myself and my world structured and manageable.

* * *

You may think, my friends, that I write these letters for you, but I don't. I use what I write for letters, but I write for myself. And when I can't write, things start to crumble around the edges and go soft in the middle. I am immersed in the 'brain' of the United States government and economy, with considerable skills of observation, selection and description, and I no time or energy to do the reflection, writing and tinkering I need to do to tell my stories – for your or for my own sanity and self-respect.

* * *

Dale, my boss, is a relatively young man – about 38. He is conscientious and compassionate, very bright and ambitious. His second son was just born this fall, and his wife is staying home to take care of the children. He makes over $60,000 a year, and he is already saving, he says, so his boys will be able to go to any colleges they choose. It is an admirable plan, and yet it stings. I can't put my kids through college – I can't even help them. On $20,000 a year it will take me at least another year just to pay off the money I owe to friends who helped me when I had nothing. I don't want to live like this now, and I certainly don't want to spend the rest of my life like this.

"After another year," says one friend, "you could get a deputy press secretary job at $28,000." Another says "Get a different job now – with your resume you should be able to move up to the $30,000 range right now." But I don't want more money – I want time – for music and words, for reading, writing, and trying things out; time for trees and silence, for friends and a garden.

* * *

The Fairfax Unitarian Church is new, built into a hillside of tall oak trees, with long windows looking out to the near and middle trees, and two high windows opening up the sky. There are three other buildings on the grounds, for offices and for Religious Education. They have so many members they hold two services every Sunday. The members are bright, busy professionals, politically liberal. The minister is a kindly zealot, not especially well-read, but able to stay out of the way of those with real skill, and be daddy to everyone else.
This past Sunday a guest preacher spoke on South Africa, remarking on the insularity of the white Afrikaners, who do not know or even imagine what life is like for the black people in the homelands. It is easy for us to decry the blindness or selective vision of apartheid, yet we are just as unknowing about the poor and the blacks of our own country, and about goodness, justice and honesty. Teach your child to use the microwave, says a column in the Living section of the newspaper, ignoring the fact that poor people don’t have food, let alone microwaves; the poor deliberately choose welfare because they are too lazy to work, says a caseworker for an Ohio county human services office; the Sandinistas are training 8-year-olds to attack our Freedom Fighters, says my son Seth, fresh from the Army. Plump healthy children appear on TV ads for McDonalds, NutraSweet, Toys-R-Us; endless TV westerns outdo one another in the wickedness of the Bad Guys to hammer home the message that any kind of violence is justified as long as you can show the badness of those against whom it is directed.

South Africa is not all that different from Nazi Germany, and the only thing that keeps the United States from going down that road is our inability to agree on any single vision of the way the world is.

* * *

Thanksgiving Day, 1985

I don’t ordinarily read the comics, but my housemates exclaimed over them at breakfast while I was chopping celery and onions for the holiday stuffing, so when I had everything ready I sat down at the kitchen table with a fresh piece of toast and new cup of coffee and picked up the comics pages. Most cartoonists had, as agreed, drawn their strips about hunger, and most of them managed something light-hearted if not comic. I got halfway down the page and found my vision blurred by tears: we have so much because so many have so little. Yet we, who are overweight, comfortable and have some control over the conditions in which we live, are able to look out and see the poverty and misery of others and say yes, this is the way it is, and yes, it touches us, and we can see the absurdity of it. Our vision is very weak, our wills are weaker, our patience with the folly of others is vastly exceeded by our tolerance for our own foolishness, and our collective attention span is quite short. But there is still a spark of glory still alive in each of us – we do care about one another. All of us know in our hearts, however faintly, that in a world where anyone starves it is immoral to be fat, and in a world where anyone suffers it is wrong to take ourselves and our comforts too seriously.

So why should I weep? (Aside from my generally leaky psychological plumbing.) Gratitude, I guess, that I am not really living only in stage-sets and scenarios invented by the interests of men (gender-specific noun intended); pity, and grief. Not so much pity for the starving Africans and the victims of violence everywhere as for our weakness, our nitpicking, trivial existence among the artifacts of an economic system based on the accumulation of material ‘goods’; our inability to live in
the Light that illumines our existence. And grief, for the music of our lives that we let slip into the past unheard. *Kyrie eleison.*

* * *

It is not quite as it was, but I am once again sitting at the C-64 in an unheated room (the new gas furnace has been installed but not inspected, and cannot be turned on) wrapped in an old lap-rug with a cat warming my knees, and a small radio making 17th century sounds. Babycat belongs to Carole, but spends most of her time in my attic where she is safe from Nelson, the ballplayer. To Nelson anything he can hold in his mouth or carry is a ball. This includes, but is not limited to, shoes, sticks, T-shirts, soap-bubbles, fire logs, quinces, dishes, Seth's ankles, Ginna's neck...and cats. This afternoon I will bake a $3.00 chicken with extra stuffing and three sweet potatoes and make a small salad of apples, celery and walnuts. We will finish our dinner in front of a fire of oak logs in the fireplace with the pumpkin pie I baked last night. This is the first time in 17 years that I have had a Thanksgiving dinner without any food I grew myself, and I feel the loss very keenly. I find it dehumanizing to live completely separated from the production of the food that sustains me. I will admit that my years of gardening have taught me that if I had to produce all my own food I would starve. But in my ideal world, family and neighbors would work together and share in providing food, and food would not be part of the money system at all. Meanwhile Congress proposes shooting dairy herds to reduce milk production and cuts off funding for birth control; millions are spent each day to store cheese, butter and grains, and a sign in the bus reminds riders that during that bus-ride, three and a quarter children will starve to death.

I see every evening the meanness of the reality depicted on TV, and I realize that for millions, this is the vision of hope, of a better life. The ads for toys alone are enough to make me consider turning in my belly-button. I am only grateful my own kids are grown.

Plans for the holidays are taking shape. I have reservations on People Express to L.A. on Xmas Eve, to spend two weeks in Santa Barbara with Alys and Seth (he is flying out on Dec. 7). I'm hoping to get a cancellation a few days earlier, though I don't expect that Congress will recess before Friday the 20th the way things are going. On Twelfth Night I will fly back to DC, and the next day drive to Kent and spend the rest of the week there finishing up some things and attending my final school board meeting.

Seth has been a good addition to our household for the last month. He substantially engineered the fence to enclose the dogs in the backyard, though it's not quite complete, because it rains all the time. The posts for the gate are set in concrete, and it can be completed in a day when it dries off. He has also been here to let in workmen and inspectors for the new furnace, and to take the dogs out, and keep the fire in the fireplace going during the day. And he fetched and carried for me when my leg was swollen.

* * *

I know, I know -- I left you in the office in the middle of the day, without any lunch. (letter of November 2) I'll rescue you soon, I hope. There isn't enough time, and my attic rooms are very cold. Even in the living room by the fireplace it's only about 60. It's 55 here right now. I hear the
lisp of rain and the hiss of passing cars through the unsealed windows. I often feel defeated and go to bed feeling I have let myself down.

You will have observed that my most frequent typo is a missing ‘a’. I think this is because of small differences between the keyboards at the office and the one on the C-64. So for those of you who feel cheated, I append a collection of ‘a’s:

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  a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a a A A A A A A A
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There. That should do it for the year.

* * *

DECEMBER 1985

December 15, 1985

jingle-jingle-jingle -- (snarl) I stand amid alien corn (with the latter-day pun intended), unable to rekindle the wonder and surprise of Christmas past, untouched by red ribbons, foil ornaments and full color advertising supplements to the Washington Post appealing to greed and guilt, while staring into a featureless future.

I am completing a year in Washington, working as a press aide in the office of Senator John Glenn. I like my job but the dislocations of the year have been hard on me.

After I knew I was staying in DC I found a house in Alexandria to share with two delightful young women: Carole (to whom we all owe thanks for photocopying my letters) and Lauren, an accountant – both literate and liberal people. We make a good intentional family without infringing one another's privacy.

Seth left Kent for Fort Benning in July; I moved my big bed and other furniture down here in August. I had to take my dear friend and companion Gertrude Stein (a plain black dog) to veterinarian for an easy death. Big, loyal Albert stayed with the Kidneys, and Isabell came with me to Washington. Of my seven lovely cats, four (Christina, Shadow, Owen Brown and Terrible Tiger) died of feline leukemia because I hadn't been able to afford the vaccine for them. Jacob went to live with a friend and ran away, Tompkins found himself a new home, and Bob and Kate found a home for Boots.

At the end of September Seth started having trouble with his sternum and ribs where he had had surgery when he was 12, and by the beginning of November he was here in Washington, out of the Army forever on a medical discharge. He spent a month here, sleeping on an improvised bed in the room I use for the word-processor, then went on to his father's in Santa Barbara, to go to school out
there. I will fly out there next weekend, then back to DC to drive to Kent for a third week of vacation. I will officially resign from the school board at that time, and do some more sorting and disposing of my things.

* * *

What do I do in the Senator's office? What everyone does: information management; make and answer phone calls; write and reply to letters; research and process texts; burnish idols, weed the myth-garden; superintend the props, costumes and masks; make lists, type, file and discard; read and clip newspapers; walk the labyrinthine corridors of power; make photocopies; cosset the printer; attend meetings; write speeches; make coffee; remove staples...all among the nearly 50 other people of the staff. A Senator is a collective construct -- an extended computer program with a mind of its own. John Glenn is a good man, intelligent and compassionate; he reads his briefing book and talking points, observes the rules and the niceties, takes a personal interest in the people who work for him, encouraging one to quit smoking and another to lose weight, asking about kids and aging relatives, and sharing his chocolates. He can be passionate about things that affect people, tends to talk too much, has a temperate, unaffected style, and likes to josh with people.

Washington is a city of very intelligent, well-educated people, most of them overqualified for the jobs they do. Despite the gloss, most government jobs don't pay very well. It is the intrinsic interest of the job, or the belief that one is doing something significant that keeps people there. But the long working hours and commuting times leave people with little time to invest in outside interests or friendship. I like the people I work with, and enjoy conversations with them, but I have found no-one I would count as a friend.

I don't like the physical ambience of Washington. Everything is paved; every tree and bush is planted and pruned; there is constant traffic roar and exhaust fumes; buildings are crowded together and the streets and sidewalks are dirty and dangerous. It does not get dark at night: from Capitol Hill no stars are visible. I fled from the Hill to this place where I am five minute walk from a ravine with great oaks and beeches growing where they will; sycamore, blue-beech, dogwood and tulip trees, a small rocky creek and a crow who comments unfavorably on Isabell.

As I watch the Congress, the Democrats and Republicans, the President and his henchmen, the lobbyists, my colleagues, and the riders on the Metro, I come right back to some Melancholy Conclusions: we do the best we can, and it isn't very good; the trust on which we base our common life together is as holey as Swiss cheese; we don't even come close to loving our neighbors; for us nothing is universally and perpetually good; and there aren't any answers at the back of the book.

What I want for Christmas is hope – that despite our bungling and short-sightedness we can get better at living. I want Christmas to help us understand the damage we do in striving for goodness, and to help us forgive ourselves for being ordinary people. Most of all, I want Christmas to help me be happy with others as I am happy with myself. The latter is the hard part, and the part that most Christians do so badly.
Friday morning rain clouds kept the sky dark, but just as the bus turned north onto the Shirley Highway the sun broke through, brilliant and gold, casting a complete bright rainbow onto the heavy grey clouds to the northwest. The bus was packed with commuters reading newspapers or spiral-bound reports drawn from briefcases. I may have been the only person who saw the rainbow.

May you see many rainbows in 1986.

* * *

JANUARY 1986

January 18, 1986

Recess is a time of preparation for the coming challenges, and in Glenn’s office this year one of the challenges will be his campaign for a third term. Kindness (n., proper) the Republican who will oppose Glenn, is making an aggressive play for the attention of Ohio voters, and the teletypewriter stays hot with pages coming and going. I am merely the technician in these interchanges, operating the teletypewriter and retrieving the pages that arrive and distributing them to the right people.

Last Friday we received from our Columbus office a press release put out by the Kindness campaign about a letter Kindness had written. I took it off the teletypewriter, glanced through it and estimated I would need five copies. When I brought them back to my desk Dale took one and read through it, then said I should give copies to the Senator, Ed, Phil and MJ. I delivered the first three, then went back to the copier to make more. While I was there Ron came by and wanted one, and then George, so I made another five copies, including one for the Kindness file and one for the clipboard. Then I went back to my desk, stopping in MJ’s office and putting one on her desk.

I think.

This is a routine operation. I do it several times a day and don’t think much about it. People occasionally look up and say thanks, but commonly take no notice of me. I observe that on some desks the pages accumulate right where I deposit them, but I don’t attend closely to the process. I’ve usually interrupted something I need to get back to deliver the teletypewriter pages. So I was surprised 15 minutes later when Dale abruptly demanded to know if I had given MJ a copy of the Kindness letter. Sure. Was I absolutely sure? Well, I guess so. He got suddenly angry, ordered me into his office and closed the door, then demanded to know, yes or no, had I
given MJ a copy of that letter. I said yes, but with a hopeless feeling. I'm not absolutely sure any past event happened exactly as I remember it. There is no such thing as instant exact replay from human memory. All human memory is notoriously spotty, and (necessarily) highly selective.

Furthermore, in this case it didn't make any sense – it would only take a minute to make another copy for MJ. I shrugged it off as one of the hidden hazards of the job. I see a certain tension in the relationship between Dale and MJ, perhaps engendered by totally different cognitive styles. But it is necessary to overlook such differences and trust one another in some modest but fundamental ways, or we can't do anything. If I must remember precisely what I did and when I did it, it becomes impossible to move forward responsibly: the past consumes the present.

Which leads me to a Blatantly Abstract Principle: the prime and most useful tool of any secular system is the wastebasket. Without it, a system drowns in irrelevancies, degenerates into noise.

There are many kinds of wastebaskets – an eraser is a wastebasket – and the mind has one, too. It is the counterpart of memory, which, for want of a better term we shall call a forgetery. Little is known about it – since we don't have a word for it we can't think or talk about it.

For any wastebasket to work, however, the system has to have an idea of worth or value – what deserves to be saved and filed and what doesn't. Then it needs a means of sorting. That's a process that works by Art, not Law. (Suppressed giggling: the invention of the wastebasket is what has kept the Second Law of Thermodynamics from gobbling us up, isn't it?)

Washington is a city of Art, in lots of useful senses. As above, it is a city in which wastebaskets overflow, in which ideas are sorted by value, and everyone tries to trash others’ ideas. Washington is a classic example of McLuhan’s (or whoever) definition “Art is anything you can get away with.”

And Washington is a city of people obsessed with that most human of arts – lies and lying. Outlandish representations and misrepresentations are now being made about the ‘lie detector.’ I find myself tempted, as a person whose fundamental premises are that information is social, knowledge is instrumental and truth is negotiated, and who sees lies – and secrets – as simple common tools of information management, to snicker at the silliness and stupidity of people who think that a lie is something separable from the strategic interests in which it is planted, and to be scornful of those who believe lying is a moral category, not a logical one.

Scanning the radio band for some tolerable music, I have settled on the Mahler 4th Symphony, a work I never heard until, at age 25, I played it in the Oberlin Orchestra. Even then, there was a slight air of apology – that Mahler was a poor
thing, decadent and unequal to the great and glorious Brahms and Dvorak. In the succeeding 30 years Mahler has been rehabilitated by the musical community, and his music has been placed in the ‘great and glorious’ category by common agreement. At Oberlin I also participated in a bit of student parochialism known as the Clementi-Kuhlau Society.

The irony of this is that the lie-detector itself is a lie: the misrepresentation of a set of meters as reading ‘truth’ rather than as physiological changes. And it depends for its effectiveness on a deceptive demonstration of how it works. But finally, as George Schulz told the President, lie detectors damage human trust, confidence and dignity far more than any lie for self-defense, profit, or art.

The principal delights of Handel’s ‘Saul’ as performed by the Washington Handel Festival were the male treble voices -- Paul Esswood as David and David Clenny as the Witch of Endor. Esswood has a fine, rich, rather dusky sound, and refreshingly precise intonation; Clenny more clear-sweet and coloratura style. The orchestra and chorus were well disciplined, in tune, and seemed to be enjoying what they were doing. It is quite long -- three hours -- and I enjoyed every minute of it, though I find the Kennedy Center oppressively ugly.

When I was at Oberlin I was taught that we would never hear live performances of Handel’s oratorios and operas because we could never have castrati to sing the male roles for high voices. That has proved to be untrue. Is it then a lie? No, of course not. It was misinformation, or more likely, misunderstanding. We didn’t believe then that un-castrated men could sing in the soprano and alto range, though at least some knew it was possible. But we didn’t care, then, we didn’t place much value on the music of the high Baroque, and didn’t want to bother with it.

I have long claimed that we live by and through Useful Conceptual Fictions. The lie detector is a Conceptual Fiction that has grown beyond useful and turned ugly, now able to savage the human trust it was intended to protect. We should be very careful about attacking others for the fictions by which they manage their lives.

* * *

In the last week before the Christmas recess Ed, the AA, called a staff meeting for review and summing up, and to give us a prospectus on the coming year. It was held on a morning Dale had not come in, and nothing much was going on. Marty had been asked to give a short review of what the press office was doing, and went down to the conference room without saying anything to me.

I went along shortly after, and found a place to stand along the wall -- the conference room is too small to seat even half the staff. I stood there unnoticed for about half the meeting, until
Marty noticed I was there and leaned over and whispered that I wasn’t supposed to be there, I should be answering the phones. I wasn’t having that—I had been notified of the meeting, and I needed to know what was going on in the office. I stayed put.

Afterward I picked up the press office phone messages from the front desk—only two of them—and put them on Marty’s chair. Then I took a phone call from a radio station wanting to know if the Senator was going to make a statement on the tax bill. I went to Ed and asked him. He said he would ask George to write something for the Senator to say about the tax bill. When I got back to my desk Marty demanded to know what the phone call had been, and why I hadn’t handed it over to her. “I’m supposed to handle those things,” she said, “and you shouldn’t go to Ed without going through me.”

I found this hard to take. She had said I was supposed to answer the phones, and when I did, she didn’t like it. She wasn’t there to go through to Ed when the call came. The implication was that I was only to answer the phone and direct it to someone responsible, and that I had no need to know what was going on in the office. I try to make allowances for other people’s insecurities and the pressures they may be under, but this was capricious and unnecessary. If Marty’s view is that I am just a phone answering machine it’s not going to work. But I don’t know what I can do to change her mind.

It may seem very exalted to work in a Senator’s office, but I am mostly nothing but a technician, typist and phone answerer. I get too little opportunity to do things I am uniquely good at. Also I have spent less than two hours in the Senator’s presence when legislation, policy or public statements are being discussed. My best contribution has probably been the editing of the weekly ‘Media Review’ (clips from newspapers) for the staff, and to bring topical and timely reviews and comments from my wide reading.

But it’s hardly enough to sustain me with a convincing sense that I am spending my time and my mind well. Ten years of this and my health and spirit will be broken. After this year I want to do something else. I’d like to be closer to my kids than $500 and 3000 miles. I want to have friends and the time to enjoy them; I want to read and write for myself and have a musical life.

1 - secular, in the strictest sense of ‘existing in time’, timebound; the opposite of sacred -- timeless, eternal. Of course, as a human invention, any perceived ordering is by definition secular.

2 - The Clementi-Kuhlau Society was formed in Oberlin in the mid-50s by E. Bruce Brooks, David Zinman and myself, primarily as a means to poke fun at a vocal group of college (not conservatory) students calling themselves the Mahler-Bruckner Society. They consistently polluted (we thought) the Oberlin Review with laments over the neglect of the great works of the eponymous Mahler and Bruckner. The CKS employed a number of strategies, including picketing the concert of the Oberlin Orchestra that
included the Mahler 4th with signs reading “I go plenty for Muzio Clementi!” and “Keep Cool with Kuhlau”. We also provided medals for performers who played Clementi or Kuhlau on student recitals. We called them the “Order of the Sacred Cow” and they were made of small flat plastic cows reading RARE, MEDIUM RARE, and WELL-DONE (liberated from the Oberlin Inn, where we all worked at one time or another). I always thought our greatest triumph was getting the Review to send a reporter to ask us if we were serious.

* * *

FEBRUARY 1986

February 2, 1986

Once a week there is a meeting to decide which of the many events to which Senator Glenn is invited he will attend. Probably about three-fourths of the invitations are winnowed out before the list reaches this committee, which consists of Diane (personal secretary and doorkeeper), Murph (appointments secretary for DC), Kathleen (appointments out-of-town and travel arranger), MJ (personal aide – i.e., political adviser), Ed (the AA), and someone from Press. Marty usually goes, but last week it was on Tuesday, the day Glenn does his ‘radio show’ (a phone interview with one or more news directors from Ohio radio stations) and she was still in his office at 10 when the invitations meeting started, so I went down to the conference room in her place.

It was a long boring meeting. Glenn’s campaign director, Rupert, was there, and every invitation had to be considered for its contribution, or lack thereof, to the re-election campaign. There was a two page list of out-of-town invitations, and I noted which were accepted and which might require ‘remarks’, jotted down a few funny remarks and doodled in the margins. We finished about 11:20, when I headed back to my desk, pausing at Ron’s desk to grumble about a New Indoor Freestyle Record in boring as he listened to the Conrail debate on his squawkbox. Dale, still looking pale from a bout with the flu, said he wanted to make some plans for the rest of the week. “Let me call Condo (Adam Condo, Cincinnati Post) back, then we’ll go over things,” he said.

I started looking over what Beth (the new Press fellow) had brought to my desk, took some pages off the teletypewriter, and talked to Marty about the radio show for a few minutes. I had just sat down at my desk when Ron swept by, running to the TV in Dale’s office, with two words: “Shuttle crashed!”

Within a minute there were a dozen staffers crowded into the 4 foot wide corridor between my desk and Marty’s and we watched with shocked silence the first replay of the billowing explosion of Challenger. At 11:48 the phones started to ring: ‘Would there be a statement from Senator
Glenn? ‘Could I talk to the Senator for just one minute?’ ‘Where is Senator Glenn?’ ‘Will there be a press conference?’ ‘What was the Senator’s reaction?’ ‘What does Senator Glenn think caused the explosion?’

Valerie, who handles NASA affairs for the Senator (on the staff of Governmental Affairs) watched the launch and explosion and started to weep. But it was her job to draft something the Senator could use as a statement. Dale was in the Senator’s office with Glenn and Ed. Beth was ferrying messages from the press office to Dale and back -- every telephone was busy. About 12:30 Val managed to call down from the GAC office to ask Dale what should be in the statement, and I asked Beth to ask Dale to call Val.

Beth returned to the press office saying that Dale said I should go up to the committee office and help Val with the statement, while Beth sat at my desk and fielded press phone calls. I was grateful to get away from the phones, not because I was pestered by them, but because there was nothing we could say to comfort people who were bewildered and hurt by what had happened.

I wasn’t much help to Val, except to answer her phone so she could work on the statement. The committee office has a fossil computer system, even more obtuse than the Honeywell OAS in Glenn’s office. It is truly weird: in attempting to correct a misspelled word, Val wiped out the whole paragraph she had just written. We tried again, and managed to finish something about 1:30, and ran, literally, down to Glenn’s office with it.

Glenn had just left for the Senate Press Gallery, for a press conference at 1:45. Phil told Val to run after the Senator and try to catch him, but she didn’t have her ID, and wouldn’t be able to get into the Press Gallery without it. I did have my ID, and she said “If you come with me, I won’t need it.” We set off: down the elevator to the subway; cars to the Capitol, up the elevators to the third floor. There were many people outside the Press Gallery, but my ID got us in right away. We found Dale at the edge of a crowd of reporters around Glenn. He was answering questions patiently, plainly.

No, he couldn’t speculate about what had caused the explosion. Yes, he had had reservations about sending civilians into space, not because of safety, but because he felt research should come first. No, the shuttle safety record was excellent, yet we all knew it could happen sometime. “It was a day we hoped would never come, but it had.”

Reporters were scribbling; there was a thicket of microphones, cameras clicked. Glenn walked quickly back through the press rooms to the TV Gallery, where he said the same things for the TV cameras. Val couldn’t even get close to Glenn, but Dale said the Senator was doing fine; he didn’t need the statement we had written. Val went back. I stayed to show Beth where to take the Press Releases she had just brought over, then I went back to the Hart Building. It was
2:15.

Marty was upset because I had gone to the Capitol with Val; we were all getting a little frazzled. She was trying to eat a sandwich between phone calls, and I had had no lunch at all. The calls kept coming: McNeil-Lehrer wanted Glenn on their show; the major nets wanted him live -- evening, morning, noon, anytime. Newspapers and radio stations from all over the world begged for only two minutes of his time.

Glenn went to the floor of the Senate after the TV news conference, and returned to the office about 2:30. Within ten minutes of his return he had been asked by Vice President Bush to go to Cape Canaveral to meet with the families of the astronauts, and five minutes later he was gone.

Marty made the calls to cancel all the appearances that had been scheduled for the remainder of the day, reserved a room for a Wednesday morning press conference and made arrangement for morning appearances on the TV networks. Beth wrote and photocopied announcements of the morning press conference and went down to the carry-out for sandwiches for herself and me. Dale was over at the recording studio editing the tape of the 1:45 news conference for a 4:30 satellite feed. Kevin, our intern in Columbus, called all the Ohio TV stations to give the coordinates for the feed. I transcribed a paragraph from the audio tape of the news conference so we could read it to callers who needed a quote from the Senator, answered phones, called the networks about the Wednesday press conference, wrote the letter we have to file with the Rules Committee to use a room for a press conference and rustled up an intern to carry it over to the Russell Building.

About 5 o’clock we all started trying to return the phone calls from people we had put off when we didn’t know anything. A couple of the legislative aides volunteered to make calls, read the paragraph from the press conference, or tell them about Wednesday’s news conference. Mostly we had to say ‘Sorry, the Senator will not be able to talk to you.’ Calls were still coming in, from every state of the union, from the BBC, news bureaus in Brazil, Australia, Japan and Israel.

We finished the calls by 7:15 and made a scenario for the next morning. Dale and Marty would go with the Senator to the network morning shows: ABC at 7, NBC at 7:45. Beth and I would get the 9:30 press conference in hand; make sure there was a flag, etc. I would get to the office by 8 to start answering the phones. I finally cleared off my desk, stacked the newspapers and mail I had not had time to deal with and set out for Union Station. But first I called my housemate Carole, to ask her to meet me at the Pentagon, because I was afraid I would miss the last 17M bus at 7:45. (I did, she did.)

I stayed up to watch the ABC special on Challenger at 10, the news at 11. Glenn was shown a number of times -- sound bites from his press conference. He did everything unscripted, even his statement on the floor of the Senate (Val never got to him.) and it was effective. Not always
grammatical, not always smooth and resonant, not always in fine rhetoric, but plain and honest, authentic and whole.

The reporters were waiting for him at Andrews AFB that evening, and he was on the 11 o’clock news.

Wednesday morning ABC sent a car to get him to their studio by 6:45. NBC picked him up at 7:30 for their show. He had a briefing in the office at 8:30 for a committee hearing at 9, and the 9:30 press conference.

Beth and I left the office for the press conference about 9:10, with Lewis carrying a flag, because Marty was sure there wasn’t one in 485 Dirksen. The room was already jammed when we got there, with about 18 TV cameras set up in two tiers. The operators of the high cameras were standing on chairs. The lectern had more than 20 microphones clamped to it, and cables lay on the floor like serpents. There was an aide from the Sergeant-at-Arms office checking press IDs, and noting which networks and news services were there. We didn’t need our flag -- there was one already in place. Reporters kept coming in, and finally had to find places on the rostrum, at the Senators’ desks behind where Glenn would stand.

Just before Glenn arrived I counted 23 TV cameras, and the microphones were too densely packed to count. A number of the journalists were crouched on the floor between the chairs and the lectern. The Senator was ten minutes late, strode in quickly and made an opening statement without notes or a text of any sort, then asked for questions.

“Why were there no ejection seats?”
“What was going to happen to the space program?”
“Did Christa McAuliffe know the risks she was taking?”
“What do you think caused the explosion?”
“What effect would Gramm-Rudman have on the space program?”
“Haven’t you always been against sending civilians to space?”
“Shouldn’t we be using only unmanned spacecraft?”

John Glenn, in his calm, good-natured manner, well-placed voice and fluent speech, tried to answer the questions and be fair. As he talked he occasionally lifted his hands to gesture, which set off a flurry of clicking from the still-cameras. Many reporters had small tape recorders, and jockeyed to get their microphones within range for certain questions. Glenn knows the state of space technology and understands the trade-offs, but his first concern was for the people, the families of the astronauts and ground crews of the Challenger.

About 10:15 the same questions started coming around for a second time, and Dale stepped forward and said the Senator would take just one more question. Some reporters were already
leaving, others were crowding around trying to get a last question or a close-up shot.

As Glenn left with Dale they met Hodding Carter waiting with a portable TV camera rigged up with a white silk umbrella reflector on spidery arms. The corridor proved too noisy, so they borrowed a nearby office for a five minute interview.

* * *

By Friday we were able to start catching up on all the things that had been dropped at noon on Tuesday. Glenn had left at 7AM for Houston and the memorial ceremonies there, and we were able to say to callers who still wanted “just two minutes” that he wouldn’t be back today. I had finished the ‘Media Review’ which had 60 pages, three times the normal size, and three-fourths of it about Glenn’s response to the shuttle tragedy,

At 5 o’clock most staffers were clearing their desks and getting ready to go home for the weekend. Dale was modifying the beginning of the op-ed we had written so Glenn could use it for the memorial service for Judy Resnick on Monday. I was finishing a letter of congratulation that needed to go out that day. Ed came ambling along the aisle between the desks:
“Everybody in the Senator’s office. Would you call up to the interns?”

We gathered a little nervously, sitting on the couches, chairs, window sills and floor; we had not expected the Senator back in the office. The committee staffs were late. Phil looked out the door and said “Here comes Energy,” and someone quipped “Aging will be a little slower.” Then John Glenn walked in and sat down at his desk.

“I just wanted to fill you in a little bit on what I have been doing this week. I haven’t been around much, and you have been working here, and I think you need to know what’s going on. This was a week I hoped would never happen...” He told the story of the whole week, ending with a description of the memorial service in Houston that morning. He talked about the formation with the missing plane and of the flyover, long a part of his military experience.

“They had four planes...one turned and flew straight up...right up...” He turned away, in tears. After a moment he turned back and continued “right up into the clouds. I’m sorry. I didn’t think I’d do that. I ought to have better control. Well, I guess it’s all right. Maybe we’d all be better off if we let our feelings out a little more.”

* * *

February 23, 1986

So how are the explosion of the Challenger, “Star Wars”, the National Peace Institute Foundation, and the Glenn re-election campaign related to one another?
Goffman’s Law.

That’s Erving Goffman, and to the best of my knowledge, he never formulated his law as such – that was done by Rom Harr. Goffman’s Law, stripped down, says that in hierarchical institutions the Expressive Order tends to overtake the Practical Order.

Did the engineers misrepresent the qualities of the seals on the Challenger’s rocket booster? Did people lie in order to get the Challenger launched on schedule? Can we really make a shield against incoming nuclear warheads? Does an institution like the National Peace Institute Foundation actually move us away from warlike behaviors toward peaceful ones? Will we be able to design systems that will perform accurately 100% of the time? Are decisions of policy or action ever taken objectively, rationally? Are we now able to manage large information systems such as NASA, a school district, a 747, a symphony orchestra, a chess tournament, a bank, a peace institute, the Pentagon, the stock market, a hospital, a Senator’s office, so that their performances meet our expectations? Can we know enough about complex systems to make responsible decisions about using them? Do we know anything about the social interactions of systems, or are we stuck with a “personal talent/personal deficit” model of management? Are we objective about costs, risks and benefits? Is it possible to be? Are we clever enough to outsmart ourselves? And where are we when we have done that?

There are a few non-hierarchical institutions in human and animal societies and other information managing systems, but they are rare and tend to be unstable. In hierarchical systems the Expressive Order chooses who gets to the top of the hierarchy, and what the perks and punishments will be. The Practical Order gets the work done. The Expressive Order works out of the money system of the culture, otherwise farmers, cooks and scavengers would be wealthy, and lawyers and brokers, Senators and Presidents would be poor. It is tempting to argue that men live and move and have their being in the Expressive Order, and women clean up after them and get the work done, but that’s an artifact of the culture as well. And in case you think that explains anything, I have a theory about that, too, which I am not going to discuss here.

Dale wrote Glenn’s speech announcing that he would run for a third term. That’s not strictly kosher under Senate rules, but it’s reasonable, because Dale is Glenn’s principal speechwriter. It was a good speech, and though the Senator needed a little prodding to use the strong language on Marcos, he finally signed off on it. Beth typed it into the computer on Friday afternoon, and on Tuesday morning I made the final revisions and formatted it: six single-spaced pages for the press release and 24 double-spaced half pages in Orator font for Glenn to read from.

The first problem was to get multiple copies of the press release – campaign materials may not be printed at public expense. Dale’s first notion was that I should go down to the copy center on
the 2nd floor and run it off myself, unobtrusively, so that no-one would notice that it was a campaign speech. I don’t believe there was any intent to deceive -- Dale just couldn't come up with an alternative scenario for getting them done in time for him to take to Ohio on the weekend. It might have worked, until Dale decided he wanted them copied double-sided, to save weight: “I have to carry these around for two days.”

Whoa. The only machine in the copy center that automatically copies double-sided is the one used by the copy center operator, and the controls look like the cockpit of an airplane. Even if it were not in use, which it never is, I wouldn’t know how to work it. And I could scarcely be unobtrusive taking all the odd-numbered pages out of one end of a copier and feeding them back in the other end, especially not for 150 copies. I suggested to Dale that we send it out to a copy shop, and ascertained that the cost would be $42. Consultation with MJ determined that the campaign could afford that much – in fact, why not print extra to send out to all the media? Fine. How many? A quick caucus was held and an estimate of 500 was proposed and immediately adopted. That would be 150 for Dale and 350 for the media; the price would be $110. I walked over to the new Kinko’s on Pennsylvania Avenue to drop them off.

It took me 20 minutes to get there, and 10 more to get back to the Madison Building, where I was meeting a friend for lunch. I spent about an hour at lunch and returned to the office about 1 hour and 35 minutes after I had left. Dale scolded me for being gone more than an hour for lunch without telling him. Not, of course, because it made any damn difference whether I was five minutes later than I should have been, but because Marty had been scolded the week before for being too long at lunch.

The copies were ready at 3 o’clock. Take a cab, Dale said, to campaign headquarters on N. Capitol Street and get the check, then take the cab to Kinko’s and bring the copies back in the cab. Wouldn’t it be more sensible, I suggested, for someone from campaign headquarters to go and pick them up and pay for them, then bring them over here, especially since we knew one of the campaign staff was coming over here anyway. So I was spared the trip. However, the estimate of 500 copies proved inadequate. Dale decided he needed to take 175 copies, just in case. Copies were sent by courier to the Ohio press corps, Ed wanted 30 copies for the staff meeting, and committee staff members wanted to have them, too.

By Wednesday afternoon, only about half of the copies were left. Marty had organized a volunteer ‘stuffing party’ (‘stuffing party’ because we can’t use Senate staff for campaign materials). No-one had actually added up the number of copies we would need, and we were unsure how many we had. The campaign people were too busy to help, and they couldn’t get us more copies.

Marty managed admirably, given that she had inadequate materials and support to do something that wasn’t even her job. Several staffers took a half day of leave and pitched in,
folding, stuffing, sealing and putting stamps on envelopes. Beth worked at weeding out duplicate and garbled address labels. I looked up missing addresses, then rescued Lewis, who was trying to run off more copies on a machine that would only collate 15 copies at a time. It took us until 6:30, and we finally mailed about 450 – we really didn’t know how many – to Ohio dailies and radio and TV stations.

We have known for months that the announcement of Glenn’s run for re-election would be made on these dates. The campaign staff has been in place since September; they are supposed to be experienced. Making copies for the media of the speech announcing the candidacy is such a good idea that it is hard to believe that no one thought to plan for it. Yet the whole exercise was entirely *ad hoc* and unplanned, and very wasteful of time, energy and paper.

Dale earns over $60,000 a year, has access to the Senator, gets credit for good press operation, and is believed to have a bright future in Washington. (I want to add that he is a good person, works hard, and tries to be fair and honest. He is also friendly and fun and I enjoy working with him.) Marty earns less than half his salary, and I earn about a third. There is a campaign staff as well, that might reasonably have been expected to handle this job.

I have talked before about the conceptual fictions by which we live. These structures of conceptual fictions are not what is at issue here, however. This is a question of information management -- how we represent and construe ‘the truth’ of events. In the past week we have heard about a lawyer who refused to back a client in perjury, and accusations that the White House pressured NASA to launch Challenger so that the President could refer to it in his speech.

In the past we have had many disastrous decisions. Those taken by generals in war have escalated as our weapons grew larger and more accurate. If the decision to launch Challenger was flawed by the ambition of NASA administrators, it would not be the first time. And is it not possible that what brought down the Nazis was not so much our strength as the Expressive Order of the German hierarchy -- the inability of their officers to separate their dreams of power from reality?

* * *

It has grown dark outside. My old lamp with the torn dusty shade illuminates the dark green leaves and golden oranges on the potted tree that overhangs the printer at the end of my worktable. The radio is turned off -- all the classical music stations in Washington degenerate into ‘folk’ music (what other kind is there?) on Saturday evening. I listen to the swish of passing cars on Braddock Road, and the downstairs lisping of the TV.

* * *
It is a cold sunny Sunday afternoon. The weekend walk was yesterday, when I took Isabell and Nelson down to Indian Run. Nelson, with his fixation on balls, was ecstatic, and selected a series of unsuitable stones, many the size of footballs, to try to carry in his mouth. Isabell investigated small noises and scents around the trunks of trees where the snow had melted, and I played my favorite game of clearing the creek and small tributary rivulets of the leaves and twigs that clogged them. It was a day of mud and melting snow, and the spring cheering of cardinals. Halfway home Nelson abandoned his stone and undertook to carry my Bear-stick*. A five-foot stick athwart the jaws of a dog only three feet long is a novel sight. When we got home I made him leave the bear-stick on the porch, but gave him back his stone, which I had put in my pocket. He played another half-hour with the rock, pushing it with his nose, barking at it and tossing and pawing it.

Today I cranked out a letter to Science News about an article they published on "Computing Art" which had irritated me a good deal. In the course of writing the letter I pulled out one of my favorite books, Opening Pandora's Box, by Gilbert and Mulkay. The book is a sociological analysis of scientists' discourse, and it set me thinking about how we build science from what we hear others saying. I was reminded of seeing a portly middle-aged man on a Yellow Line train reading Margaret Boden's Minds and Mechanisms and being tempted to start a conversation: "Oh, I read that. It's good, but I think I liked her Artificial Intelligence and Natural Man better." Of course I didn't. I only fell to brooding about my lack of time to read and write. This morning I got up at 6:30, ate my usual breakfast of fruit and cottage cheese, and set out at 7:35 for the Fairfax Unitarian Church with the cello and my kenya-bag stuffed with a small towel, a hot-water-bottle, my dress-up shoes, a banana and a small bag of a homemade confection of peanut butter, brewer's yeast, milk powder, honey and rice-krispies. Judy Harrison, the music director, met me there and we rehearsed the three pieces I was to play that morning. After a half hour Judy went to warm up the choir, and I stayed and played in the empty church until people started coming in for the 9 o'clock service.

I have been practicing doggedly for a month, after supper from about 8:15 until 9:30. First I had to recover muscle patterns, stamina and callouses, then start to reconstruct the musical algorithms. I also had to do some serious work at learning the fingerboard of Caroline Webber's cello, which I am playing this year. I like it very much -- it is a very responsive instrument with considerable depth and resources. It is also slightly smaller in body size and string-length, and better suited to my short stature and limited stamina than my own instrument is. A cello is a big instrument, which requires a lot of energy to play. With Caroline's cello I simply don't get as tired because I don't have to reach and move so far. But I have played my own instrument for
thirty years, and it takes a while to unlearn the precise location of notes and learn new ones.

In addition to two Bach chorale-preludes (transcribed for cello and piano) I had intended to play a pair of movements from one of the unaccompanied cello suites, but after trying them out in the room last week, I decided my intonation wasn't clean enough for unaccompanied Bach. (The only way you can define tonality linearly is by placing tones precisely in the key they belong to.) So I decided to play a slow movement from one of the Vivaldi sonatas. Judy is a wonderfully competent musician. Her playing is fluent, spirited and controlled, and she listens.

It worked; I played well and was better satisfied with the sound and sense of my playing than I have been for a long time. The Unitarians were impressed. I was too: playing that well is worth working for.

* A Bear-stick is the stick one picks up at the beginning of a walk in the woods, to repel bears. On walks of extended duration one generally acquires a Better Bear-stick, in case one meets a Better Bear. It is a relic of my childhood walks with my father.

* * *

My life is still very circumscribed. I still have only an hour or two a day for humane endeavors. If I have $20 a month for discretionary spending I consider myself rich, get reckless and buy a book, go to a concert or get a bagful of clothes from the Salvation Army store. I catch myself lusting after a better printer and monitor for the C-64, or entertain delusions about being able to afford a piano.

* * *

Washington scene: Union Station, 6:15PM. The old railway station is huge, of white marble decorated with art-deco statues and pure lofty and piously capitalistic quotations around the top. It rises above the plywood paneling that screen the renovations going on within, and above the battered taxis queuing for fares along the front. The pavement is wet from rain, and covered with a thin dark no-color sludge. At the southwest end the taxi-starter and a couple of helpers herd travelers into taxis as they come to the head of the line. The taxi-stand is at the main entrance to the Metro station. There are newspaper boxes, mostly empty at this hour around the bases of the two columns. Congressional staffers hurry across the street, dodging taxis and suitcases to get on the escalator to the Metro.

One night, as I walked past the taxi stand, one of the black men working there hollered at a colleague "What's the next station after Metro Center?" He got no response and tried again. This time a curly-headed young professional woman walking just in front of me called back over her shoulder "Farragut North"

"Hey, Farragut North -- Thanks!" came the reply.

* * *

I'm not quite sure why, but Senator Goldwater is placing the Pentagon phone book in the Congressional Record, a little at a time. The Pentagon is certainly an astonishing institution of
American life. It is a huge ugly building with miles of corridors and thousands of people, conscientiously and (probably) effectively doing what they understand their jobs to be. There are layers of hierarchy, and divisions of responsibility, and I suspect that most of the people there have little idea of what goes on above or below them, or in the next room, or of how what they do fits into larger goals. Before Christmas Senator Proxmire revealed, with much scorn and sarcasm, that the Army had 12 pages of specifications for fruitcake for holiday dinners.

No doubt a very large share of the work of the Pentagon is devoted to maintaining itself -- the beliefs, values, customs, roles, rhetoric and dialects, on the hierarchy itself. It seems fairly important that large parts of what goes on inside the building be kept secret. People report that a tour is a succession of "...and behind this door..." statements that are unverifiable. One suspects that many, if not most, of these activities would be insignificant if they weren't secret: the market is manipulated thus. If a thing is worth what someone will pay for it, then a 'Classified' label assigns a value not negotiable by the buyer.

* * *

Dale, the press secretary, has lank brown hair and a ready smile. He has quit smoking three times since I have been there, and last Friday, when Marty declined to give him her last cigarette I suggested that he quit smoking again. He grinned and told me to shut up, then took the New York Times article I handed him headlined "Reagan says choice is between contra aid and communism". As he was reading it, Glenn appeared at the door, and Dale showed him the article and said: "Senator, you shouldn't let Reagan get away with that."

Glenn objected: "But I don't think people can separate the tactics from the issue."

Dale argued bravely that that was exactly why it was important for the Senator to speak up, and offered to write a statement for him in such a way that people would understand. The conversation moved back up the aisle toward the Senator's office. Phil joined the group, then Pat and Don.

“What's the down side?” asked Dale.

"The Senator doesn't need to make that statement," said Phil.

It ended in a draw, with no statement on Friday. Monday morning Dale breakfasted unwisely on a Tootsie-Pop which dislodged a cap on a tooth. Until he left to go to the dentist Dale continued to press for a statement against both contra aid and the White House tactics.

The next morning I found the Sunday Plain Dealer had run an editorial saying all the things we wanted Glenn to say about contra aid and the President's red-baiting. Dale took it and tried again to persuade the Senator. He didn't succeed.

My personal judgment is that the American people, for all the success of Rambo-movies, are
sick of seeing people shot, bombed, grenaded, mined, strafed and variously murdered, 
dismembered or maimed for any reason, particularly political ones. I suspect most of us don't 
see much difference between warriors and common terrorists. I also observe that it is not the 
Generals in the Pentagon who are demanding contra-aid.

Dale finished the day by writing and posting a Press Release about winning a round of Liar's 
Poker from Ron, who managed to lose even with a bill with 5 zeros on it.

*   *   *

March 16, 1986

I'm ashamed that I can't control my life enough to be able to do things that are important to me, 
and to have what I do considered important enough by others that I can have the leeway and 
resources to do them.

In the wake of the first March payday I sat down on Friday evening with my account 
books, 
income tax forms, calculator and bank statement and figured out that, aside from being 
committed to $100 a month for the next two years to repay what people loaned me when I had 
nothing, I am out of the woods financially. My budgets are working, my savings plan keeps 
ahead of insurance premiums and property tax on my house in Kent, and most months I still 
have about $100 for discretionary spending. There are some costs to this -- I have to get up 
early enough to get on the highway by 7 AM because parking is free, but the Metro and bus 
costs almost $5 a day, and I can spend no more than $2.50 for lunch each day. But for the first 
time in years I felt I could let go a little and not worry about whether there would be enough to 
get by on.

Thereupon I immediately came down with a raging sore throat, leading me to wonder if the state 
of anxiety in which I had been living had been protecting me from the nasty bugs that everyone 
else gets. But maybe not. A regimen of naps and oranges put me back in shape enough to get 
out on the Mall Sunday with the March for Women's Lives, along with 86,499 others, including 
my friend Ann Barnum from Akron, and her sister Ellen from Syracuse.

It was a heartening event. They were, admittedly, my kind of people: well educated, open, 
honest, friendly and displaying a good bit of wit and resourcefulness. Many wore white -- 
jogging suits, jeans, summer suits with pleated skirts, dresses, sweatshirts. After a fair amount 
of nagging by the organizers, and some very irritating chants that drove me inside the American 
History Museum for 45 minutes the march formed up into ranks of twelve across along both 
sides of the Mall. Ann, Ellen, and I joined up with the LWV of Washington for want of a better 
place to be, and received many remarks from them about how glad they were that some LWV 
members had shown up.
The marshals did a fairly good job of controlling the flow of the march, despite the straggly lines and self-sufficiency of the marchers, who thought nothing of dropping out, changing groups or dawdling to gawk. We marched up Constitution Avenue beyond the White House and back along Pennsylvania Avenue. When we reached Maryland Avenue my feet and ankles were hurting, my sore throat had returned and I ached all over, so I dropped out. I went to my car, which was parked in the Senate ‘peon’ parking lot, by way of Union Station where I stopped in the john and bought an orange juice to swallow some aspirin with. I had been on my feet about five hours with only one break of sitting on the ground for a half hour.

By then it was 3:30. Ann took us all to lunch at an outdoor cafe, then we drove down Constitution Avenue so that Ellen could put some flowers at the Vietnam Memorial and catch her bus back to Syracuse. Ann came back to the house with me, where Carole had made pasta for us. Ann left after supper to drive back to Ohio.

I started the week tired. Monday I went in early so I could be sure to leave in time to get to the rehearsal of the recorder group preparing for the Fairfax Unitarian Church choir’s Madrigal Dinner in April. Tuesday was a normal day, and Wednesday I was looking forward to hearing the Choral Arts Society sing “The Seasons“ at the Kennedy Center — George had given me a ticket.

George, the domestic policy director in the office, is a lean man in his early 50s with a fine bass voice, rather sparse grey hair and sparkly eyes. He is a long-time member of the Choral Arts Society, a large chorus directed by Norman Scribner. George loves to sing, and we often have conversations about music.

Wednesday morning the traffic was worse than usual, and it took an hour and 20 minutes to get to the Hill. I had packed a sandwich for my supper, my dress-up shoes and a curl-fryer. It was a busy day, with two press releases going out, one of which I had to hand carry down to the Service Department. I worked right up to 7PM, then ate my sandwich, an orange and some chocolate, washed my face and fried my curls and set out for the Kennedy Center. The Senate was still in when I left, and George was still at his desk but wearing his tux and tie, with Eileen standing by to take over for him when he had to leave. I walked to my car in my sensible shoes — it takes 10 minutes to get down to Union Station. When I put on my dress shoes I discovered my feet were swollen.

The concert didn't begin until 8:30 and lasted until after 11. I was very tired and achy, and my feet hurt in my shoes, even sitting down. It was not a great concert. The soloists were game, but lackluster, the orchestra sullen and not quite in tune, ever, and Scribner was stiff and controlling instead of drawing out the best the musicians had to offer. (Is this a difference between choral and orchestral conductors?) There were some good bits. It is almost impossible to ruin the exuberance of the drinking chorus — and the choir was actually quite good
-- well balanced, in tune, precise at entrances and apt in phrasing, with very good articulation of words.

I sat alone, hobbling out at intermission to go to the ladies-room, and trying not to let my tiredness overwhelm the music. Afterward I talked to George. He said he wished they wouldn't start the Wednesday concerts at 8:30, but that he would have missed the beginning if they had started earlier tonight. He was still high on the music, and pleased that I had come to hear it.

I got home at midnight with my sore throat returning for an encore. I managed to get to bed by 12:30 and so got five hours of sleep. Thursday I still had a slightly sore throat and an almost-headache all day, and choir practice in the evening. I cleared my desk about 5:30 and told Dale I was going home early because I didn't feel good. I had written a letter to be read at the National Congress of Aviation and Space Education which still needed the Senator's approval, but I'm not usually invited to go to his office for these occasions, so I packed up and left about 5:45. It was drizzly in DC, but not raining until I got out to Virginia. Traffic was thick and slow, and it was nearly 6:25 by the time I got to the intersection of Little River Turnpike and Braddock Road.

I was waiting in the left-turn lane, about three cars back from the intersection. The light was green, but the left-turn arrow had gone off, and I was resigned to wait for the next cycle. I watched the car at the head of the left-turn lane start to turn, even though the lights of the oncoming cars were starting to move toward us. Then I saw a car coming toward me swerve to miss the left-turning car, swing back into its lane, go into a skid and come right across the 5 foot median. It crashed into the left front of my car, tossing it about two and a half car-lengths backward and rotating it 180°. Luckily I had my safety belt on, though it didn't keep me from being thrown hard against it or prevent my head from hitting the door-post. I was quite conscious, but stunned, and I could feel a goose-egg rising on my forehead.

It took 20 minutes for the Emergency Squad to get there, and five more for the police to arrive. The medics checked me out, took my blood pressure and pulse and said I was okay, but asked if I wanted to go to the hospital. I didn't; I wanted to go home, eat something warm and lie down.

Everyone was kind and helpful. The other driver, in spite of not wearing her safety-belt, was unhurt, but her car appeared to be smashed worse than mine. A woman who had been waiting to cross the street had seen the whole thing, as had the driver of the car behind mine (but he was from an embassy and didn't speak English). The police officer was a young woman wearing an orange slicker. Everyone agreed that I was not at fault in any way, and that the left-turning car, which had disappeared, had set everything off.

The young policewoman finally took me home about 8 o'clock, after my car had been towed up to the Ford dealership. No one was home, and I had to take the dogs out, feed them, bring in
the mail and fix myself something to eat in Carole's microwave. I took two aspirins, had a hot shower and made a hot water bottle for my left shoulder which had become very stiff, and went to bed.

Friday I was very shaky every time I tried to get out of bed. I spent half an hour on the phone with the other driver's insurance company, and they finally agreed that my car would be fixed at no cost to me. They weren't particularly hostile or difficult, but it took so long I was exhausted.

I am car-less. Today I am feeling better. I am less stiff, except for my left arm, and I'm able to think about something besides seeing those headlights coming at me and hearing the terribly loud crash when the car hit. Carole loaned me her car to get groceries, and Lauren cashed a check for me and picked up the accident form I must send in. I was able to take a walk down to the creek this morning and found spring-beauties in bloom on the south-facing side of the ravine, under beech-trees.

Now I sit in front of the C-64; to my left is the dormer window, with a plastic fresnel-lens tacked over one pane that shows me the sky underneath the upside-down house across the street, and moving cars hanging down from the pavement. I have more to write, and tomorrow I will take the 7:45 bus and start the scramble all over again.

* * *

March 16, 1986

Friday evening, with every muscle of my upper body sore from the car crash, I sank into the wing-chair in the living room. Lauren was watching TV, and I had spent the day alone, reading, writing, napping and mending, and I was ready to be entertained. At the station break there was the usual assortment of commercials for razors, deodorants, shampoos and automobiles. I paid little attention -- commercials are devoid of content, and they are rarely about anything I buy. (I bought a six-pack of razors a year ago and haven't used half of them; I don't use deodorants; I buy the house-brand of baby shampoo, and in 39 years of driving I have bought five used cars and leased the one I have now. As a consumer, I am something of a failure.)

Then there was a commercial that enraged me so much I stomped upstairs, gnashing my teeth and making plans to immigrate permanently to Tierra del Fuego. It was a commercial directing us to "Support our President -- urge your Congressman to vote for contra-aid" complete with visuals of communist helicopters, and threats of the Red Tide Destroying Our Way of Life.

There is something vastly ugly about putting moral decisions about war and people's lives and worthiness up on the auction block with the hard-sell of advertising. I felt quite ill: how dare they? The propaganda of the Nazis pales by comparison.
The Reagan administration, with its doctrine of anti-communism is proving to be more socialistic than the communists themselves -- it appears that it intends to control not only our behavior but our beliefs. Their arrogance seems to be out of control, with Speakes and Reagan proclaiming that anyone who disagrees with them is a communist.

I have elsewhere argued, and still believe, that the fatal flaw of communism (and socialism) is that it locates moral responsibility in the collective rather than in the individual. As an antidote to the rabid capitalism of the 19th century, which located moral responsibility in individual men of wealth and power, the idea had some merit. But in practice it only switched the base of power to other individual men who claimed to speak for the collective values (moral choices) of the people.

Now we have the worst of both worlds: the use of wealth to buy advertising intended to impose the moral choices of a few rich, righteous, self-satisfied and narrow-minded men on all of us, and convince us that it is right and good for us to believe as they do. Indeed, they even threaten us: believe as we do or you will become the enemy -- the terrible communists, who deserve to be wiped from the face of the earth. (Jew-lover, Nigger-lover, fellow-traveler)

Another ugliness of the Reagan doctrine is the suppression of ‘Voice’ and the reliance on ‘Exit’ in A. O. Hirschmann’s terms. These are ways of affecting the behavior of institutions -- ‘Exit’ drives the marketplace -- if you don't like Brand A you leave it for Brand B, if your stamp-lickers are not performing well you fire them and hire new ones. ‘Voice’ is negotiation: if you don't like Service A you talk to the managers about modifying it, if your stamp-lickers are not performing well you train them, exhort them, inspire them.

The abortion debate has been ugly from the start, because of the true believers who insist that the turf on which the debate must take place is what is Ultimately and Eternally Right, and untouchable by any individual act of conscience. The Catholic Church is presently defending that turf, territory that they have claimed successfully in the past. I don't know what the outcome of that will be, but it is possible that it will be the final showdown for the Church. They must assert their control over the individual moral decision or lose their hegemony. At the March for Women's Lives the marchers chanted "Not the Church/Not the State/Women must decide their Fate" and so it is. To impose the beliefs of any collective on individuals is the very slavery of which communism stands accused: it robs the individual of the inalienable right to autonomy in their personal moral decisions.

On a TV debate John Lofton, a right wing bigot and anti-abortionist who writes for the *Washington Times* arrogantly shouted down all efforts at true debate with repeated assertions that life begins at conception. I wanted to ask him if anyone had the right to believe that life did not begin at conception, or if he would allow anyone the right to state what she believed if it differed from his belief, or if anyone had the right to act according to his own conscience. His behavior suggested that he believed that no one had those rights. With a person like that there
is no debate possible, no conversation, nothing to say -- one walks away angry and helpless.

I hope the American people are not so listless and spineless that they will be taken in by the shouting of bigots or the paid ads for the Reagan doctrine. Americans are ill-informed, but not stupid; they are of little scope but great generosity; timid, but hopeful. They want to be good and kind, to choose well and fairly, to trust one another and respect one another. They want to participate in decisions about their lives and get a fair share of the goodness of living.

I hope too that we will be able to transcend the ugliness of Reaganism. I'm quite serious about Tierra del Fuego. If this country goes into the fascism of state control of our reproductive lives, state control of our priorities (war on communists first, personal wealth and power second, humane treatment of our neighbors last) and state control of religious belief and morals, I don't want to live here anymore. I don't think there is anything I could do: writers can't save the world -- they can't even make it worse, as Isaac Bashevis Singer once remarked.

Perhaps some larger cause is served by the swings of political fashion. I don't know that we are better off than we were in the 14th century. We can kill and maim people more efficiently, but there are more of them, so it comes out about even. We know a lot more about the world we live in, but our knowledge is tainted by our belief that the physical world can -- and should -- be managed by us to our profit and advantage. We live longer, spending our days on TV and trivia.

But I am losing heart. I don't live in a community here. I am surrounded by kind acquaintances and few friends. What I say and write disappears without a ripple. Many days I just want to escape -- go where there is a broad sky and time to watch it, where there are mountains and water, where I can look a long way and not see anything, where there is a hearth-fire and silence, and I can listen for the singing.

* * *

One day two weeks ago I went down to lunch early and found Phil sitting alone at a table in the non-smoking section of the cafeteria. I joined him and we had a real conversation that ranged from the impact of the environmental movement to SDI to the limits of AI. Phil and I disagree on many issues, yet it was a highly successful conversation that produced new ways of seeing for both of us, increased mutual respect and good feelings.

That helps.

* * *

This is an explanation-cum-confession. I don't write to you alone -- not because I'm lazy but only because my time to write is so limited and I have so many good friends with whom I want to stay in touch. At present my mailing list has 31 addresses. When I first came to Washington last year I tried to write individual letters, but even with the wonders of the word processor, that quickly became impossible. Then I tried to group my friends by their interests, but some people got neglected, and my patience was not equal to waiting while my sad little printer ground out eight copies of four page letters. I decided to send everything to everyone, by photocopying,
and found a copy shop on Pennsylvania Avenue. In April I was sending out 15 letters at a time; by August it was 25 copies.

Who's on the list? Old friends with whom I have been corresponding for years; old friends who never wrote back and don't now; new friends who are interested in what I'm doing in Washington; people who write to me; my family and some cousins. I have dropped a few people who showed no interest whatsoever, but writing back is not a condition for receiving my letters.

I limit the letters to four pages in consideration of the costs of copying and postage. I print my own address labels on the C-64. (Did you know that handwritten envelopes usually take an extra day to get to their destination?) I buy envelopes on sale at K-Mart.

Mostly I assume that you (and all my readers) want to know what goes on in Washington, what life is like in a Senator's office, and how things look to me. When someone asks about something and I think my response would be of general interest I include it in the group letter. Occasionally I write a separate personal letter to one person, or somewhat more often I add a page or paragraph for one person to a group letter. In addition to the diskettes for the C-64, I keep a three-ring binder with copies of all my letters.

So now you know the awful truth. I can only plead that the alternative is a letter for each of you about once every three years. The rest of the awful truth is that I get home after 7 PM five nights a week, mortally tired both physically and psychologically from coping with an environment that overloads all my circuits.

So why do I do it? Partly because I think someone should -- that there should be a record of what life is like for ordinary people caught up in the workings of government. Partly, too, because I feel -- more than ever here in Washington -- that my very being is ephemeral and isolated. It is a way to assure myself that I exist and am part of the human community, especially since the car accident wiped out my confidence that the world behaves lawfully and cars do not cross median strips. And partly, to be honest, I write because I think what I write is worth reading, and might be publishable someday.

*   *   *

March 29, 1986

Well, in retrospect, maybe my car was thrown only one and a half car lengths, it was still one hell of a wallop, and if I hadn't had my seat belt on I probably would have been seriously hurt.
As of today, however, I still don't have my car back -- it had $1900 worth of damage. I have recovered my confidence enough to drive to the Hill twice in my little red rental Chevette. But I want my own car back and it won't be done for another week.

"Equivocation and inertia" are exactly right. I am not privy to the deliberations inside the Senator's office, but I do know that it took five adults the better part of four days to come up with a position on Contra aid not significantly different from the one they started with. Of course no one knows what the hell is going on in Nicaragua. I presume that is that same as in theoretical physics: it depends on who's looking, and why. Also it seems that once the decision is made whether we are looking for waves or quanta, there is no way to see it any other way. I seriously doubt that the government of any city or state in this country could emerge pure and pristine from the kind of microscopic, intense and angry scrutiny we are giving Nicaragua.

I don't get to discuss issues with Glenn; I'm not even sure I want to. I don't believe I have any special insights, and I do believe that Senators (Presidents, judges, etc.) should not be managed. John Glenn is able, shrewd, and compassionate. He does his homework, he is not dogmatic or arrogant -- "I always use pencils with erasers..." – and he has senses of humor, proportion, and irony. He is at his best when he speaks in his own voice.

His response to the Challenger explosion is an example; another is what happened during the deliberations on Contra aid this week. The staff all knew that Reagan would get his way in the Senate, so Glenn's floor statement was crafted to include a couple of paragraphs about how bad the Sasser bill was, but because it was less worse than the President's, Glenn would vote for it. Then there was a page in which he objected strongly to the Administration's tactics, calling them 'red-baiting' and 'neo-McCarthyism'.

But when the debate began, John Glenn was sitting in the conference room autographing photographs (a chore that needs to be done before recess). By the time he got to the floor of the Senate a time limit had been put on speeches, and he had only three minutes. He skipped the part about the Sasser bill entirely and went right to the good stuff. He read three paragraphs from the prepared material, then set out on his own -- some pretty passionate stuff about Reagan not being a priest, a ruler, or a king, and that we had "a Constitution, a CONSTITUTION, Mr. President, that separates the powers of government so that we..." Well, Dole and Byrd weren't going to sit still for that. They cut him off.

I suspect that part of the reason that Glenn's image lacks resolution is that he resists being managed, and he is never quite where his staff would like to position him. And when he takes off on his own, Phil calls for "Damage-control mode."

I guess if I have an ideology it is that there IS such a thing as responsible information
management. And that's what I work for. All knowledge, all information is rooted in, and is mediated by interests. The only honest thing to do is to keep those interests as clearly in view as possible, and to manage information toward giving more people more options for living. This would be a whole 'nother letter. I will only say here that it takes a lot of patience and forbearance to watch the butchery.

Within my own rules, however, I have had some small successes. I wrote a letter to a convention of 'space educators' that, as Dale put it, got Glenn off the hook for his earlier opposition to the teacher in space program. I have managed to intervene in a number of smaller systems in the office to reduce the inertia and the 'autopilot effect'. (I will include "A Moral Story" about one such intervention.) Do I have advice for forlorn Democrats? Not much. The main reason I am hopeful about the Democratic Party is that it is such a mess. Like good garden soil, made of clay, sand, rotted vegetable matter and generous quantities of manure it will, in the long run, outproduce the carefully managed hydroponic garden of Reaganism. I am not much persuaded that the Democrats would be better off if they all united behind some particular ideology or goal, but certainly an activist electoral strategy would not come amiss.

* * *

I have been flirting with the Unitarians of Fairfax (acronym: FUC) singing in their choir and doing musicianly things for them. I have not joined their church and probably won't. I am at heart a Quaker because in truth the only place I find any spiritual refreshment is in the Silence-among-Friends. But in Washington I find my need for music and friendly common conversation outruns my need for silence. So I go to Meeting at William Penn House about once a month, on a Sunday the Unitarian choir doesn't sing.

The Fairfax Unitarians are like Unitarians everywhere -- enormous good will, great diversity, lively argumentation, a good bit of energy and passion and not much critical reflection on the underlying premises of their lives. They assume that the way they see the world is the way the world is. (This hardly makes them different from other sects.) But they are a cheerful lot, generally thinking they have got the best of both traditional religion and intellectual rigor. It is my personal opinion that they have the worst of both, but it doesn't matter. I am having fun with the choir, and that does matter.

The choir is putting on a Madrigal Dinner on April 5. We are preparing a dozen madrigals and motets, dances and instrumental pieces; there will be a lutenist, jugglers, mimes, and a recorder consort; we are making costumes and banners, and there will be a catered dinner. I let myself get roped into playing recorder and have found the group not as awful as I thought it would be.

* * *
I went to the family service at the Fairfax Unitarian Church this morning with some apprehension, expecting the usual dog-and-pony show. It was one, but despite my hardness and cynicism, I was charmed and delighted. There was a clown-show, in which a robed and bearded clown drew wonderful things from a box -- a lighted candle, a bubble blower that showered us all with bubbles, colored silks to juggle, a wind-up frog that hopped around his feet, ping-pong balls to throw at us, and balloons.

The idea of the service was the Creation, and it was a fairly soggy mix of near-myths, non-science and noodle cosmology, cold, limp and hopelessly tangled. At the end of the service everyone received a helium-filled balloon with a card on which to write a wish or wonder. We all trooped outside to launch them together on the warm spring wind. And I was surprised by joy again, at the sight of hundreds of balloons -- red, pink, purple, yellow, white and orange -- floating and climbing like pastel pearls against the bright blue sky.

* * *

I have for you today a Moral Story.

It is about two young coffeepots in a busy Senate office. These two clear glass vessels we shall name 'Coffee' and 'Decaf', though their masters call them 'Hard Stuff' and 'Unleaded.' They live in a kitchenette (read closet) in the Washington office of Senator John Glenn, Democrat of Ohio, just across the aisle from the workstation (read cubicle) of this storyteller.

The Senator, in his mercy, provides at his own expense (not the taxpayers) all the fixings to keep these shiny round youngsters full, so that they may refresh him, his guests, and all of his staff. In his wisdom the Senator knows that what holds the world together is not gravity, electro-magnetism, the red-shift or the weak force. None of these: it is coffee.

Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to take note of the fact that Western Civilization never got off the ground until the Turks invaded Vienna in 1144 and brought coffee to Europe...

(Oops, pardon my lapse into Senate-ese. But while we're here, let me add that it is unlikely that the Senator would have known that himself. Some junior aide would have called up CRS and received a packet weighing about four pounds on 'Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Coffee and Then Some'.)

The conflict in our story begins when some (temporarily, of course) witless staff member took the last full cup of brew out of Coffee, leaving only a half-inch of sullen dregs. Soon thereafter, Diane (the Senator's Personal Secretary) came by, discovered this and issued a Colloquy (that's like a memo, but is presented as Oratory) saying that the next time the Senator (i.e. Diane) comes looking for a cup of coffee and someone has Taken the Last Cup and Not Made
More, the Senator will take away the coffee and fixings and there won't be any more.

There followed muted blaming and mutterings of "It-wasn't-me-I-drink-tea" and the more insecure scurried to make more coffee at 5PM when it wouldn't be drunk. For many days there was no further incident -- once the pot was half empty, no-one took any more lest he be accused of taking the last cup.

Then one Tuesday I arrived early and found that someone had left poor little Coffee half-full on the hot burner overnight. She was a sorry mess, and had to be soaked and carefully scrubbed. In the meantime I made a pot of hot water, cleaned the basket and put Decaf on to brew.

Presently Lewis, a bright-eyed and bushy-bearded youth from the legislative staff, arrived and complained that we all need Hard Stuff first thing in the morning and why had I made Unleaded first?

I told him why, and he was suitably chastened. We then fell to conversing about the most recent lapse in filled pots, and how hard it was to tell exactly when one became obligated to make a fresh brew.

As I held the now clean brown-headed Coffee aloft for inspection I suddenly remembered I had in my desk drawer a pack of thin gummed paper tape, suitable for effacing a single line of type. I proposed to Lewis that we stick lengths of this around the girths of Coffee and Decaf, to show the level at which more coffee should be made.

"Aha!" said Lewis, "THE LINE OF DEATH!" (forgive him -- it was the day of the battle of the Gulf of Sidra.) He set about lettering the words on the strips of tape.

And so it is that now ever afterward Coffee and Decaf proudly wear, low on their bellies, little white belts saying LINE OF DEATH -- MAKE MORE. They are much happier -- they no longer tremble at Diane's Colloquies, they no longer simmer for hours half-full, they are spared the fear of unemployment.

But even better, instead of anxiety, sneakiness and silence from staff members, there is surprise and playfulness. Now there is something to talk about -- one can say "Oh, I'm at the LINE OF DEATH, I've got to make more Unleaded," or "I'll pour us both another cup, then I'll make more" or "The next cup will take it down to the LINE OF DEATH, so I'll bring a pot of water to make it easier for the next person."

The Moral? Oh, yes, the Moral. This: people need to talk about what they are doing. They need words for things, events and situations; they need boundaries and meanings. Once the parameters of the 'coffee situation' became 'common talk' -- the situation became manageable.

*   *   *

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Chortle! *Science News* published my letter on ‘Computing Art’ in the March 29 issue. At the top of the letters column, too, which sent me scrambling to check back issues to see if they put letters in alphabetical order by last names, and they don’t.

But unlike all the other letters-to-editors this one did not quite sink without a ripple. I actually got a letter from the managing editor of *The American Journal of Art Therapy* (another of the ubiquitous oxymoronic names of journals) saying complimentary things and asking me the source of “Art is anything you can get away with.”

Truth is, I'm not sure where that originated. John Cage quotes it somewhere, but I'm fairly sure Marshall McLuhan said it before him. I suspect it goes back to further, to Chesterton or Wilde. Okay, any ideas?

I did call the lady and talked to her, and sent her off to read Mary Douglas, Walter Ong and Gilbert-and-Mulkay (that should keep her busy for a while). I don't think she knew what I was talking about, though. Her turf is made up of an article in "Outsider Art" and paintings by mental patients.

But worse, from my point of view (though I'm sure she is a perfectly nice person who is trying to do better) she seemed to be one of those limp intellectuals who is out in the garden in a broad-brimmed hat with a pretty basket and shears, looking to gather a bouquet of ideas to go with the drapes. There is the assumption, too, that the right flowers will be found on the rose-bush of some particular Grande Scheme. During our talk she let slip that she believed that very few people were capable of being artists, bringing us right back to the pervasive model of human capacities as matters of personal talents or deficits.

That's guaranteed to raise my hackles. From the anti-abortionists with their "But-you-might-abort-Beethoven" to the whiny "I-have-no-talent-for-math," I have no patience with the notion that people behave, succeed or fail because of some personal quality with which they are born. It is one of the most blinding and crippling (and hence useful and powerful) epistemologies the human race has ever invented.

If Beethoven had never been born the course of Western music might (repeat, *might*) have been different, but I suspect the culture of music would have filled his spot. There were many musicians of stature around, though some had made the mistake of being female and regardless of talent or accomplishments could never be thought of as Beethovens. We (some of us) make the rules and decide how they are to be construed. And most of the stories we use
to account for the way things are of the tiger-repellent type.\footnote{1}

While we’re here, *Science* 86 has an article entitled "Mindworks" that uses an example showing five figures and the question "Which of these shapes is most different?" Then they have a "gotcha" to prove you wrong when you choose the one that is most different by any common construing of the word ‘different.’ I see this as a word-game, not an exploration of how the mind works.

What turns up lacking in all of these schemes is any sense of the ad-hoc nature of the human experience and the social nature of knowledge. As I write this, Garrison Keillor is doing the "Raw (&!) Bits" commercial, and he and the other actors are trying to outsmart the trombone player who is supposed to provide the blat between the two words. It strikes me as funny, and I laugh. Map that onto one of those Grande Schemes, if you can.

1. Two men walking down the street in New York; one takes a pinch of white powder from a box and throws it over his shoulder. "What's that for?" asks his companion. "Tiger repellent" is the reply. "Don't be silly, there aren't any tigers in New York," says the second man, whereupon the first says "See! it's working."

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Here is another story.\footnote{2} The choir at the Fairfax Unitarian Church has about 50 members -- bright, competent, successful professional people. There is one rather large woman who might be described as plain, though she has an earnest, lively manner, and is very friendly and kind. Jane (not her name) is very active in the women's rights movement. Last Sunday she surprised some people by going to the front of the church to read a letter from a gay-lesbian group of which she is a member asking that church members make a special effort to include gays in their activities and attitudes.

It was a courageous thing to do. Few of us 'straight' people would have the guts to stand up for our own idiosyncratic sexual behaviors. Sexuality is an aspect of our lives that we consider to be completely ‘personal’ -- though of course it is mediated socially, almost more than anything else. Yet we keep fooling ourselves -- again with the personal talent/deficit model -- and we keep looking for ways in which gays are 'hardwired' differently from the rest of us.

In my constructionist model (of the way the world is) those of us who think we do sex like everybody else affirm and legitimize our behaviors by carving out categories of ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ (there is no word that is not pejorative). It is one of our enormously Useful Conceptual Fictions. The category ‘gay’ is a social construct, necessary for the comfort and convenience of the majority.

But it is hard to know what to say to the Janes among us. I find it wanting to say "That's all right, dear, I don't care how you do sex" because it focuses on her ‘deficiency’. It is after all not her behavior, but our fear that is at issue. What we need to do, somehow, is to figure out why
we need to have a class of pariahs selected on the basis of certain sexual behaviors. In the meantime, a little Christian charity would not come amiss. In an uncertain and capricious world we need to remember that we are more alike than we are different, and that no human being deserves despising.

2. Storytelling is the way we make sense (social sense) of our experiences. Colin Turnbull observed in The Mountain People that the ilk, as their social organization disintegrated, lost their ability to tell stories. It is a book worth reading.

* * *

Senator Glenn has a LaRouchian opponent in the primary, one Don Scott, farmer. After the debacle in Illinois everyone is a little uncomfortable about the LaRouche people, and during recess, when Glenn was in Ohio, he got some questions from the media about the LaRouche campaign.

Dale and MJ usually travel with him in Ohio, and they are now joined by Rupert, the campaign director. When confronted about what to say to about LaRouche and Co., the received wisdom of MJ and Rupe – but not Dale – was to duck and not answer: why give them any publicity. Dale said Glenn should, and indeed has a moral obligation to speak out against their anti-Semitism and racism.

When they returned to Washington the office was tense for a few days. Glenn didn't come into the office, and left the next morning for San Francisco to visit his son and family. But for a long half-hour that morning all of us at work-stations near MJ's office could hear a shrill and overwrought argument about a press conference at which Glenn had spoken bluntly about LaRouchian extremism. A few days later Dale asked me to type into the computer (he still doesn't use it) a memo to MJ, Rupe and the senior policy staff giving reasons why Glenn should be out front in repudiating LaRouche, and citing Moynihan's letter in the New York Times.

I was to do this without letting anyone know I was working on it – partly to protect me, and partly so Dale could get his ducks in a row before distributing the memo. As I was working MJ came into my cubicle looking for photographs and I set the screen to scrolling to keep the text unreadable.

Now the memo has been distributed and nothing much has happened. Dale wrote a short statement saying that Glenn would not debate Scott because he would only debate bonafide Democratic candidates in the primary, and the Republican candidate in the general election campaign. Meanwhile, Thomas Kindness made a statement of some dignity about the dangers of LaRouchian zealotry.

One of the reasons Dale gave for repudiating LaRouche is that to do so should increase campaign contributions by Jewish groups. I don't know if that betrays an underlying utilitarianism, or the belief that the campaign staff only understands money.
But when Marty said she would call Alexei De-something-enkov of the Soviet magazine *Trud* back to tell him that Glenn had declined to be interviewed on the subject of Yuri Gagarin's flight, Dale said "Why bother? You won't ever have to deal with him again, and he can't do us any good in Ohio."

* * *

It is time for another disclaimer. I tell stories about my adventures, and I aim for a certain level of disinterestedness (I won't call it objectivity), but I don't imagine -- nor should you -- that I am providing a pure and unbiased report of events. Experience does not come to us un-texturized, and writing involves thousands of losses. Of the myriad observations, impressions and sensations of my experience I have the time, skill and patience to record only a few.

* * *

A quick catch-up: I got my car back on Wednesday the 9th, just one day short of four weeks after it got smashed. It ended up costing Allstate (the other driver's insurance company) $2500. I had a rental car for two weeks, but driving it to the Hill during the week was not practical. I took the bus and Metro, which is fairly costly ($18.25 a week) and tiring (it takes an hour each way, and barely 30 minutes of each trip is sitting down -- if I am lucky enough to get a seat). I also missed having my morning shot of music from WETA, which seems to help me handle the stress of commuting.

* * *

It is Sunday evening. WETA is providing Handel's *Julius Caesar* in a spirited performance. The windows are closed against a rather damp chill, and Isabell is curled on the brown chair dreaming of our hike down to Indian Run this afternoon. There was a little tickling rain, and we crossed the creek to the south side where beneath the tall beech, oak and tulip trees is a low green canopy of mayapples. Among the mayapples were spring beauties, patches of adders's tongues, bloodroot and rue anemones. We found clumps of jack-in-the-pulpits and virginia bluebells, and a place to sit on some relatively dry leaves and sticks under a great beech tree. I sketched and Isabell crouched nearby, watching.

* * *

April 16, 1986

"Cap Weinberger has never seen a shot fired in anger. He doesn't know there is no such thing as a 'surgical strike',""}

Glenn was expressing some off-the-record doubts about the wisdom of the attack on Libya, doubting that this bombing would put an end to terrorism, or that military 'terrorism' by the United States was much different than the guerrilla terrorism of Qaddafi. Yet his public statement, argued for two hours Tuesday morning, said basically that they got what they deserved.
The last time I heard that was during the first weeks of May 1970, in Kent. Rumor and the press told us of a communist conspiracy among the students, of the arsenal of deadly weapons stashed the Kent State dorms, and of the 'outside agitators' representing (variously) the SDS or the Black Panthers brought in to (A) blow up the Main Street bridge or (B) take over the village of Hudson, and finally that the whole event was being masterminded from a Soviet submarine in West Branch Reservoir. On the basis of these facts, terrible reprisals were taken against the students.

So here we are in Washington 16 years later. We rise early to a crisis, to pluck our Washington Posts from our doorsteps and find out not what is happening to in the world, but what everyone agrees is happening. Anyone whose statement veers too far out of the mainstream will be unheard, so all the politicians say pretty much the same thing.

Glenn's remarks to the hastily assembled press conferences (live from the Senate Radio and TV Gallery, and a conference call with Ohio radio news directors) raised some doubts but focused more on the failure to negotiate in the Middle East, on the dangers of escalation, on the folly of arms sales to fanatics, and on where Reagan's strategy goes in the long term.

By Thursday there were more pressing things to deal with -- the potential loss of contracts for maintaining the B-1 bombers and funding for the Stealth aircraft. These are two meaty issues, encompassing the arrogance of the Pentagon in refusing to release the costs of the Stealth programs and the possible loss of some 800 jobs in Ohio.

By Thursday keen observers were also pointing out something else: the coincidence that the bombing of Libya occurred right at the time of the 6 o'clock news. "Why, we never thought of such a thing," said the Administration. But I have trouble believing them. This is not a war against terrorism, but for public power, and our peril is great. We're being made fearful; sober voices tell us there are fewer bombs on airplanes than there were ten years ago, that Qaddafi is insecurely in control, that the Israeli reprisals have not worked to reduce terrorist acts. But we don't hear them.

We only hear the fears being fed to us. Tuesday morning there were more Capitol Police on duty all over the Senate, bomb rumors seeped from floor to floor: "I hear they have the dogs at the north entrance." People talked about changing vacation plans: "I wouldn't go east of Rome if I were you," "Do you think it's safe to fly to Dayton?"

Ron (who serves the office as parliamentarian and keeper of the vote-counts) sat in his cubicle glumly considering a UPI article that explained that should the President and all the successors to the Presidency be killed, in an attack on a joint session of Congress, for example, the office would fall on the one absent Cabinet member (absent for just this reason). "Oh," I said brightly, then it could be Bennett!" Ron buried his face in his hands for a moment. "I guess it's not very likely," he said, "Let's hope it's not."
I went on down the aisle to Celia’s desk (she is the office manager) to ask her if the office can pay for photographs of Annie Glenn used for publicity when she appears on behalf of the Senator. Celia was chewing on the end of her pencil, puzzling over a form in front of her. "This isn't right. I can't say 'Who should I notify if anything happens?' But I can't say 'Who should I notify if you get blown up by a bomb?' either." After a few minutes we settled on "Please give two names and phone numbers of people to be notified in case of emergency," and moved on to my question. A call to the Ethics Committee determined that we can't pay for the pictures.

Friday noon the Senator was scheduled to fly back to Ohio to attend an Ohio Democratic Party dinner in Columbus and do an ed-board with the Cleveland Plain Dealer. I had spent a half day getting a pack of editorials from the PD ready for him, and on Friday morning I got to the office at 7:30 so I could finish the MEDIA REVIEW (weekly collection of clippings) before Dale and Glenn left at 12:30. I was scotched at every turn. First, Dale brought me a PR he had written out by hand on the B-1 bomber issue. Then he went with the Senator to meet a bunch of school kids on the Capitol steps, leaving me to get the PR approved by Phil, type it into the computer, make photocopies and get it out to the Ohio press by the 10 o'clock Riding Page (a courier service of the Senate post office). I am a poor typist -- fast, but inaccurate. I don't give a fig about typos, as long as the sense is there; people read right through them. But that morning I had 35 minutes to type a single-spaced legal sized sheet, along with fielding phone calls. Marty was at the doctor, and Beth had been sent on an errand. In the middle of the typing I got a call from Columbus: could I do a letter for the annual meeting of the UUAW in Lorain and telecopy it through before noon? Of course I could -- AAUW is very supportive of the Senator and he spoke to their Coalition for Change last year. I finished typing the PR at 9:48 and sent it to Printer 5 because Printer 3 was lying in pieces all over the floor. Printer 5 botched it by not advancing the paper properly, so I had to re-queue it to Printer 2, then grab it off and paste on the Press Release heading and get ten photocopies stuffed into ten addressed envelopes. At 9:58 Dale appeared and said "Hold it -- the Senator wants to see it again." Dale was back a minute later -- it was the Dear Colleague letter Glenn wanted to change, not the PR, but by then we had missed the Riding Page. I let Marty, who had just arrived, deal with telecopying the PR to the Ohio press corps, and I turned to the letter for the AAUW.

I finished that about 11 and telecopied it to Columbus, and set about finishing one copy of the MEDIA REVIEW for the Senator to take to Columbus.

For the MEDIA REVIEW I clip, collect and sort several hundred clippings from Ohio newspapers and major national newspapers, ordering them by topics and laying them out on letter-sized sheets, filling empty places with political cartoons from Ohio papers. Then I type into the computer a log of media events (this makes the events of the week searchable) including all the press conferences, press availabilities, speeches, interviews, and press releases of the week. This list is printed out and included in the MR. Then I take the finished pack down to the Senate Copy Center and have them run off 23 copies, double-sided to save bulk, for distribution to the senior staff, committees, state offices and campaign office. It usually takes a couple of hours to get the copying done.
That Friday I had 91 pages of clips – too many, but I didn't have time to weed them out. I ran off a single copy for the Senator and Dale on the office copier at 12:25; the others weren't done until 3:30.

While I was finishing with the MR I got a call from Jim Hannah of AP: could he have a copy of the letter on which the PR was based. I went to Milt Beach and got a copy of the letter, made a photocopy, put it in an envelope for Hannah to pick up and took it out to the front desk. There I found Howard Metzenbaum looking at the magazines. I introduced myself and as we shook hands. I said I was Dwight Arnold's daughter. He thought for a moment, and said "From Kent State -- I remember him."

Metz was flying back to Ohio with Glenn. We learned later that there had been a phone threat from someone who said he was going to "get Metzenbaum when they landed at Port Columbus." As you probably observed, they didn't.

For recreation these days I sing in the Fairfax Unitarian Chorale. There are, on good days, about 50 voices, including a good complement of basses and tenors. On Saturday last we participated in a festival of U-U choirs from ten churches in the area. With a guest conductor all 130 of us rehearsed six anthems in two hours, the performed them, along with selections by seven of the participating choirs.

Massed choirs are fun to sing in, but in general, I think, rather dreadful to listen to. The program included a rather nice *Exultate* by Alessandro Scarlatti (though I'm sure the original wasn't in the key of D -- that's a rather clever way to keep a string on your copyright) and a luscious and overripe piece by Pablo Casals, for which the basses sang the low C, lifting one right off the floor. There was also a TTP (for those of you who just came in that stands for Truly Tiresome Piece) by Wm. Billings, another non-starter by one Thomas Benjamin (U-U's think they like it because of the words), the gracious, sing-able and durable "The Road Not Taken" by Randall Thompson, and a rousing Handel anthem, 'Hallelujah Amen'. The guest conductor was quite good, but I'm not sure how one could fail among these musicians.

The individual choirs ranged from excellent to Methodist, and Fairfax, though we had only 27 people, was far and away the best choir. We sang Palestrina, Lassus and Thomas Morley from our madrigal dinner. I told Judy Harrison (our director) that I was glad I had picked the right Unitarian choir.

The Mt. Vernon U-U church is in a half-ruined formal garden on a ridge on the grounds of an old mansion, now the parish hall of the church. There was a boxwood alley, a partially restored brick wall, flowering crab trees, tulips, bluebells, rhododendron and grass full of purple and white violets. At intermission we all trooped outdoors, caucusing under flowering trees, or sitting along the wall. It was bright and cool; there was a leaf of tissue paper moon pasted on the plain blue sky, and a song-sparrow whistled and trilled from the hedge.
Some of you may be hearing Mr. Kindness’ radio ad, in which he attacks Glenn for his Presidential campaign debt. Just what Kindness expects Glenn to do about the debt is unclear. He must know that under FEC regulations Glenn can contribute only $50,000 of his own money, which he did long ago. The same regulations require that all money must be raised by a campaign committee, and there are strict rules about how much may be contributed by individuals, corporations and PACs. No one now doubts that Glenn's run for the Presidency was ill-considered, but it didn't seem so at the time. And no one is clamoring to change the FEC rules. Indeed, the last thing this country needs is to have public offices for sale to the wealthiest candidates. At present Glenn doesn't have many choices for paying off an old debt.

Bizarraries of the Capitol

(1) Off a basement corridor of the Hart Senate Office building there is a room in which one sees, when the door is open, a totally bald man working at a desk right under a large hairy animal skin hanging on the wall.

(2) Since February of 1985 the huge lobby of the Hart Building has had the center enclosed by full plywood panels, leaving only a walkway about ten feet wide all the way around it. There are a number of neatly lettered signs saying PLEASE EXCUSE THE TEMPORARY INCONVENIENCE, and go on to explain that a sculpture by Alexander Calder is being installed behind the barrier. About a month ago they hung the mobile part from the six story ceiling -- four huge flat black ‘clouds’ that rotate slowly, growling quietly. Since then nothing has happened. Scuttlebutt has it that the stabile parts, a set of tall black ‘mountains’ built off site have proved too large to get through any entrance. In the meantime I am getting fond of the plywood panels. They have interesting subtleties of texture; some are grey and worn and others young and virile; some are painted or stained. Perhaps Calder planned that, too. I do think it was prudent of him to die after engendering this Work of Art for the U.S. Senate.

MAY 1986

May 17, 1986

Monday morning brings traffic congestion, and the choices are: leave in the car at 7AM, fight traffic, arrive frazzled at 8 o'clock and put in a 10-hour day, then drive home for 45 minutes; or take the bus at 8AM and save an hour. I usually take the bus.

And so it was that last Monday evening at 6:28 I was on the Pentagon bus platform, standing on aching feet in a line already formed for the 17M bus due at 6:45. The previous 17M bus goes at
6:22, but there is no way I can leave the office at 6, walk to Union Station (10 minutes, if I walk briskly) ride to Gallery Place on a Red Line train and change to a Yellow Line train (10 minutes, at best) then ride to the Pentagon and run up the escalators (7 minutes) and make it. I could sit on a bench instead of standing in line, but at the risk of standing up on the bus. I could also take a 19E bus at 6:35, but it leaves me a half mile to walk home from Little River Turnpike. So the least worst option is to stand on my tired feet and wait for the 6:45 bus. The platform is loud with the roar and drumming of dozens of busses, arriving, idling and leaving. Every two minutes a jetliner taking off from National Airport roars overhead; between them the rumble of highways to the east and south can be heard. It is hot and humid, the fumes from bus exhaust do no dissipate readily, a commuter two places ahead of me is smoking a cigarette and the woman behind me has on some god-awful perfume. Then miraculously, a mockingbird sweeps into a small larch tree at the edge of the platform and begins a trenchant, witty, lyrical and loud comment on the state of the world and is answered by a rival, across the bus lanes in a tree beside one of the entrances to the Pentagon. Together they weave an alien song above the sheet-metal, concrete and wheels, and over the heads of the mute, tired civil servants waiting for their busses.

Sixteen months in Washington has convinced me only that no human being should have to live this way. One is assaulted constantly by noise, stink and heat; there are random hazards to mobility, including capricious drivers, poor road signs, cracked sidewalks, inadequate parking (or too many cars), lax bus schedules. Cost-of-living in Washington is driven by a layer of people (mostly men) making $60,000 to $120,000 a year, leaving the rest of us with some hard choices about where we live and how we commute. (Air conditioning for my car remains out of reach.)

I suppose all this might be bearable if I could muster any sense of the importance of what I do and how it fits with who I am and what I am capable of doing. All I can muster at the moment, however, is a sense that I don't do my job as technician especially well because I am not allowed to participate in the conversations which structure and maintain the values and goals toward which we direct our work: "Senator Glenn". I spend 60 hours a week in pursuit of this mediocrity, and I bring home just over $1100 a month.

I have stubbornly tried to continue to write, to play the cello enough to keep from losing what I have left of neglected skills, to plant a garden, to take Isabell for a Sunday hour to rummage in the ravine in the woods, to read at least Science News and the TLS every week, and to spend a little convivial time with my house-mates. But it doesn't work -- I get exhausted, if I'm lucky, and sick, if I'm not.

This week I have a sudden flare-up of inflammation under my lower front teeth. I went to Lauren's dentist early Wednesday morning after a bad night. He said he couldn't do much until the inflammation went down, in two weeks. So I spent three days of getting up feeling better but getting home at 7PM with an aching jaw, only able to crawl into bed after a bowl of soup and a
handful of aspirin. Also this spring I have been plagued by a painful patch of skin on my upper back. It is not swollen, red, blistered or welted, and hence baffles the priests of modern medicine. What they have been able to do for me so far is to get me two boiling hot trips through rush-hour traffic to Kaiser Springfield.

I am not a little worried about my lack of physical resilience. I don't think I'm getting more infections and malaises than I used to, but seem to be less able to shake them off with a good night's sleep, or a few days of vitamins and the anticipation of better things. No doubt the stress of my job, and getting to it, and the lack of any sense of accomplishment in it contributes to this. No doubt, too, that another cause is my frustration at not being able to sustain any kind of musical life except a holding operation, or have any productive life of the mind -- which includes reading, writing, talking, listening, reflecting and then reading, writing, talking, listening, reflecting some more.

And finally, I live among kindly strangers. It's like wearing new clothes all the time: they are bright and handsome, correct and sturdy; they do not unduly reveal one's lumps and slouching; they fit properly and do not chafe or bind; some can be recognized as future favorites. But one never feels completely comfortable with them. There is always a little stiffness, some unpredictability, and unwilling, one cannot quite trust them as one trusts the old soft shirt and faded jeans, the threadbare jacket with all the pockets, the ragged sweater and broken down shoes.

This week I made two mistakes in my technician role as a link in a communications network. One was the failure to make a phone call, the consequence of which was that a radio station manager yelled at Dale. The other was a call I should not have made to a national news network about the Senator's press conference on his Presidential campaign debt. They weren't interested anyway, but Dale was furious, all out of proportion, I thought, to the offense. (Of course, if I had understood why the call was inappropriate, I wouldn't have made it.) Marty came to my defense and nothing much happened, finally.

Except that my confidence melted a little more, and my determination to get out of Washington hardened a good bit. This is a no-win job for me. To the extent that I get good at the technician job I lose not only the opportunities but the skills I need to do information-management tasks -- which are what I do well and which give me a sense of accomplishment. I am a poor typist because I am caught up in precision management of ideas and meanings; I am a poor relayer of telephone messages because I try to meet my needs for accuracy, civility and common sense, as well as the needs of the people on the other end of the phone line. I am a poor follower of arbitrary rules laid down by somebody else because I know they are arbitrary and because I have to make my own judgments about values and goals.

It is not that I am a poor team-player. I consider myself an excellent team player, and I think my former colleagues on the Kent school board would agree. It is not, either, that I can't handle the
ad hoc nature of the decision processes. I learned that well as a musician, as a single parent raising two kids on very little money, and in my long apprenticeship to my father, who was a Master of Makeshift, and could always — until loss of brain cells took away his powers — turn unpromising weeds into a garden of delights. He taught me well.

But now where can I go? If I went back to Kent there is no way I could pick up where I left off, nor would I want to do that. I have dear friends and dear places there, but I would have to be financially competent to live in Kent, and there are no jobs there for a person of my talents. Further, if I were financially competent I’m not sure Kent would be the same place it was when I was poor. In any case, it’s still a long way from my kids in California.

I suppose I should try to get a job someplace on the West Coast doing something I believe worthwhile, among people who do not treat me like a piece of advanced autonomous software. I don’t care much about getting rich. I’d only like to be able to live in a quiet house surrounded by many trees (and please, a creek or pond) have a small car with air conditioning, have unshakeable health insurance, and enough money for a piano, books and music, as well as enough for conviviality with friends. I might as well wish to win the lottery.

Would anything make me want to stay in Washington? I suppose nothing is impossible. If I got a whole lot of money, so I didn’t have to live or work in the city, and if I fell in love with someone who wanted me around, and if I had all the above mentioned amenities, then....who knows?

* * *

It is now noon on Sunday, May 18. By the grace of a battered 24-inch fan roaring barely a yard from my left arm, it is 84° at my desk. Outdoors it is 86° and rising. In another hour this upstairs room will be uninhabitable and will remain so until about 10PM. Al, our amiable but dilatory landlord, has been promising to fix the air-conditioning for two months.

If I could afford $650 a month rent I could have everything I have in this house, plus air-conditioning that worked. This will probably be the last letter until the AC is working.

* * *

And so it was. It is now June 1, and the AC is working, laboring against the afternoon sun glaring onto the roof of my attic. It is 100 out there, 80 in here, and 70 downstairs. My housemates have suggested that I move my C-64 downstairs, but in this heat, even thinking about that defeats me. It would take 3 or 4 hours, time that I desperately need for other things.

I went to Connecticut last weekend, to visit my brother Vic and his family and an old friend from Ohio. I enjoyed the trip, but it has left me hopelessly behind on correspondence, gardening, laundry and mending, household cleaning, filing and reading. I foolishly forgot myself so far as to buy four new books (The Triumph of Politics, Habits of the Heart, The Social Brain, and a sci-fi, Footfall) on the totally foolish grounds that I would like to read them. I have started two and finished neither, and gotten weeks behind on my magazines into the bargain. A lot of time
went into my garden this week, because the work must be done now if there is to be a garden at all.

About five years ago I tried to explain to a successful older woman and good friend the dilemma I faced in trying to find some means to support myself. Her advice was to give up all my reading, talking, writing and messing around in the library and concentrate on developing marketable skills. It is not bad advice on how one should live, but it begs the question, for me, of why one should live. I insist on reading ‘support myself’ as ‘support myself’ and not ‘support the self that society says you ought to be’. As I perceived it then, and still do, reading, discourse, writing and research are central to who I am and how I relate to the worlds I live in, and most of all, to what I believe is my role or mission in the human community -- the why of my life. When I do not read and am deprived of intelligent conversation and time to write I become somebody even I don't like very much -- a dull, tiresome, bungling person. And the most discouraging part is feeling that I'm not doing anything worth my while, and that whatever I might have uniquely added to the human discourse is lost.

Enough. You have been more than patient. Next time we will be back in the thick of things -- beginning this week you will be able to watch Senator Glenn on TV.

John Glenn, looking at a photograph of himself: "Look at that furrowed brow. Looks like threads so I can screw my hat on."

* * *

to Bill Poland, former colleague at Ohio State University School of Music

May 31, 1986

Okay, so Vivaldi wrote the same piece 400 times, but so did a lot of other people -- Mozart, Chopin, Dvorak -- right up to Copland and beyond. What matters is that composers tickle us with novelty and inventiveness within the constraints of ‘sameness’ imposed (really, negotiated and selected) by the expectations of musical communities.

Here I am on a hot Saturday morning, after a stint of gardening in the early cool, listening to "Desert Island Disks" on WETA in the comfort of air-conditioning, which is finally working. DID is a Washington institution, in which the famous and favored are asked to imagine themselves cast away on a desert island with only a phonograph and five of their favorite recordings.

One might suppose that we thereby see into the private lives and musical tastes of these celebrities, but I am skeptical. I managed Glenn's appearance on "Guest Conductor", an
analogous program on WGMS. I started from the innocent notion that I should ask the Senator about his favorite pieces of music. Not so. The Senator's favorite music is "something American, something Jewish." So I chose Appalachian Spring, the Barber Adagio and Schelomo, and threw in Holst's Planets as a space-piece. Then I was allowed to fill up the rest of the two hour program with music he actually liked -- the Debussy Clair de Lune and selections from La Bohème.

Is this dishonest? Of course not. All of us manage our public personae, all the time. I have no doubt that John Glenn would readily learn to 'like' the works I chose for him, given the opportunity, even if it were not politically expedient for him to like them. They are all inventive pieces written by recognized craftsmen, and are well liked by critics and general audiences all over the world. A more interesting question for me is why we demand of public figures that they display certain characteristics and conformities. We certainly don't want honesty: what happens when Neville Marriner says he isn't neurotic enough to enjoy Mahler, or when an obscure Congressman from Oklahoma confesses to a liking for the piano music of Faure?

* * *

When I write to people I try to say outrageous things to goad them into responding. Trapped in a paper-handling and telephoning job I very keenly miss the give and take of ideas in conversation and argument. I have, over the years, enjoyed a very satisfying conversation-by-mail with Don Anthony, an old Kent and Oberlin friend, a pianist, musical aesthete and Schoenberg specialist who lives in Palo Alto. I had rather hoped, when I expanded my mailing list, to tempt some other people into arguing with me. Several have bitten on baits I dangled in front of them, then the correspondence faded as they found they didn't have time to continue.

* * *

Letters are nifty because one can say anything, try out unpromising ideas, moon over trivia, commit non-sequiturs, make the most blatant self-pity sound noble, justify one's inadequacies, make mistakes and turn them into new directions, and, after painting oneself into a corner, push over the wall and start somewhere else. Letters are easy because you don't have to document every assertion, and because there is no place to start them except in medias res. Letters are fun because you can be playful with yourself, your correspondent, and with the ideas that are your toys. Letters are useful because they tell you what you think and what's important to you. And best of all -- letters leave tracks to show where you have been. But don't mistake me: neither the starting point nor the destination are important. It is the travelers and the journey, and the new ways of seeing and understanding they construct that make the correspondence worthwhile.

* * *
At last! THE idea of the Twentieth Century! And from that twerp Pollard who cared so little for his neighbors that he used them in his sordid spy-games. He offered (according to the Wall Street Journal article yesterday) to give the United States all proceeds from any book, movie, TV production, etc. about his spying career. Not only could we reduce the deficit this way, we could plan for continuing revenues. The Treasury Department could commission adventurers to commits deeds of derring-do in trench coats, and then make blockbuster movies. Or in keeping with the President's penchant for privatization, we could sell the CIA to a giant of the entertainment industry (RCA? MGM? Rupert Murdoch?) for a large sum, and get royalties for the use of military or state secrets.

It all reminds me of a crude joke from the 1950s. A man submitted a story entitled "I slept with a bear" to the Reader's Digest, and it was primly rejected as not suitable for a family publication. The author tried again with "I slept with a bear for the FBI". Better, said RD, but not enough. The third time the story was accepted with the title "I slept with a bear for the FBI and found God." In this decade it would be "I slept with a spy of the Soviet Bear for the CIA, donated the profit to Uncle Sam, and found Peace-of-Mind." Ugh.

Monday June 2 was the first day the world saw the United States Senate in action on TV, via C-Span. In Senate offices we had been watching it on a closed-circuit feed for six weeks and were already bored. Boredom notwithstanding, anxiety was running high among Senators and staffers. At present there are only four TV sets in the office -- a big color set in the Press office, a small B&W one on Ron's desk and tiny portables for the Senator and Mary Jane.

On this fateful Monday, Morning Business, (the time in which any Senator may speak on any subject by Special Order) started at noon, and many Senators had requested the opportunity to speak. Glenn had voted in favor of the trial of televising the Senate only grudgingly, and had maintained all along that he wasn't going to get involved in grandstanding, or in doing anything that would change the way the Senate does business. So we watched Dole and Byrd, Packwood, Heflin, Hawkins, Kassebaum and others speak with more and less skill while Glenn went to a committee meeting, made phone calls from his office and conferred with Phil and Len.

But Dale had called before he arrived that morning and asked me to have Beth (our graduate fellow) to make a square of cardboard to stiffen the Senator's breast-pocket so that it would not sag unbecomingly when he attached the microphone clip. Beth dissolved into incredulous laughter when I explained this, so I made it myself. I made a paper pattern, took it to Ron to check the fit in his jacket pocket, and then made of set of cardboards around that size to be sure we had one to fit the Senator's jacket pocket.
After lunch Glenn came down to the Press office to ask Dale about an interview scheduled at 4 o'clock, and saw on the TV set that the Senate was still in Morning Business. "I'm not going to show my face down there until they get down to real business. All this fuss about the blue shirt and the red tie -- I didn't even wear a red tie. They said this TV wasn't going to change anything, and look at them!"

I slipped the pack of pocket-stiffeners to Dale, and he grinned his lopsided grin and offered them to Glenn.

"Oh, no! I'm not going to..." But Dale reassured him: "It's all right, it doesn't show -- it just keeps the microphone from slipping and making mike-rustle."

Glenn returned to his office with Dale following: "Senator, we're getting calls about the release of the Stealth figures. We need to get a statement..." Twenty minutes later Dale returned and said to me and Marty "Come in here a minute, and call Beth to come down."

"Okay, listen to this -- this is the Senator's own idea, he wants to do it, and I think it would be great. He wants to go down and make a Special Order statement in which he makes fun of all the primping the Senators have been doing. You know -- powdering his bald head, looking sagely to the left and right. I think it will be great." We agreed: "Yes, he should do it -- they'll love it." "Sure, he does that sort of thing well." But Beth was skeptical "Will he really do it?"

We called all the Ohio TV stations, the newswires, the nets and the syndicates. Only a few cable companies in Ohio are carrying C-Span, but all can monitor it, tape from it and use up to three minutes a day. If you watched the news at all that evening you probably saw Glenn combing his almost non-existent hair, demonstrating mike-rustle, and asking Ohioans if they would rather he wore a red tie.

The phones started ringing the minute he finished, with one person saying that if he had done that during his Presidential campaign he would now be President. His little demonstration was reported in the Washington Post and New York Times the next morning, and the Plain Dealer mentioned it in their editorial on televising the Senate.

On Thursday of last week the bill to prevent the sale of arms to the Saudis came back to the Senate after being vetoed by Reagan. The Senator (the collective, incorporated Senator) had decided (and it is a decision in which staff participates, not one he takes alone prior to the briefing) to make a floor statement urging the override of the veto. The statement had been carefully crafted by Pat (Foreign Affairs), Phil (Leg. Director and Military), Dale, and MJ, and was frankly aimed at the Ohio Jewish constituency.

The decision was finally taken at about 10:50 and Dale came running back to the Press office. "Get Julie (our Columbus intern) and have her take half the list (of Ohio news organizations).
The Senator will be on between 11:30 and 12 -- they can tape it live. I'll call the nets and the syndicates." I called Columbus, but Julie had just left to pick up the newspapers. Beth was in Ohio and Marty was home with an ear infection, so Dale and I had to make all the calls ourselves. I fished out our list for satellite feeds, which has 21 Ohio TV stations on it, and we had all the usual difficulties. We were put on hold to listen to the audio signal for the station, the assignment editor was out and the secretary didn't know if anyone was monitoring C-Span, lines were busy. We finished about 11:35; Glenn was still in his office, but it only takes him five minutes to get to the floor.

I did some errands around the office, delivering clippings and telecopier pages, and came back past the Senator's office as Pat and Phil came out, agitated. "I'm not going to be the one to tell him," said Pat.

They came on around to the Press office and Phil told Dale that Glenn had decided to go to the Armed Services Committee meeting instead of making the floor statement. "There's a vote in the committee," Phil explained.

Dale turned pale. "Goddammit, we just called every television station in Ohio and they're all watching, right now. If he doesn't show, they'll never believe us again."

Phil shrugged. "It was his call. Maybe if you said something to him..."

Dale took a deep breath. "I'll go talk to him" ...and strode out.

He was back in three minutes. "It's okay; he's going to do it. He's going down to the floor right now." Staffers gathered in the Press office and watched him make the statement at 11:55. He looked good.

At 2:20 all the staff was again clustered around the TV sets, watching the end of the voting on the override. Ron and Eileen were keeping the tally, and counted 33 No votes. But when the vote was announced it was 34 Noes, and the override failed. "That would have been Syms," said Ron, "He changed his vote."

"Sure," said Dale, "He needs the President's help in his campaign. He probably got two appearances out of Reagan. Besides, there aren't any Jews in his state."

* * *

Full staff meetings are held irregularly. Most weeks only the 'department heads' meet (AA, LD, Foreign Affairs, Military Affairs, Domestic Policy, Press, Aging Comm., Energy Sub-comm. and MJ). So on Wednesday when I heard Ed's secretary Lisa tell Celia to have everyone come to the Senator's office at 10:30 for a staff meeting I knew something was up. I went to Marty's desk and looked questioning. Without a word she turned over the top one of a stack of upside
down press releases for me to read: GLENN ANNOUNCES RESIGNATION OF CHIEF OF STAFF.

Marty and I had known that something was afoot, because Ed had been going into Dale's office and closing the door. (Dale and MJ are the only ones with doors that close. Dale also has a Venetian blind over the window, and MJ's door lacks a doorknob). And one Friday, when I went around to the north elevators to take the MEDIA REVIEW down to the Copy Center I found Dale and Ed conversing at the head of the stairs there. They asked me what I was doing over there, and I explained, asking them the same question, which they ignored. Marty and I had suspected that Dale was negotiating for another job and that Ed was privy to his search. There are few alliances, and even fewer friendships within the office. Dale and Ed have been the exception, going to lunch together most days and consulting frequently in the office. Curiously, in the office hierarchy of access to the Senator, Dale stands higher than Ed. (Access goes, as I see it: MJ, Diane (personal secretary) Dale, Phil, Len, Ed. Usually the AA is much nearer the top.)

By the time I got to the meeting all the places to sit in the Senator's office were occupied, so I sat on the floor between Diane and Rose (Mailroom Supervisor). There were about 45 people altogether, sitting on every available surface or standing around the edges. Glenn greeted us and called on Ed, who asked Phil to start the first agenda item -- a review of the status of legislation in every department. Phil began with a general statement:

"It's hard to believe, but it's only 67 days to sine die [adjournment] October third, including Mondays and Fridays [days on which, by tradition, the Senate conducts no business]. Ron?"

Ron: (floor monitor, and specialist in Senate rules and processes) "...and maybe a lame-duck session. The big difference, of course, is TV. The first day of TV there were 18 Special Orders, and they weren't on the tax bill. They're talking about limiting them to five minutes. [the present limit is 15 minutes] Dole says maybe they'll put them at the end of the day."

Glenn interrupts: "And they said TV wouldn't alter the Senate."

Ron continues. "The Saudi arms sale veto override is scheduled for 2 o'clock Thursday, then we'll be on tax reform."

George: The Higher Education Act passed with 97 votes. The Senator's Future Teacher Training amendment failed, but we expected it would. Helm's bussing amendment slowed everything down, but the bill got through."

Glenn: "I don't know how much time we've wasted on B-A-P (that's Bussing, Abortion and [school] Prayer). Somewhere between 150 and 200 votes in the last two years, just on those
three issues."

George then called on different aides in turn.

Kathy C.: [housing, education, agriculture, women] "The housing bill was accepted by the committee. The Davis-Bacon waiver was defeated, but Armstrong will try again."

Eileen B.: [urban affairs, transportation, manufacturing] "We're working on a transition rule for the steel industry that will allow them to cash in their investment tax credits 50 cents on the dollar." There is an explanation, and someone wisecracks about saving 'historic hottubs' in California. "Patricia and I have been working with steelworkers, mayors and community leaders about the trade bill."

Glenn: "You know, it's really terrible in Cleveland. Japanese steel is being unloaded right in sight of the empty, idle Republic Steel plant."

Eileen continues with Huffy Bicycles -- a special bill is needed to protect their duty suspension. "...and our heaviest mail is still on product liability."

Glenn: "We've had 150 proposals on that...and about as many on that erosion control bill that would allow people whose houses are falling into Lake Erie to build barriers or move their houses with 30 year loans at lower interest. We're going to have to widen the outlet at Niagara. We don't need another study, unless it's a trip to Venice."

Eileen: "There's a Glenn-Metz bill for Enduro, and another to make double-breasting illegal..." Glenn explains what this means: "...prevents a company with a union contract from forming another company to avoid their union obligations."

Then it's George's turn, with his fine, modulated bass voice: "We had five special requests for transition rules about the tax bill. Three got through -- though one of those was mooted because it will be finished before the new tax bill takes effect. These are short term exceptions. The other two are the Cleveland domed stadium and the Columbus convention center."

Dale: "What do we do with Press on these?"

George: "Nothing. If any word got out we'd be deluged."

Dale: "Will the committee tax bill go through unscathed?"

George: "The President is trying to prevent any amendments, and has invited every Senator to the White House to persuade them that the whole thing will unravel if any exceptions are made."
Glenn: "That's flat stupid. It's preposterous because the committee loaded the bill with their favorites. Besides, the thing is monumental. The full text [of the tax bill] is 2,600 pages, and the summary is 1,100. We haven't even had time to read it. I objected to the fast track; they said 'We'll make changes in the conference committee.' But the people don't elect the conference committee."

My hips and legs were getting cramped, and I managed to shift to the other hip. There were more reports.

Pat: "Saudi arms sale. The administration claims they have the votes [to sustain the veto]. We will vote to override. Nobody knows what the House is going to do on the Contras."

Phil: "There is a major fight shaping up between Appropriations [Committee] and the authorizing committees."

Glenn: "Appropriations is trying to take control. We should either get rid of all the authorizing committees or get a resolution to prevent Appropriations from giving away money."

Phil continued with some wins for the Senator: "Weinberger released some cost figures for Stealth, and we're quite sure it was Senator Glenn's letter that turned the trick. But we're still not satisfied -- we think Weinberger is playing games. The military retirement bill is another win. The Senator orchestrated it and will undoubtedly be a conferee [on the House-Senate conference committee]. It's going to be knockdown-drag-out in conference. We're heading for markup [where how much is spent for each program] in the Armed Services subcommittees, and in the full committee we'll have the B-1 and SDI."

Summer interns were introduced or announced, and the Ohio fellows (including Beth) praised. Then Len Weiss took the floor for Governmental Affairs and the Energy Subcommittee.

Len: "The hearings on transferring research on the biological effects of radiation to HHS [from the Department of Energy] are coming up. There's a lot of opposition, but we'll do okay. We're getting a good bit of help from Chernobyl. People can't help comparing DOE's behavior with the Soviets'. There's going to be a field hearing in Florida on Soviet reactors in Cuba. Paula Hawkins [Senator from Florida] must know that the reactor in Florida -- named Turkey Point -- has one of the worst safety records in the country. There's a meeting for planning the 1990 census, and on July 16 IAEA has one on nuclear safety. The Rogers report will be out very soon; we don't expect any surprises in it."

Diane L.: (Aging Committee) "We're about to go with the bill to eliminate mandatory retirement.
There will be more nursing-home hearings, and probably another bill. Today there's a bill of which the Senator is an original cosponsor on the way Medicare pays its providers.

The agenda listed the Press's contribution as 'Media Madness.' Dale told about the Cleveland Indians game where Glenn was besieged by autograph hunters and hand shakers, about "Hands Across America" in Columbus where Annie's 90 year-old mother joined them, and listed the Senator's TV appearances of the preceding week. (They were about TV in the Senate, and the shipment of mustard gas across Ohio.) He had the Senator tell the "Kindness Story of the Week:

Glenn: "Kindness learned that I had been on a call-in show on WCOL a couple of weeks ago, and demanded 'equal access', which is like 'equal time,' but not quite. So they invited him on. Well, the first thing that Kevin Young [of WCOL] asked him was 'Congressman Kindness, why have you elected to run a negative campaign against Senator Glenn?' and Kindness kind of bumbled and hemmed and hawed and didn't answer very well. After that the calls that came in were definitely hostile. He [Kindness] spent $450,000 on TV ads that were all negative. I won't engage in that -- I'll talk about defense, about jobs and research. I think maybe he's doing himself more harm than good."

Dale gave some perspective: "There might be as many as 17% of Democrats who would consider voting against Glenn, but that wouldn't be enough. The Republicans were trying to influence the LaRouche vote, but even there I doubt if they're making much headway. I think the WCOL thing showed a lot of the Senator's strength. Kevin said he didn't think Kindness would ask to be on a call-in show again, nor indeed would he be invited."

Ed had sat through the meeting, over an hour, comfortably slouched in one of the chairs across from the Senator's desk. He is tall and good looking, with black hair and dark eyes, a laid-back manner and fine wry wit. It was now his turn. "I have an announcement to make. I have been here a little over eight years -- that's 65 in dog-years -- and I have decided that I have done everything I set out to accomplish, and that it is time to move on. I have built a responsive productive team here, and I want to pursue some new challenges. I think it's better to move on before the campaign gets into high gear, so I will be leaving July 1. I'm looking at a couple of other possibilities, both in government and in higher education. I don't think I can explore other options very thoroughly as long as I have this commitment here. I want to thank you, Senator Glenn, and all of you. I think together we have built a first rate staff, and I'm proud to be able to leave things here in good shape."

Just like that. He's giving up a position in a major Senate office, and close to $70,000 a year for new challenges. I have to admire his cool, his courage and his style, but I don't believe it. It's
too easy, and not in character for his mind and sensibilities. The prestige, mobility, salary and perks of an AA are considerable, and the job is certainly not lacking in challenges.

So why? Rumors are rife around the office, and I have some ideas of my own. The AA is supposed to be the top person in the office, the one who orchestrates all aspects of the Senator's official activities, and the one person who has access to him at all times. Yet in the year and a half that I have been here, neither Ed nor his predecessor has had this sort of access to power. Nor has been any perceptible collegiality or consensual processing among the staffers under either AA, though Ed must certainly have tried to achieve it. There are some alignments and loose factions, but I have not seen, nor been a party to, any conversations or arguments in which ideas are constructed and negotiated. When George arrived last fall he attempted to hold seminars on Wednesday mornings, but they were constantly overtaken by events. Phil has done somewhat better with foreign policy/defense, partly by organizing on a military model, partly by having many old military hands in the Glenn office who are also more mature in age than the domestic policy people.

But the big stumbling block in the office remains the anomalous position of Mary Jane, and the access she has to the Senator. As political advisor it is her job to keep the Senator apprised of possible political risks and payoffs and their respective probabilities. MJ is nearly 50, a petite blonde, always very sleekly turned out; unmarried and Catholic. She is very wise in the ways of Ohio politics, Ohio politicians, and John Glenn. She demands, and often gets, a couple of hours on his schedule every day, though she is often pre-empted. I don't know if she is the Senator's strength or his millstone -- probably both.

Rumor is quick to appoint villains, and MJ is at the top of Rumor's list. One scenario has it that Ed quit because he could not wrest control of political power from MJ. Another is that MJ undermined Glenn's trust in Ed, so that he was left out of all decisions. Still another suggests that Ed tried a "It's me or MJ" ploy on Glenn and lost. I doubt that one -- it's not Ed's style, and even if it were, he wouldn't try it unless he thought he could win. Another questionable rumor says that Glenn found out that Ed knew about another staffer's plan to take a job elsewhere, and pronounced Ed's failure to tell him disloyalty and asked for his resignation. I have trouble with that one, too. Although I have little conversation with Glenn, and although he was a military man, firing someone that way seems uncharacteristically intemperate for him.

The rumors will continue, and bits of information will float out of the current, and someday there may be enough pieces to reconstruct the event. In the meantime, three days after Ed announced his resignation there was another staff meeting (I got a seat on the couch this time) at which Glenn announced that Phil would be the new AA. Phil is in his early fifties, with a little more girth than he wishes he had. He had a full career in
the military, and has an earned Ph.D. Some of the younger staffers make fun of his military scripts and rules, but I find a certain practicality to them. I like Phil very much; he is a charming conversationalist, well informed on many subjects, and not at all dogmatic or rigid. But I confess to smiling when a staff memo came around "from Senator Glenn" detailing the new organization of the office in terse paragraphs with 'selective underlining' -- one of Phil's favorite protocols.

My final observation: the validity of Goffman's Law [in hierarchical institutions the expressive order takes precedence over the practical order] may get an interesting test in the coming months. It has held up well in the first two AA s I've observed in Glenn's office.

* * *

Last Saturday I went with six youngsters (oldest 33) from the office to the wilds of the Cheat River in West Virginia for a day of river-rafting. It was great fun – lots of white-water, tumbled rocks and detritus from the flood last fall, dark green rhododendron climbing the steep sides of the gorge, wood thrush and peewee audible above the rush of the water. The raft I was on flipped over passing through one rapid and I had to swim out and rescue Chris – not from drowning (the water was swift, but shallow) but from panic. The scariest part of the trip was afterward, on the bus ride three miles up the side of the gorge on a little crust of road that was crumbling downhill.

The only damage I sustained was sunburn on my thighs because I wore shorts. We left at 3:30 in the morning to get up there, and got home at 10PM.

* * *

To my daughter Alys Henning, for her 22nd birthday

June 26, 1986

Sometime in February I stopped using the stereo Seth left here for me because it was making a constant frying and crackling noise. I figured it had gotten dusty or damaged, or that something had burned out inside it. It wasn't until we turned on the air conditioning in May that I discovered -- by jostling the plug in the outlet and blacking out my whole upstairs --that it was the fault of the wiring of the plug, not in the stereo system at all.

So now, on this hot steamy Saturday afternoon I write in air-conditioned comfort, listening to a Bach cantata from my own small stock of records. Looking about my work-space I see the quality of my life. At my feet lie dog hair, crumbs of mud from the bottom of my thong-sandals, a pushpin, two torn tractor-feed margin strips, a card with a note on it and a used printer ribbon.
Behind the support that connects the two ends of my worktable is a pile of computer paper, old phone books from Kent, my unpublished novel and some tablets and pages covered with my own handwriting. Beside the C-64 I see two pens, a screwdriver, a piece of pink quartz and a stone-with-a-hole-in-it, a dried rose, a glue-stick, and upside down blue glass jar, my rough wood diskette holder stuffed with unanswered letters and postcards, a candlestick holding a tuft of dried coiled grapevine tendrils and my sweaty glass of iced coffee.

A small black fan named “R.M. Banner” purrs from the bookcase just beyond the worktable to cool the TV-set monitor so it will not have seizures, and to my left the sun is blocked from coming into the room by a ragged piece of aluminum foil taped to the window, a white curtain, a philodendron sprawling from a hanging basket and a large, presently inert window-fan that is used when it is not hot enough to have the air conditioning on. Above me hangs a page-sized plastic fresnel lens, a stained glass tulip, and a small painting of a columbine on a piece of wormy chestnut.

Elsewhere in my attic home there are piles of books, a flat box with music spilling over the top, a heap of once-worn shorts, skirts and shirts, two baskets of clean laundry not put away, shoes scattered on a rumpled rug, a hopeless pile of TLS, Science News and Christian Century on top of my bedside chest, jostling my small radio, skin-lotion, alarm clock, notebooks, sketches and pens. The bed is unmade, with a pile of pillows and a tumble of sheets with Carole’s cat industriously grooming herself on top; also my purse, one book and one TLS, and an old man’s shirt I sometimes use for a pajama. There are also mirrors, paintings, prints, tapestries, photographs, plants, pots and pretty things, everything covered with a thin layer of dust.

Professionally my life is not much different. I am reasonably successful in a job I am not especially good at, in a city I do not like, in what I consider an uninhabitable climate. I do not make enough money to play the middle-class games necessary for comfort and satisfaction. At present I am on a collision course with periodontal problems because I am unwilling to give up the meager $50 a month leeway I have carved out of a very tight budget. I have neither the time nor the reserves of energy to do things that are important to me: reading, writing/thinking, playing music/composing, and playing with plants, trees, water, earth and four-legged creatures.

So I’m not sure that, even if I wanted to (which I don’t) I would be entitled to offer you, on the occasion of your 22nd birthday, any counsel on the conduct of your life. Still, having called you into being, I feel a certain obligation to explain why. Of course, I take credit only for your existence, not for who you are -- you have done that.

Among mathematicians (which you and I are not, my dear) a distinction is drawn between ‘ill-conditioned’ problems and ‘well-conditioned’ problems. Ill-conditioned problems are those in which small changes in conditions make large changes in outcomes. Life is generally considered to be an ill-conditioned problem, and people spend a lot of energy trying to psych

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out which small cheap changes -- buying a lottery ticket, falling in love, changing a hairstyle, taking a course in cake-decorating or karate, eating bran, meditating, etc. -- will make large desirable differences in their lives.

So I was taken aback this week, reading Pamela McCorduck's book *The Ultimate Machine*, by her notion that the most worthy thing computers could do for us would be to change living from its messy, uncertain, ill-conditioned state to a neat, predictable and well-conditioned process. Whoa! Not MY life, lady.

Perhaps the mathematicians befuddled her with their choice of words. It certainly sounds like a clear case of Good and Bad -- who wants to be ill-conditioned, ill-favored, or ill-mannered? But I think the misunderstanding goes deeper, and reflects an epistemological snarl that vexes the lives of all of us in the educated, affluent West: we do not distinguish between HOW we should live and WHY we should live.

This is an enormously complex problem, because we have another epistemological deficiency in thinking about this: we do not take into account the instrumentality of human knowledge.

Wait! Don't go away -- I'll explain. Instrumentality simply means usefulness, and what I mean by the instrumentality of knowledge is that our knowledge is clustered about -- indeed IS about -- things that are useful or valuable to us, and we tend to ignore information about things we don't value or see any use for.

This lands us smack in the middle of the shifting, treacherous ocean of Values, far from the solid ground of Materialism, Money and How-to, the only places we enlightened, success-oriented Westerners feel comfortable.

A substantial number of people elect to negotiate the waves and troughs of the sea of Values from the pseudo-solidity of the good ship Jesus, or the vessels of other religions. But others drown, because they have no baseline of goodness against which to measure their lives, no sense of why their lives are good and worthwhile. They believe that knowing HOW -- to make money, to play golf, to fly, to buy a house or choose a suit, to screw, to get something they want -- is all there is to life.

I have concluded, after 55 years of trying to get the hang of it, that the ‘How-to’ or utilitarian mode of living is not worth the candle. A good job, good money, good health, good sex, a good neighborhood, good marriage and a good retirement do not add up to a good life. Living one’s life in order to have children, so that they can have children, and on to the nth generation is also not good enough. I cannot stomach the ‘Do-it-for-Jesus’ approach, (and if Jesus is as great as he should be, he wouldn't be able to either) nor that life is merely preparatory exercises for admittance to Heaven. If there were a Heaven it would surely be filled with souls resentful of
the meanness, misery and brevity of their lives. And the unborn, so beloved of Right-to-Lifers, would probably be considered quite lucky.

So what is worth living for? People have always found, or invented, many answers for the question 'Why should I live?' A common choice is another person -- a personally significant other. It seems to me that is an easy way out, and in this time of disloyalty, not very reliable. But it does seem to be satisfying to many.

Some fall back on the notion of a ‘genius’ or ‘daemon’ that guides one’s life. The idea has an ancient and honorable history, and apparently, like Niels Bohr’s horseshoe, “works whether you believe in it or not” (which means that it always makes sense when applied retroactively).

I have always been mildly envious of those who seem to know from childhood what their mission in life is to be. But I also suspect such people don’t have much fun. In my religious years (aged roughly from 10 to 17) I used to pray fervently to be given the ability to believe all that Sunday school twaddle, knowing full well I could never accomplish such belief myself. But in all honesty, if you asked me point-blank what is the purpose of my life, or the purpose of life in the abstract, I would be pressed, and probably do some undignified backpedaling.

I did want to have children, not out of a sense of duty, but only, I think, because I had had a wonderful childhood, and because I had, and still have, the strong sense that life is good, and its goodness lies in newness, change, responsiveness and what I can only call expanding awareness. Parenthood did not work out quite the way I imagined it would, but I hasten to add that I am very grateful it didn't. I never considered the marriage of your father and me a failure. We achieved what we both wanted, which was to have some really great kids.

Have I had a good life? Yes, a wonderful life, and I think it will be yet more wonderful. What I have been able to do, and what I hope for you and Seth is to develop a reasonably responsive system that proceeds not toward a fixed destination but toward a better journey. Not much to go on? Maybe not. But durable, I think, and possible. And full of surprises and fun.

If there is any metaphor to be teased out of the story at the beginning of this letter it is that a responsive system must be securely connected to its power source. But the metaphor fails in a crucial way: the power source -- the source of goodness in human life -- is not exterior to ourselves: it is in the inventiveness of life itself, within our own storied selves.

* * *
The heat wraps around ankles and presses on skin as I leave the cool of the Hart Building at 6PM, and I feel moisture condensing on my hands and arms. This is the third day of temperatures over 90, and my first day back at the office since the Fourth of July. I spent the long weekend at home on Braddock Road, alternating gardening with chores like bills and correspondence. Yesterday at 4 PM it was 100°F at the back of the house, and last night it got down to 78°F. In spite of the air conditioning, which runs all the time in weather like this, I sleep poorly, spread out flat on my stomach. I have learned to keep drinking thin limeade full of ice to help me shed excess heat, but it means getting up frequently during the night.

My garden is fine. We have been eating yellow crookneck squash and green beans. I spend too much time pottering among the vegetables, marigolds and sunflowers when I get home in the evenings. I weed and water, pick off drying blossoms, transplant dill or basil to better locations. It is all I am good for after a day at the office; I feel defeated. When I start out in the morning I am full of ideas that I want to write, and by the time I get home in the evening I can't even think of what I wanted to say.

If I had the time and energy I would record the thousand little details I notice in a day. I would tell you about the ride on the subway car between the Capitol and the Hart Building with the attendant (you can't call him the driver because it's all programmed to stop and start, running on rails that have no junctions) wearing the standard Senate uniform of blue suit, white shirt and red tie, but this one has added one gold earring.

And I would tell you about the handsome young black Capitol policeman who sat on the seat opposite me and looked ruefully at his supper of cheeseburger, fries and fried apple pie in a cardboard carry-out tray and remarked that he guessed he's start bringing his dinner from home.

I might remember to tell you about the exhibit of high school artists, one from each Congressional district, which hangs in the underground corridor between the Capitol and the House office buildings. Some are amateurish, some wonderfully skillful, some fanciful, and some very strong. I might even confess that I am arrested every time by a painting of black lab that looks so much like my big dog Albert (who stayed behind in Kent when I came to DC) that I get an attack of homesickness.

Or I might tell you about the woman I saw in the Senate cafeteria. She had severely short hair combed absolutely smooth, a perfectly tailored immaculate white dress, and was cutting her
grilled cheese sandwich into dainty bites with a knife and fork. (I knew instantly she was a Republican.)

Or I could tell you about consulting with Annie Glenn about some of the questions we get from people: What is Senator Glenn's favorite dinner? His favorite prayer, hymn or Bible verse? Was he ever a Sunday School teacher, Boy Scout, DeMolay, Kiwanian? Did he ever participate in Boys' State? Study Latin?1

A few months ago we got a request for an Ohio recipe for the "Salute to America" cookbook being published by J.C. Penney. Ordinarily we shy away from plainly commercial enterprises, but I thought this might be one we would want to do, so I called the New York office and got more details. They would contribute $1000 to Senator Glenn's favorite charity, and wanted a recipe that had been a family favorite. I explained it to Annie and she thought we should do it.

"I know what. Let's send the mayonnaise chocolate cake. John loves it and our kids always asked for it on their birthdays."

A few days later, she brought me, with her shy smile, a copy of MUSKINGUM CHOCOLATE DEW CAKE all typed up and ready to send. She confirmed that they wanted the contribution to go to the Salvation Army, and I wrote the accompanying letter and sent off the recipe. Last week we got a copy of the cookbook with the recipe and a picture of the cake beautifully done up with chocolate curls on the top. I took it over to Annie's desk.

"Oh! Look at that! Doesn't that look good! I have to show this to John."

This week I had a new question to take to Annie: 'Did the Senator have any pets while he was growing up?'
"Yes. Ike and Mike, they were beagles and he took them rabbit-hunting with him. We always had pets when the children were young. I'd like to have a dog, but John says we travel too much."

MJ came by, with half of a Weight-Watchers fudgicle. "Only 54 calories!" Annie's eyes lit up and she took a bite. "Umm...good!"

Just then the buzzer on her phone sounded and she smiled. "That's my husband. I have to answer." [He is ready to go home, he'll stop by in a couple of minutes.] "I'll be ready," she tells him, then turns back to me. "Is there anything else?"

I had a couple more things -- the questionnaire about New Concord High School (now John Glenn High School) and the request for a chicken recipe.
"No, we never sent them one. You know how I like to make it? I just brown it and put a little water on it and cook it with a lid. It makes such good gravy."

And John Glenn appears, saying "Come on, let's go!" Annie put the half-eaten fudgicle in the wastebasket and picked up her tapestry bag. "We'll finish this next week."n

But of course I don't have time to write about all that.

1 - Chuck roast with potatoes, carrots and onions, but we don't say that -- too much cholesterol.
   - The Lord's Prayer, Amazing Grace, and the Ecclesiastes thing 'To everything there is a season'
   - Yes. No. No. No.
   - No. Yes, and hated it -- he passed only by promising the teacher that he wouldn't take the second year. But we don't say that either.
2 - Annie has controlled her stutter by speaking slowly and pausing until the word is ready. It is impossible not to notice the hesitations, but her friendliness and vitality make them quite inconsequential.

* * *

A questionnaire has been distributed to all the Senate staffers about health and fitness. Mostly they want to know if we would participate in exercise groups, stop-smoking classes or stress management programs. I find the whole thing objectionable. Why is it the responsibility of each of us individually to spend our money and our precious private time learning to manage stress in our jobs? Why don't we try for more humane processes in our workplaces, and try to reduce the sexism, unfair pay scales, inadequate parking and foul air from cigarette smoke? We seem always to assume that it is a personal deficit if one is stressed by a job, or by being unemployed. I don't want to be given what is good for me – I want the chance to participate in decisions about the conditions in which I work.

And I'm sick of working all day in cigarette smoke. Dale and Marty both smoke, and smoke more when they are under stress, which is most of the time. Marty tries to be considerate, but Dale is hopeless. He told me once, after I had asked him if he would mind not smoking when I was working with him in his office, that as long as he left the door open, the smoke wouldn't bother me. It is so typical of male smokers that I wasn't even surprised. John Glenn doesn't smoke, but has not moved to defend the majority of us from the stink produced by the minority.

Marty has had an extended flirtation with 'the Crunchies' -- the Natural Resources Defense Council. They offered her a job, but she has decided to stay on with Glenn, though she is still pursuing the Foreign Service and some possibilities with network TV. The Crunchies made her a very attractive offer, but Dale and the Senator came up with more money and the promise of the press secretary position next year when Dale leaves.
Dale wants to run for Congress himself. He intends to go back to Ohio after the election and establish residence, so that he can start his own career, perhaps by running for the Ohio legislature. He should have a decent chance -- he knows all the Democrats in Ohio, he has a good political sense, and he is a very good speaker. Glenn's office may not be a very exciting place after the election. Annie would like the next term to be the Senator's last; he will be 65 next week and 71 at the end of another term. Without the stimulation of having to keep voters happy for the next election, things may get pretty routine in the office.

This week, however, was far from tame. It started with John Glenn's sister Jean in a coma from an automobile accident. He had spent the weekend in Nashville doing the things one does for a family member -- insurance, doctors, seeing to her apartment and belongings. He didn't want any publicity but he got it anyway.

Then came the derailment and chemical spill and fire at Miamisburg. Decisions had to be made about what should be said, how it should be said, who should go, should it be with Metzenbaum or not, what should we ask of federal agencies, etc. There was also an oil spill near Lima, and a giant pothole swallowed a car in the middle of Columbus. ('The driver could not be reached for comment' said one news story.)

Then on Friday the four banks that had loaned Glenn a half million dollars each filed suit for a declaratory judgment against the FEC for questioning the legality of those loans. This was a stroke in Glenn's favor, but the banks hadn't bothered to tell the Glenn for President Campaign that they were going to do it. By 4PM the campaign had filed their own suit, while I was still typing (me because there was no one else to do it) a 16 page 'white paper' on the FEC treatment of the Glenn loans.

At about the same time there was a report that a Stealth aircraft (which no-one has seen) had crashed in California, and word came through that Ohio was about to lose its federal highway funds because they had not passed a 21-drinking-age law.

At 5:30 Friday I was distributing 23 copies of the MEDIA REVIEW (which ran to 118 pages this week) while waiting for the printer to chatter out the 16 pages of the white paper. Marty was struggling and cursing over formatting a speech for Dale, who was taking one phone call after another and smoking frantically.

Marty: I've changed my mind. I'm going to the Crunchies. I haven't called them yet to say I'm not taking the job, so I can still do it.

Dale: Too late. I just called them and told them I'm taking the job.
3 - people who would be called ‘Greens’ in Europe are here dubbed ‘Crunchies’ because of their quaint food preferences: raw vegetables and granola. This is probably a very local usage

* * *

In a fit of optimism, or hubris, or both, I bought a whole bunch of books, which I list here in the order in which I liked them (or how much of each one I read, which is the same thing).

* * *

Habits of the Heart (Robert Bellah and others) is a temperate and humane dissection of our secular – in the narrow sense of non-sacred – ideologies and values.

Black Mischief by David Berlinski is an irreverent and very sharp commentary on the magics and myths of science, mathematics and computers. The Triumph of Politics, by David Stockman. I think I am going to like what he has to say, but I got put off by his autobiography – too much zeal to impress the reader with his farmboy background. I suppose that, not unusually for most books, there isn’t enough substance to fill enough pages to make a substantial book, it had to be fattened to justify the price. I will read the good parts, especially in light of the recent accusation that Stockman was ‘had’ by the Pentagon folks who fudged the figures they gave a newcomer. The Ultimate Machine by Pamela McCorduck -- disappointing, soft, cute and sugary.

The Social Brain by Michael Gazzinaga. This one is my own fault. I was looking for a book about the social mind. This isn't it.

* * *

July 27, 1986

I try to get to the C-64 early in the day, before my attic rooms become unbearably hot. But I am a great putter-off and putterer, and so it is nearly noon on this Sunday morning. I have this morning gone to the grocery store, pulled weeds from the garden, given Isabell a bath, tinkered with the fans and curtains to try to keep the house cool, carried out the trash, tidied up the floor of my bedroom, made and consumed a sandwich of cheese, green pepper, tomato, mayonnaise and a munchie of peanut butter and chocolate bits on a puffed-rice cookie, along with two glasses of iced coffee generously laced with Hershey's syrup, read the Outlook section of the Post (and was suitably alarmed and/or outraged) and done more calculations on my fiscal expectations.
If endless days of 90° temperatures and 95 percent humidity were not enough to make me miserable, the last exercise accomplished it. I never expect to be rich, nor indeed do I especially want to be. But I stubbornly and unreasonably keep hoping to be financially competent, and to have enough to live decently among my neighbors and have access to the goods and services that are important to me. I think my needs are fairly modest, and that my skills and performance are good enough to be able to earn enough to meet them. This competence seems always just out of reach. My present salary of $20,000 a year yields me $14,200 after deductions.

And the picture, from the tax bill that is expected to come out of the conference committee, looks even bleaker. My measly $20,000 will be taxed at 27%, which will give me after deductions, barely $13,000. In fact, the way I figure it, I would be ahead to request a pay cut to $19,900, which would give me an annual take-home salary of $14,700. At the 27% tax rate I would need $24,000 to take home that much.

When I left Kent I made some promises to myself, in the expectation that I could look forward to have some disposable income for the first time in 15 years. The first thing I promised was that I would never forget what it is like to be poor. I recognize that poverty has been my choice, yet it is fair to say that such a 'choice' arises out of a myriad of choices, decisions and values of my personal and social being (I once failed an exam to become a life-insurance agent not from lack of knowledge or skills but because I didn't show any ambition for prestigious housing, expensive automobiles or fashionable vacation-spots) and not from a single 'now-I-will-be-poor' decision node. But knowing this does not make it easier. Poverty hurts in every aspect of living, from ill-fitting shoes to the loss of hope for a better tomorrow. I had a particularly bad time with my conscience over whether I had the right to inflict my lifestyle of poverty on Seth and Alys and ask them to share in the scarcity in which I chose to live. I was not so much concerned that they might be damaged as that I knew that their peers were being given stylish clothes, cars and careers, and that my choice might restrict their choices of life companions and careers.

* * *

I am enchanted, delighted, transported -- by Handel's Alessandro being broadcast on WETA this evening. There was a time when I would have believed that my ability to respond this way to music was either a supernatural gift, or an accident of the arrangement of neurones in my particular brain. But the former rests on some improvable and wildly improbable axioms, and the latter explains nothing, furthermore, both are tainted in no small measure by self-interest.

I can't make sense of any of the supernatural or 'spiritual' schemes proposed by the Great Men of the past. If telepathy ever worked, it clearly worked so much worse than talking that it got selected out of the genome in fairly short order. If Mozart's symphonies were dictated to him by some deity, it had to be a minor, capricious, parochial one -- a definition that fits the Christian God pretty well, come to think of it.
Individual particularity is a more seductive notion. Even if acquired by chance, it is pleasant to think that one has a special set of brain cells that make one 'musical' and different from ordinary mortals. It is also a common metaphor in the musical world, under the name of 'talent.' It also rests on one our most useful conceptual fictions -- the black box.

There is another metaphor for the drive to do music, that of a personal need or imperative. This is often founded on a supernatural premise, but it doesn't have to be. I've used it myself in the past. At the time I wrote some of my best music I entertained and encouraged the feeling that the things I was writing had a will of their own and were pressing me to realize them.

And as much as I am aware that music, prose and paintings are social events, my own experience in creating the first two is that there are individual dimensions to these events, especially in time: whatever music or text one doesn't get written down within a fairly short time of conceiving the idea of it, will never exist. This is a source of frustration for me here in Washington, where I see every day thousands of things I would like to write about and cannot.

Yet the paradox with which I live is that although my personal philosophical/epistemological explanation of the way the world is locates knowledge, language, music and art in the socius, it makes me socially an outsider, with neither the support of others nor the common conversations that connect me to others, and provide 'reality checks' in the form of feedback for my ideas.

So here I am, aged 55, uncommitted to any profession, uncommitted to any other person, homeless (in the sense of not having a place where I am 'at home', though I am at home with a number of good friends) living and working in a place tolerable only as long as I believe it is temporary, trying to figure out what to do with the rest of my life.

Last Saturday my housemate Carole took me to a two-hour class on how to get grants. It was well done, by a lively black woman with lots of practical suggestions. The second hour of the class was given to class members telling what they wanted a grant for. I was rather surprised to hear myself saying that I wanted to write an opera.

I have finally made some vacation plans, for two weeks starting August 23. I will visit friends in Columbus, my cousin Martha at Marblehead on Lake Erie, my 95-year-old aunt in Wilmington, other friends at a cottage on Lake Piedmont, then go to Kent for the remainder of the week after Labor Day. I will be driving alone with Isabell, and will travel mostly in the early mornings.

I intend to relax, talk and argue with my friends and relatives, swim, read and ramble in whatever wildernesses present themselves. In Kent I will do as much disposing of things stored there as I can. I also hope to get a better printer for the C-64, so that you don't have to struggle
with this quaint typeface.

* * *

Out of the stubborn sticky yellow clay of Virginia I have raised a dozen tall sunflowers -- ten of them made it to 12 feet tall before they bloomed and the weight of their heads bowed them down. They grow in the narrow strip of ground between the blacktop driveway and the concrete terrace at the back (east) of the house, and they cast a fine shade in which to sit and watch the beans growing on the dog-fence, and the mockingbird prancing from quince-tree to fence to the small bird-pond half hidden under marigolds and globe basil. We are eating beans, tomatoes, broccoli, green peppers, basil and dill; the first cantaloupe is a week away; butternut squash are turning gold, and we will have half a dozen spaghetti squash in a few weeks. I also have a fine bed of four-o’clocks, portulacas in clashing colors, great bloody amaranthus torches against the brick wall of the house, pink and white petunias cascading from two pots on the back porch steps, and marigolds, everywhere.

It helps a lot, having even this small garden. I can potter about in it in the evening, when I am too tired and hot for anything else, pulling weeds, mashing bean-beetle grubs, picking tomatoes, dosing plants with fertilizer-water, or just wandering about and looking.

* * *

AUGUST 1986

10 August 1986

They are smiling, these mustachioed young men in a wire photo picture in the New York Times, from under identical paper hats printed with pictures of their martyr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his daughter, Miss Benazir Bhutto. They intend to take over the government of Pakistan and right with bloodshed the wrongs they have suffered. The Pakistani government, in the meantime, is working night and day to ‘develop a nuclear capability’, and they don’t mean generating electricity.

In Washington D.C., smiling young men lacking colored paper hats, but with CIA top security clearances have ‘blacked out’ -- for Congressional aides -- hearings about the sale of nuclear materials to Pakistan. Members of Congress with any expertise in nuclear matters are rare, of course, and most depend on professional aides for guidance. This is the way we make nuclear policy. (George says that in the whole Congress there are two Members with graduate degrees in science or engineering, and maybe a couple of dentists. Ron says ‘so what?’ they’re elected representatives, and not supposed to be specialists.)
On the same day as the Times article, the Washington Post ran an article about C³I -- C-cubed-I -- or the Command, Control, Communications & Intelligence network. This is a Pentagon Productions extravaganza designed to allow the U.S. to ‘prevail’ in an extended atomic war. It has only cost $20 billion so far, and has some wonderful Buck Rogers toys for the heroes-to-be of the Holocaust. Also on that same day the Glenn office received a large black umbrella that revealed, when opened, a large number of nickel-sized holes. The accompanying card, signed by the Physicians for Social Responsibility, read: THIS IS A STRATEGIC DEFENSE INITIATIVE UMBRELLA. ALTHOUGH IT IS 95% EFFECTIVE AGAINST RAIN, IT WILL NOT KEEP YOU DRY.

Then there is the Stealth bomber, invisible alike to radar, Senators and taxpayers. It is so sacred that even the amount of money it costs must be kept secret, according to the Pentagon. Several evenings later, while waiting for the 17M bus across from the East entrance to the Pentagon I observed a woman with bleached-blonde curls, heavy makeup, spike heels and a short flouncy dress with crinolines and a low decolletage going up the steps and into the Pentagon. For a long time this baffled me, until one evening I missed the 6:45 bus and saw several more women in similar get-ups, some escorted by more or less paunchy, balding middle-aged men in checkered shirts and string ties. Square dancers, probably generals and their wives.

* * *

Now comes Joseph Newman with his energy-increasing machine. That he managed to get a Congressional hearing for his contraption is an index of the confusion of interests and beliefs that drive our decision processes. The hearing was called by Sen. Thad Cochrane (R) of the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, possibly at the behest of Tom Kindness, Glenn’s Republican opponent in the fall election. That interest betrayed by Kindness putting out a press release about the machine, and turning up at the hearing, apparently in the hope of confronting Glenn and getting some free publicity. If the Democrats take the Senate in the election, Glenn will probably become Chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee.

The interest of Mr. Newman is pretty clear: he wants to make a lot of money. He has hired a high-powered PR firm, a team of hot-shot lawyers and a stable of testimonial-reciting ‘scientists’ to promote his Wonderful Invention. It is a black box of an electric motor that produces, he asserts, a greater output of mechanical (shaft) energy than the input of electrical energy it runs on.

Not so, says the Patent Office and the National Bureau of Standards -- we can’t find any measurable increase. “Fraud,” screams Newman and lawyers, “unfair tests because the oil companies have paid off the government and the Congress to keep this scientific breakthrough off the market.”

Len, Glenn’s staff advisor for all matters scientific (and the expert who drafted the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty) wrote a statement for Glenn to read at the hearing. It was calm, fair, a little
wordy but well thought through. Glenn didn't use it. Instead he asked Newman if he would let his device be tested at an independent research agency like Battelle in Columbus. Indignant protestations about the brilliance of Newman's breakthrough and the sacredness of his rights as an inventor, and a convoluted verbal slither that could only be read as a 'No.'

Later, when Dale took on a radio talk-show host who featured Newman accusing Glenn of 'deriding his invention' Len was put out: "Dale should have let me do that," he said. Ease off, I told him -- Newman's invention is not scientific, it's a media event.

Despite all the ruminations of the armchair scientists on the mysteries of the 1st and 2nd Laws of Thermodynamics, the question of whether Newman's machine 'creates' additional energy through an added magnetic field, the question is moot: no-one but Newman has been able to find any additional energy.

In more abstract terms, however, Newman's machine is a profit-enhancing machine. He needs government recognition -- i.e. the publicity surrounding the rejection of his patent application -- to generate a number of people who believe he has been unfairly treated and that he has really built a better mousetrap. These people can then be milked for investment in his company or be persuaded to buy his gimmick in the hope of reducing their electric bills. Nothing new about that; P.T. Barnum would be proud of him. Nothing honorable, either, though it is one of the fundamental principles of capitalism.

* * *

In the course of assembling the MEDIA REVIEW each week I read or scan a large number of newspapers as well as TV and radio editorials sent out by Ohio stations. The recent editorials about South Africa have been particularly instructive. Many of them say, in arch but unmistakable terms, that we must not let humane or moral considerations interfere with our national interests in South Africa.

It's enough to make me want to turn in my belly-button. I have more sympathy for ignorant thugs in funny hats than I do for educated asses, smug generals, quack inventors with perpetual-motion machines, or well-fed yuppie moralists who believe they know what is good, useful and true for the rest of us.

But then how shall we live together? The paradox thickens as our social groups get larger; our shared values are progressively diluted in larger populations. If people cannot know enough to protect themselves from exploitation by zealots in funny hats, generals with wholly holey holy umbrellas, inventors with money-making machines and patriots who put national interests ahead of human dignity and moral indignation, can we survive? The really scary part is the push to impose, from the top down, a set of expediencies as moral values.

Moral values are of course expediencies -- but they are social expediencies. They are values that work to lubricate the thousands of social interactions that keep us alive. It is wrong --
inexpedient -- to kill one another, to steal, cheat or do damage. It is good to protect, share, trust, help, teach and heal. But these classic moral values serve the larger interests of smaller communities. What we are seeing now is the desire of a few successful men to make whole nations subject to the expediencies of their petty, personal interests.

The Reagans, Falwells, and Meeses of our day are, through their power, arrogance and wealth, falling headlong into precisely the evil of communism they claim to resist -- taking moral responsibility away from the individual and giving it to the state. For it is only in the internalization of the common good -- the moral values of our communities -- that the individual is fully human and the community is fully humane. And without the participation and consent of all individuals in the arguments and agreements of value-making, we create slavery. At best this is the benevolent paternalistic socialism of East Germany and at worst it is the brutal bloodthirsty autocracy of South Africa.

It is here, too, that the dangers of the anti-abortion movement are revealed. To take the moral decision to have or not to have an abortion away from the individual and give it to the state is a first decisive step toward fascistic socialism.

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SEPTEMBER 1986

September 13, 1986

There are no job descriptions in Glenn's office. My early offer to write one for what I did received an "Oh-that-might-be-a-nice-idea" response from the then AA and an "OK-but-why-bother?" response from Dale. So I drafted one I have never shown to anyone. Given the wide disparities in pay, privileges, responsibilities, authority, knowledge, know-how, attention to tasks, writing, talking, listening, conversational skills, social competence, self-respect, confidence, cognitive styles, experience, physical stamina and wardrobe, it may be just as well.

Yesterday I arrived at the office at 8:05 AM, knowing that I had at least three hours of work getting the clips ready for the MEDIA REVIEW. I do the paste-ups and make the lists, as well as clip the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor, Washington Post, Plain Dealer and a few smaller papers we get here in Washington. Julie, the press intern in Columbus, clips and telecopies the major state papers, except the Akron Beacon Journal, which is clipped in the Cleveland office. As clippings are generated, I file them by categories/issues, making sure every separate piece of newsprint has the name of the paper and the date on it. On Thursday I start taking out each folder and laying out the clippings on one of two matrices I made, one for standard letter size, and one that will reduce to letter size at 75%. This is very time consuming, and I rarely have all the pages done by Thursday evening.
This week I had about half of the folders yet to be pasted-up and copied, but I had done the Log of Media Events, and the list of press releases, and I thought I could just about finish it by my target time of 11:30, to get it to the Copy Center in time to make sure it got done that day. Because I am usually the first person to arrive in the morning, I plan to take time to make the first pots of coffee when I get there, but yesterday I was pleased to find that Bill, MJ's secretary already doing it.

Less pleased, however, to find that he had put cold water in the pot for tea water. The 'burners' on the coffee-maker are keep-warm units only, and will not heat cold water to tea-making temperature in less than three hours. The hot tap water, though, is hot enough to reach critical tea-making temperature in about 30 minutes. I protested to Bill that I had hoped for a cup of tea before noon, and that we should put hot water in the pot.

"No," he said, "my chemistry teacher in high school told me that cold water heats faster than hot water."

I told him that was nonsense, and that common sense should tell that the more you have to heat something, the longer it's going to take. Then I went on, careless of the fragility of his knowledge and the obtuseness of his safe little world.

"You know," I told him, heedless, "it's important to question everything and measure things against your own experience."

He was hurt. "I thought it was important to believe what your teachers tell you," he countered, neatly summing up one of the largest obstacles to education in this country.

I settled down to work on the clippings with scissors and tape, and when I had one folder done I took the sheaf of untidy flappin g pages to copier. Pamela was already there, copying a letter to be included in some materials for the Armed Services Committee session. Phil walked by, looked at a copy that was streaked and too dark and said to her "That's not clean enough. Take it down to the Copy Center and have them do it."

Mindful that the Copy Center is two floors down on the other side of the building, I said to Pamela "You don't have to do that -- set it lighter."

"What number should I use?" she asked, looking at the scale from 1 to 10.

"Whatever works."

"But what number is that?"
"It doesn't matter -- move it down a couple of notches and try it. If it doesn't look good, change it again."

"Maybe I'd better take it downstairs." I grabbed the light/dark knob pulled it down a little and pushed the copy button.

"Oh, that's perfect!" said Pamela. "What number is that? I'll write it down so I know next time."

[Another anomaly of our educational system -- the every-event-can-be-expressed-numerically syndrome.]

The paste-ups went slowly. The phones kept ringing with Ohio radio stations wanting to talk to Senator Glenn about his views on the death penalty for drug dealers. I started to get anxious. I also had letters to be written and auction requests to do, and I needed to get some information from Annie about a speech she will give at the end of the month. Julie sent a big batch of clippings and cartoons over the telexcopier. There was an article about the FEC lawsuit on the bank loans from the Presidential campaign that needed to be distributed promptly.

I took it to the copier and made six copies and carried them around -- Senator Glenn, Phil, Ron, MJ -- the Kindness file and the clip file. The flimsy from the telexcopier I put on Dale's chair. I knew Dale was probably sitting down in the Senate Chef (the carryout) writing a speech for the weekend. I checked the Senator's calendar, and it was true, so I knew I would have to type it and format two versions -- one for the Senator to speak from and a press version.

I kept working at top speed. Annie called me with information about her speech. At 11 o'clock the clips pages were ready. I counted them and checked them for orientation (sideways pages must have the top of the text to the left) Dale arrived just then, beaming over the speech he had written.

After a week of discussions and arguments Glenn had decided to vote against the confirmation of Rehnquist as Chief Justice, and he had agreed to announce his decision at this speech before the Ohio Democratic Party.

Dale was bursting. "Metz is going to introduce him, so I have 'Howard, I want you to know that when the Senate votes next week, I will stand beside you, and I will also vote my conscience -- against the confirmation of William Rehnquist as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.' That should bring down the house."

"Great," said Marty, "What do you have about Danilov?"

Dale pulled out the last yellow page. "Listen to this...." But before he can read what he has written, Ken comes by and says "You'll have to change it -- they just released Danilov to the
American Embassy."

"No kidding?" Dale turned the TV to CNN and watched. I told him I was taking the MEDIA REVIEW down to the Copy Center and then going on to lunch. He was already scribbling and without looking up, said "Fine."

* * *

Rainy Saturday, October 4, three weeks later. Lest this conjure up for you an autumnal mood – the tang of wet leaves, a light wind edged with chill, the quiet rattle of rain in the eaves and the comfort of corduroy and hot chocolate -- let me disabuse you. The temperature is 85°, the humidity 94%, no-rainy day sounds can surmount the roar of the 21" fan in the window, and my comfort is a pair of shorts and a cotton singlet, and iced orangeade. The rain is a fraud anyway. It hasn't rained hard enough to dampen anything under the trees, and it is stopping.

The last two weekends have gone to housekeeping and extensive remodeling of my wardrobe. Carole took me on a tour of the good thrift shops, and for less than $100 I now have a suit, two skirts, a dress, three blouses and a pair of jeans and one of cords, all of which fit decently. Of course I haven't been able to wear anything, because it's too goddam hot.

Work has been very heavy. In order to get everything done I have to put in 10 hour days. In addition to the MEDIA REVIEW, the VIP and informational letters, I have written several speeches for Annie Glenn in the last few weeks. She goes out to make speeches when John Glenn has to stay in Washington to vote. She made a big hit with the speech for the 150th anniversary of Muskingum College, and got quoted in the Columbus Dispatch.

It has been an interesting fall, and I am frustrated to the point of madness by not being able to chronicle it all. The Administration is shameless: they should have been ashamed of vetoing the South Africa sanctions, of trading Danilov, of insisting on budget cuts to welfare programs, and of Poindexter's 'disinformation' caper.

The last I find particularly unsavory. This is an administration that promotes lie-detector tests, state religion, drug testing, ideological criteria for Supreme Court nominees, and that routinely accuses journalists of 'liberal bias' in reporting. The meta-ideology informing these behaviors we have seen before: The End Justifies the Means. It is the most insidious and destructive epistemology that men have ever constructed. What is 'disinformation' but lying? And is it justified only because Qadaffi is such a bad guy? (The old Cowboy Western movie morality: the badder the bad guys, the badder the things we are justified in doing to them.)

But finally we come down to the question: Where shall our loyalties be directed -- to our principles or to our neighbors? To me there is no contest. Loyalty to principles gave us the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Holocaust, the Soviet purges and gulags, Jonestown and
Vietnam, and it is packaging Central America and the Middle East for our next gifts. It is curious that the teacher of the Christians was unequivocal: love your neighbor as yourself. I guess what we have to do is reach for principles that embrace the welfare of people, not principles that are directed toward some socially constructed principles. Truth, Justice, Liberty, Purity, Charity, Faith, Loyalty, Patriotism, Legality, Holiness, Capitalism, Socialism, etc. are all tools that can -- and will -- be used for oppressing troublesome neighbors.

* * *

At the table next to me in the cafeteria a group of young staffers were playing a card game. It took me a while to figure out how it worked, but I was fascinated by the conversation. One of them read from a card "You are house-sitting for your neighbor, and have his car keys. Your car breaks down one day when you have to get to an important meeting. Would you use his car without his permission?" The next player answered at length, justifying his 'yes' answer. Two other players then threw down red cards bearing (I managed to see) pitchforks. Another player hesitated, fingering a blue card with a white ring on it (halo?) Others warned her "No, that's wrong. You should never take another person's car without permission."

So that's the game. The person with the largest number of red cards goes to hell, while the blue-card holders win the game. Whatever.

* * *

Having recovered (barely) from my two week vacation I am already planning some other trips this fall, including a trip to Kent to vote and on to Columbus for the victory party on Election Day, then Thanksgiving with my brother and his family in Hartford. I will spend Christmas in Washington, but go to California the first two weeks of January to see the kids.

Sorry about the long waits between letters. I have even less time this fall because I am taking a proofreading course at the USDA grad school on Tuesday evenings. I get physical training along with it. I jog to the Capitol South Metro station (almost half a mile) run down the escalator, ride three stops, run up the escalator, jog 200 paces along Independence Avenue, run up the steps, dash 120 paces along a corridor (back toward the Metro station) scramble down a flight of stairs and sprint 90 more paces to the classroom. I carry 20 lbs. of books, notebooks and dictionary, plus my usual purse and gear. It is always hot, and I am always hungry and tired. But the class is rather fun, if only for the students who want a rule for everything, and who get querulous over the difference between 'affect' and 'effect'.

* * *

I had some nice drives around Ohio. I saw the oil tank in Fostoria on which Jesus is supposed to make nocturnal appearances; I stopped at Flint Ridge and wandered along the shady trails past the flint pits, under tall oak and beech trees. I spent three days at Lake Piedmont and caught a fish that was too small to keep. I did most of what I set out to do in Kent, and I got a new printer which you see here. The tails of letters actually hang below the lines, and it is capable of a lot of tricks the old one wouldn't do, but I haven't figured out how to make it do
them, and EasyScript doesn't know either.

It was distressing and amazing to see my Aunt Marjorie -- 95, almost blind and getting deaf, her life seems so circumscribed, though she doesn't seem to be uncomfortable. She showed me some scrapbooks she was making about David (her son, deceased) for his stepsons, whom she considers her grandsons. She had been putting things in it that she couldn't really see and asked me what they were. One of them was a Christmas card from my parents in 1967. I told her what it was and she took it out. She is still trying to work on genealogies and asked me to put one of her correspondents in touch with one of my Arnold cousins.

I only stayed a couple of hours; I couldn't see what good I could do in more time, and I was pretty tense, not knowing how much of what I was saying was getting through to her. She is being well looked after by an old friend who owns the shop below her apartment.

Aunt Marjorie was always my favorite aunt. She never had a decent marriage, any money to speak of, or recognition for what she accomplished, or any of the other things most of think we need to be happy. Yet she was always cheerful, loved games and stories. She was always able to cope (when guests arrived unexpectedly she made more gravy "out of the standpipe") and she managed what she had with resourcefulness and dignity.

Isabell reports that she liked visiting Marblehead best of all. In Columbus there were two cats, one as large as Isabell, and big dogs everywhere else we went. Coming back to DC through West Virginia along Rte. 250 (I can't resist those blue highways) we stopped at a roadside rest area where Isabell refused to get out of the car, terrified by chickens foraging around the trash can.

* * *

birthday letter to my son Seth Henning

September 30, 1986,

It isn't strictly speaking accurate to say I caught the fish, although I was holding the pole to which it was attached, and I reeled it up to the boat. Ted was the one who pulled it out of the water, looked at it and said "Nice bass, but unfortunately just a little too small." He disengaged it from the lure he had put on my line earlier and tossed over the side of the boat.

I thought it looked 10 inches long, but I didn't even get a good look at it. Ted and I were trolling down along the western bank of the south end of Lake Piedmont. It was late morning on a bright cool day; the woods were dark green, slightly dusty, bordered with goldenrod and
sparsely festooned with Virginia creeper already turning scarlet and purple. Ted caught a
half-rotted tree branch, a bunch of hydrilla and a lure lost by another fisher. My fish didn't
matter because for dinner we had barbecued chicken, white sweet corn fresh from a local farm,
green beans from Swanny's garden and a blueberry pie I made from fresh berries and a
makeshift crust cobbled out of the available shortening (margarine) and pancake mix.

Still, I came away wondering. If I had held and handled the fish, would I have thrown it back?
Quite likely, I suppose. I am very conscious of my responsibilities not only to the law of the land
and the expectations of my friends and neighbors, but also of the value of living things. It
doesn't matter, of course, because I wasn't fishing to catch fish, nor to prove my skill, cunning or
luck at fishing. I was only there for the personal, selfish pleasure of the moment.

So I don't know that I have any expertise (skill, cunning, luck) that qualifies me to offer you
advice on your 21st birthday, or even to answer your question. But I don't let much deter me, so
my answer is: No, it's not wrong to wait for someone you love -- it would be wrong not to wait.
The 'lots of good fish in the sea' mentality denies the worth and uniqueness of individuals, and
reduces human relationships to a flea-market economy in which we sell off what we've lost
interest in and buy new junk, knowing that when we tire of it, we can trash it.

One of the best things about loving another person is that you can stop seeing her (or him) as
another fish in the sea and become aware of her uniqueness. This in turn makes you more
aware of yourself, and how you are different from -- and similar to -- other people. Many people
get trapped by this effect, though, and go from person to person in search of the perfect jewel
for their navels. So I think it is important to keep pushing oneself to make the experience of
loving one person expand outward and include others, and not get smitten with how one person
enhances the beauty of your own belly-button.

But the trickiest thing about human relationships, and the one thing on which most of them
stand or fall, is trust. Trusting means having shared expectations about outcomes, and a
shared set of criteria by which to judge them. Trusting means giving up some autonomy to the
other; trusting means risking loss. Trust has to be earned and learned, in thousands of small
and large transactions between people, and it is very fragile. Years of trust can be shattered by
one small betrayal. Waiting for someone you love through a time of separation requires a lot of
trust -- in yourself as well as the other person -- and trust in the strength and importance of your
love.

So my advice comes down to: Give it a try. Work hard at learning to trust each other and at
developing shared values and expectations. And try to be gracious if things don't work out.

The Spider Grandmother of the Hopi tribe gave two rules for the conduct of life that reflect, in
more abstract form, the above principles. She says ‘Don't go around hurting each other’ and
'Try to understand things'. Sound advice, if fraught with paradox and practical difficulties. We have, at best, a very limited view of the consequences of our actions, and with the best will in the world, go around hurting others all the time. Air pollution and acid rain are obvious examples; cheap electronic equipment from the sweatshops of Singapore and Malaysia are less apparent; saving whales and wiping out the livelihood of Eskimo tribes borders on paradox; every day thousands of unintended consequences of human actions remain unobserved.

Understanding is the great unending journey of human beings. It is a lonely pilgrimage, although there are many well-traveled roads, and many importunate travelers who believe that their understandings are the way the world is. If you can work out your understandings with another person at a relatively young age, I think you can get better at workable understandings for life. I think that's how marriage is supposed to work. (I have no first-hand experience.) It doesn't, in our market-economy, male-dominated society. The traditional marriages I see are based on one person -- usually the man, but not always -- imposing his understandings on the other. I suspect that in an ideal world, people should mate for life at about age 15, before our understandings, beliefs and values get calcified and turn to armor. I don't mean to suggest that you are already too old, only to advise you to try to spot places where your understandings are already petrified and monitor them for consequences you wouldn't feel good about.

Enough of this stuff. I am having a hard time getting caught up after my vacation. My next letter is far behind schedule, my rooms are a mess and I am frustrated by having so little time to do things I care about. Carole took me shopping last weekend at some good second-hand shops, and I got a lot of new clothes that fit. I am trying to save money for a trip to the West Coast after Christmas.

At choir practice last week one of the altos was showing off a picture of her dog, a 'uncut' Doberman. I took one look, and knew, at last, what Albert is. I had never seen the normal ears and tail of a Doberman. Next time you see one, imagine Albert's ears and tail on it, and tell me if you think I'm right. Albert is fine, by the way. He nearly broke my heart by coming over and putting his head on my lap every time I sat down. The house is looking good -- Bob has redone the downstairs bathroom. I cleared out a lot of stuff from my room upstairs, but there's still a lot to do.

By the time you get this you will already be 21, and have discovered that it isn't very different. You should be proud of who you have made of yourself so far. Just keep up the good work.

* * *
The 99th Congress has already faded from our memories. We can't quite resolve the images of the last frantic days -- news releases that couldn't be released until the bill actually passed, reporters from Ohio papers wanting to know how Glenn voted last spring on funding for a construction project at Wright-Pat, the extended discussions and phone calls over the "cover-up" of a minor release of radon gas a Fernald last spring,* a fresh round of "What does Senator Glenn think of Star Wars (SDI)?" and all the background scrambling to get speeches ready and Media Availabilities scheduled for campaigning back in Ohio.

There were also the daily uncertainties. The Senator is going to the Lima Tank Plant Dedication; the Senator is not going to Lima. He is not going to Cincinnati; Len will go. No, the Senator will go and Len will be available by phone – and call the hotel and make sure there is a phone in the room. No, Len will go with the Senator. Can we make the 3 o'clock Riding Page?

My doubts, at 2:48, about the last are overridden by Marty, who tackles the copier herself. It promptly runs out of paper. The replenishment, hastily thrust in, causes a paper jam. The sheet-feeder malfunctions and the printing is skewed on the page, and finally it is discovered that the collator was not turned on. At 2:58 we have a hopelessly jumbled stack of poor copies. The Riding Page leaves empty-handed.

Marty has been uncomfortably positioned in the middle, trying to reconcile the constantly shifting schedules proposed by the campaign office in Columbus with the requirements of Kathleen (the Senator's scheduler here) for rational paths from one point to another:

...from Port Columbus to Burke Lakefront to the Senior Center on Mayfield Road to downtown Lorain, stopping at NASA Lewis on the way back ... or would it be better to fly into Lorain, or Cleveland Hopkins, and could the TV interview in Painesville be taped Tuesday morning instead of Monday afternoon?...

Mary Jane has requirements, too: "The Senator just has to make these phone calls Friday afternoon. Yes, he has to go to that rally – Mayor Whosis was one of his biggest supporters in the 1980 campaign."

Marty also had to clean up a number of messes made by the Columbus campaign staff, who, despite her prodding, dragged their feet over setting up regional editorial boards for the smaller newspapers until very late, and Marty had to organize getting the letters about them out on Friday afternoon. At 4:30 Marty gave me the finished letter, which had been proofread by Dale, MJ and me, to make 300 copies. While I did that she rounded up Lewis, Elaine and Ken to
volunteer to help stuff, seal, and stamp envelopes. As soon as I had 50 copies done they started to work. At about the second batch Lewis noticed that the Area Code for the campaign office phone number was wrong -- 514 instead of 614. Everything ground to a halt.

Correcting the error and running off new copies was no problem. The problem was the 100 letters that were already stuffed and sealed. They couldn't be opened without damaging the envelopes and the address labels couldn't be removed without tearing them. There had been no order (alphabetical) to the stuffing, so we couldn't just run off a new set of just those labels, and to run the whole set and put them on a whole new set of envelopes would have taken, conservatively, an extra two hours. It had taken me four hours to run them off and put them on envelopes the first time. Furthermore, we were out of campaign envelopes. We appealed to the Washington campaign office to bring us more envelopes, and got whining: "I'm the only one here, and besides, we don't have very many envelopes." Ken volunteered to run over and get the envelopes while the rest of us cut the labels off the stuffed envelopes with scissors so we could reuse them by taping them onto new envelopes. We did manage to finish by just before 6, but Marty was near collapse.

The week had other crises. The telecopier ran out of paper, and the Senate Stationary Store didn't have any. Peggy borrowed a roll from Sen. Boschwitz' s office next door; I took one look at it and said "It won't work -- ours is a coated paper." I was right. Peggy then appealed to Bingaman's office, who had some of the right kind. Several computer terminals froze up and the system had to be rebooted. To keep from losing the document I was working on I had to move it to files and back again, then help Marty save her document. Dale asked me to come in to the office on Columbus Day (Monday) to type a speech for Tuesday, telling me I could take Tuesday morning off. Monday morning he called to say the speech wouldn't be ready until 2 o'clock; I went and did it, but there was no way I could take Tuesday morning off -- the week was already a day short.

I was quite right, of course. I got progressively more unraveled as the week went on. The weather turned hot again, I made the mistake of taking the bus and Metro on Tuesday, the day I have my class at the Department of Agriculture. My front teeth and lower jaw started hurting from an infection that spread to my tongue and made me miserable. Kaiser said it wasn't their problem, go to a dentist. The dentist said he couldn't do anything until the inflammation subsided. I just toughed it out until the weekend, when I licked it by sleeping 11 hours a day and drinking a lot of orange juice.

My turn at the Terrible Typo came last Thursday at 7:30 PM after I had been there since 7:45 AM, Dale discovered two typos on the last page of a speech I had typed and prepared 40 press copies plus a double-spaced copier-enlarged version for the Senator to read from. One typo was an extra period at the end of a sentence, and the other was 'nurshing' for 'nursing'. Dale thought we should run a corrected last page, then take all 40 copies apart and replace the page. I vetoed that -- the computer text would have had to be reformatted, because I had not had time
to make a separate text for the press version. (I had only gotten the handwritten version of the speech at 4:30PM.) Also it would have meant an hour of scrambling with 240 pages, the staple remover and stapler, and each speech copy would have to be handled twice. We settled on whiting out the offending characters, to be done the next morning by whoever we could recruit. Dale explained that he is a ‘bear’ for correct spelling.

*Glenn called for an immediate hearing, which was denied by Cochran, (the chair of Governmental Affairs and a Republican) on the advice of Thomas Kindness (Glenn’s opponent in the Senate race). Kindness claimed that holding a hearing would be ‘political’ thus probably losing the round to Glenn by giving him an opportunity to say that Kindness puts the welfare of his campaign above the welfare of the residents of the Cincinnati area.

* * *

Tuesday evenings I trek down to the South Agriculture Building to be taught the Protocols of Proofreading. The instructor is a lean, dark, balding, sparsely bearded man who talks rapidly from his experiences at the Pentagon and the Washington Post. It is our task as students to learn the correct entextment of sacred writings -- commercial letters, mostly. Although we use a set of workbooks designed for stenographers and based on antique rules, our mentor assures us repeatedly that rules vary from one turf to another and there are a host of others (which, because this is not a Book of Lists, I will not enumerate). Although he recommends the Post style manual, he grades our papers solely on their conformity to the stenographers’ rules.

It is the only fair way to treat a class of individuals with differing needs and values, of course. But I am immediately in trouble: rules are arbitrary -- we invent them, we construe them in many styles, and we protect them or discard them according to no rational patterns. They are not handed down to us on stone tablets; they have no authority except that with which we invest them. Rules of entextment do have utilitarian value: consistency provides clarity, verifiability and predictability. They also have aesthetic value: uniformity and variation, and socially recognizable elegance and expressiveness.

My goal in entextment is to produce a text of clarity and precision, and if possible, eloquence. Punctuation, spelling, abbreviations, diction, and order must be guides to understanding, not just conformity to programs. Errors should be seen as ‘bugs’ and judged by their consequences and infectiousness. A wrong phone number (as above) could have ‘infected’ a whole chain of events from that point onward -- especially if the phoning were turned over to a computer. But it is not very likely that Ohio newspaper editors, even of tiny little advertisers, would not know that the Area Code for Columbus is 614. Probably most of them would not even notice the error, but would read right through it, as we did.

So I am not doing well in the course. I make careless errors from working too fast, and I don't care enough to spend the time to catch them. I correct the diction and syntax of the silly letters we proofread -- though that's not part of our task. I impose my own style and point out 'terms of
art' that are technically exempt from the rules in the book. And I accept as the final authority on word-usage and spelling only the OED, which is neither portable nor accessible in class. I spend a fair amount of time reflecting on how textualization affects our destinies, both as individuals and as a nation, and observing how a Senator (in the expanded sense) is textualized and learning how to do that myself. It has given me a thirst for understanding more about our culture's dependence on texts. The recent manipulation of texts by the Reagan administration, (and their shame only at being uncovered, not for having done it) the push of the religiously righteous to limit the access of others to only those texts deemed pure, and the retailing of conceptual-fiction texts by hucksters whose interests are their own material enrichment makes me only more determined to try to provide texts for people that offer them options and encourage them to make their own decisions.

I could do this, I think, by writing -- though I do not believe that simply giving people good texts will enlighten or free them. Perhaps I could do it by writing the opera that has been marinating in my mind for a long time. I do not think I could do it by staying in Washington. The environment here is damaging my health, both physically and mentally, and I have no status or standing in any community. And unless I can earn a decent living, I couldn't do it anywhere.

* * *

One of my great frustrations in Washington is that there are hundreds of concerts, and I go to very few. Every Friday evening there is a chamber music concert at the Library of Congress, but on Friday evenings I am so tired I would fall asleep even if I managed to hobble there on my aching feet.

Then there is the problem that I have yet to hear performances of the quality I came to expect in my student days at Oberlin. Last night I went with a friend from the Fairfax Unitarian Chorale to a concert of Schubert chamber-music at Georgetown University. The hall was a wonderfully gloomy rectangular room with dark wood and vacuous art-nouveau murals (Faith attended by Patriotism and Morality), and the escutcheons of Jesuit institutions all over the world emblazoned under Gothic arches.

The program opened with the Arpeggione Sonata (I have played it, but it was never one of my favorites) weakly and sentimentally played by plump bearded cellist accompanied by a Nazi pianist. Next came the interminable G-major quartet, with a different cellist who made the first one sound a lot better. Cellist II not only had less tone but was insecure about how to show the tonality of D -- serious business in the key of G -- and he was hopelessly lost in more distant tonalities. The quartet players (all German) were full of Teutonic intensity and acted out the music with embarrassing vigor – leaning, swaying, and threshing about with such enthusiasm that I marveled that they were able to keep their bows in contact with their strings. The program ended with the Eβ trio, adding a colorless violinist to the first cellist and pianist. The trio was competent but shallow. The dynamic range of the string players was from mp to mf; there wasn't much inventiveness or playfulness, and they didn't make me hear the work freshly. It was disappointing, because, unlike the other two works, this trio is one of Schubert's gems and
one of my favorites, both to hear and to play.

* * *

NOVEMBER 1986

November 8, 1986

On Election Day, after I voted in Kent I drove to Oberlin, had lunch with an old friend, then picked up George's daughter Ruth to drive to Columbus. Ruth talked hopefully about how much she liked Oberlin (she is a freshman at Boston University, but considering transferring) and about how she was looking forward to a career -- in film, perhaps, or as a writer. I watched the changing grey of the sky, the occasional glowing arch of a tulip-tree still golden amid the wiry tangle of bare maples and oaks, and the patches of bright green grass surrounding dingy farmhouses, recalling my days at Oberlin.

I made all my stops in Columbus -- cocktail party for the Glenn staff at the home of the head of the Columbus office, Joan; dinner with my former colleague and mentor in the music department, now a dean; my obligatory turn at answering the phone at campaign headquarters (one call); a bootless half hour spent trying to get on an elevator to the 21st floor of the Sheraton. I finally gave that up and walked up to the second floor and waited in the crowd for Glenn to come down and give his victory speech. After that was over, still armed with a poster on a four-foot stick, I joined a pack of young staffers from the DC office scrambling around back stairways to a service elevator that lurchingly delivered us to the 21st floor at last.

The Glenn 'Victory Suite' was a large room with a platform for a five-man band along one side. (Glenn cosponsored an amendment that extended an exemption from certain tax reporting regulations that appeared, to the American Federation of Musicians, to give and advantage to big-city musicians performing in local jurisdictions.) On the other side of the room was a long table with platters of heaped fruit, cheese cubes, crackers, chips and munchies, and creamy dips, all reminding me that years ago Ray Evans, then cartoonist for the Columbus Dispatch, divided all the world's comestibles into two categories: 'Sweet Grease' and 'Salty Grease'. The table was flanked by huge TV sets, both showing Channel 6, but one had the sound turned off so people could talk in front of it. There was a cash bar for liquor in another corner, and half of one wall was taken up by a giant mixing board with rows of green, white and black levers and knobs, and little glowing red and yellow lights.

I joined the group watching the TV with audio, and as Senate seats went to Democrats -- 2, 3, 4 -- rejoicing! that made 51! Then 5, 6 -- cheering: better than we hoped. At 10:45 I decided to go back downstairs to hear Celeste's speech, but went first to the restroom. To get there I had to go through the party for Frank Celebrezze, who was losing. It was dead quiet, with people in white hats taking long pulls from their plastic glasses and looking glumly up at the arch of white
balloons printed with their candidate's name, or staring down at the floor.

The lobby outside the ballroom was mobbed. I worked my way into a crowd of celebrants headed into a middle door and found a place just inside, near the monitor of a Dayton TV station on which I could see what was happening on the stage at the front of the room. I could not otherwise see over or through the Democrats surrounding me. (Democrats are tall and opaque; they move around a lot, but that wasn't much help.) The noise level was very high, rising to a roar when Celeste mounted the stage with his parents, brother, wife, and six children. He shouted his speech, which was not especially eloquent or modest.

At 11:30 PM I elbowed my way through glassy-eyed partisans still trying to get into the ballroom, put on my raincoat and walked in the quiet and light rain up N. Third Street to my car. I headed north on I-71, back to my house among the trees in Kent.

The next morning I went to the McDonalds on Main Street with an aviary in a miniature rain forest and watched the pretty bright birds pecking and posing between flights while I ate a Sausage McMuffin and sipped hot chocolate. Before I set out to return I took Leah, the almost 3-year old who lives with her parents in my house for a walk among the familiar trees and stones of our neighborhood, playing the ageless games of Peek-around-a-Tree, Balance-on-Curbs, and Walk-through-Puddles.

I said goodbye to Albert, my loyal big dog who had to stay behind in Kent when I came to DC (he is well cared for, or I couldn't have done it) then stopped at Eric's Sohio for gas and a chance to see Eric again and thank him for all the times he had rescued my ailing senile cars. Then I went to Beckwiths' for apples and cider and talked to Marilyn and Charlie before finally leaving town about 2 PM, heading east out Summit Road to Rte. 44 and the interstate.

It was a lovely grey afternoon, rich in the muted colors of Ohio hills. I knew that the rational route was by way of the Ohio and Pennsylvania Turnpikes to Breezewood, which should have got me back by about 9 o'clock. I also knew that I had only about three more hours of daylight in which to enjoy seeing the trees and sky. In spite of all this good counsel to myself, however, I left the Ohio Turnpike at the last exit in Ohio and went south on Rte. 7, through the tiny towns of Columbiana County, getting lost in Steubenville, and driving along the swollen Ohio River past the great stacks and towers of power plants fed by Appalachian coal.

I got to Wheeling just after 5 o'clock and it was drizzling and already dark; Washington PA at 5:45; Morgantown at 6:30, where I stopped for gas and hot chocolate. The owner of the little snack bar heated a styrofoam cup full of water in his microwave, mixed in the SwissMiss and handed me the cup to taste "to see if it's strong enough. My partner and me just started this place up last spring...It looks like business might not be too good this winter..."

Traffic was not heavy, but it was very dark, with rain glittering in headlights. I had the company of cheerful Baroque music from West Virginia Public Radio through the worst of the mountains. There was heavy fog at the summit of every pass, and my view was of lightless, featureless
white. I had one scare when I came up too fast behind a trailer rig with very dim taillights. And so I got back just after 11 o'clock, 55 hours and 940 miles from where I started, very tired and tense and wondering why I did it, or why, indeed, I live as I do. I am hundreds of miles from a community in which I am at home and thousands of miles from my children. I work at a job that uses little of my skills and knowledge, and drains my physical and mental resources so that I can do little else, for a salary that sustains me, but offers me no means to break away or change my future.

Worse than that is the sense of the futility of what I do in Washington. John Glenn is a conscientious public servant, responsible and bright, with a considerable "good will." But he, like most wealthy people, is insulated from conversations rich in the folk philosophies of the poor and the common wisdom of neighbors who know and trust one another, as well as the fresh metaphors and speculative fictions of people who read and think, and who have passions for something other than money or power.

Senator Glenn of course has conversations with his aides on every issue he deals with. I'm not part of these, though I have been present at some. There have been a few occasions on which Dale or Len will get him to see an issue in a different light, or to change his stand on something. But a large part of these conversations are exercises in precision textualization (and simplification) of what he already believes.

I am convinced that: A) John Glenn and his staff are as good a Senator as it is possible to be; and B) if every legislator in the Congress were as conscientious, rational, hardworking, honest and intelligent as Glenn & Co. we wouldn't be much forwarder. There's just a limit to how far conscience, rationality, hard work, honesty and intelligence will take us toward individual self-respect, mutual trust, and shared values, and they don't get us to passion, wonder, joy or fun at all.

I strongly suspect that it is sheer numbers that defeat us. McLuhan's 'global village' is a misleading conceptual fiction: you can't have a community of millions. There can be no consensus of values; there can be no reconciliation of competing wants -- it is not even possible to know one's neighbors, let alone converse and negotiate with them.

When I came to Washington I left behind a life as part of a community where I knew as friends the mechanic who fixed my car, the president of the bank, the druggist, the owner of the neighborhood grocery store, my hairdresser, dentist and doctor, the family who ran the orchard and cider mill, the librarian, mayor and police chief. They knew me as a school board member, as a baker, a musician, as my parent's daughter and my children's mother. We talked about everything that interested us -- the chuckholes in the streets, our kids and their schools, about the Recycling Center and Homecoming at the university, about the price of heating oil and when to put out tomato plants, about the power of the Civil Service Commission and the function of the Planning Commission, about the new Presbyterian minister, the old Elgin place at the top of
the hill, the effect of Kent's new well-field on Brady Lake, and what would become of the old Parsons Lumber site. Although there were considerable differences in income among us, we respected one another and shared events and experiences.

A few Fridays ago, at one of our staff ‘Happy Hours’ I fell into a conversation with Eileen and Milt about how we allocate resources. I recounted to them the dilemmas posed to the Kent Board of Education by the family of an autistic youngster. The family had sued, claiming that we had not provided an ‘appropriate education’ for the boy as required by PL 94-142. The Board prevailed in the Impartial Hearing, the Federal Court and the Appellate Court, but the cost was about a quarter of a million dollars to the Kent School District.

I explained to them that a case could be made that PL 94-142 had to be tested in the courts, and the Kent schools were better able to afford it than most school districts. But that amount of money would have bought a lot of books or computers, or more teachers. They listened, and were engaged and interested.

But as I was driving home afterward I found myself weeping, recalling the time when I was part of conversations with my peers over how we could manage in humane ways the anger, frustration and disappointment of those involved in that case, as well as the resentment of citizens, teachers and other parents.

It must be evident that I have a profound sense of personal loss that cannot help but affect the way I see the world. But I think my individual situation throws into strong relief the lineaments of our national governance: we do not participate with our neighbors in the decisions that affect our lives. Logistically, sheer numbers prevent it, and practically, our representatives do not represent us, and our leaders do not lead but only demand that we follow. The very currency with which we negotiate our perceptions of reality is debased by information management -- disinformation -- by arrogant men with a bottomless contempt for the lives, health, hopes and fears of those they consider less worthy than themselves. And we all unwittingly reinforce the simplistic and dehumanizing non-negotiable binary opposition -- them vs. us -- in our conversations, recreations, laws and judgments of others.

There can be no global solution. It would suffer from the same inertia and insensitivity that constitutes the problem. Individually, there are some things each of us could do. We could buy goods and services from our neighbors, people who actually live contiguous to us. We could give up extensive traveling (every day I drive under the great roar of planes taking off from National Airport and seen the filthy exhaust from burning jet fuel) and expensive indulgences. In a world where anyone starves it is immoral to be fat and bejeweled. We could reject jobs that produce instruments or policies of killing and destruction, or that pay us to demean people or degrade the Earth. We could refuse to tolerate dishonesty and manipulation by elected officials. We could discipline our words to keep out the ‘them vs. us” epistemology and the euphemisms
that conceal murder, justify violence and dodge responsibility. We could recognize that we all
manage information and start conversations about how to serve our common goals with such
management, and how we can assure that all people have the chance to participate in the
management of information essential to their lives.

This is hardly an exhaustive list, but it outlines my personal philosophy and what I would like to
pursue the rest of my life. I am a competent person. I read, think and talk to people; I write. I
am a skeptic, a tinkerer, a wonderer, a player of music and words, an Asker of ‘Why?’ I find
delight in the human spirit and its myriad flowers. My only religion (that which binds together) is
that Life is Good, and that Goodness should be part of every life. I believe it is possible to live
with our neighbors in love and mutual respect.

In Washington I lack a community. I lack conversations about things I care about. I lack the
sense that what I do has consequences, or that it matters whether I do it or not. I spend my
days typing, filing, reading and clipping newspapers, answering phones, writing pretty letters to
be signed by the autopen, and trying to ignore the conversations about clothes, furs, jewelry and
TV shows, and trying not to make judgments.

Bizarries of the Capitol, #3: My phone rings.
CA: Senator Glenn's office.
Voice: Is George Spelvin there?
CA: No, I'm sorry, we have no one by that name here.
Voice: Isn't this the law office of Harangue and Squelch?
CA: No, this is the office of Senator John Glenn.
Voice: Is this 224-4102?
CA: Yes. This is Senator Glenn's office. All 224 exchange numbers are U.S. Senate offices.
Voice: Oh. Is that a branch of Harangue and Squelch?

* * *

DECEMBER 1986

9 December 1986

Just daylight December 6, found me clambering up the steep western side of a ridge in West
Virginia, stepping from fallen log to lichen-covered rock to avoid the clashing sound of my
running shoes in the thick leathery oak leaves of the slope. I had abandoned the indistinct
blazes that marked the Yellow Trail and plucked up the courage to ignore the shiny orange NO
TRESPASSING signs on trees, intent on reaching the crest and morning sun before I had to return
to breakfast at our staff retreat at Coolfont. It was quiet, with only a distant woodpecker
industriously punctuating the patient time of the mountains. There were large rocks in careless
heaps along the top of the ridge, and on one of these a wild-cherry tree had grown, twisted and rough, with two scaly trunks and one sturdy root. I climbed up and perched on the root, cold and exultant, the Gregorian hymn "Creator alme siderum" singing itself inside me to the blinding sun and the frost and bright haze in the valley below.

But I was due back at the lodge for breakfast before the closing workshop of the retreat, and I needed to pack my things for the trip back to Washington. I jumped down three rocks and headed through the trees and deadfalls. I stopped to pick up 15 foot fallen sapling and cracked it against a big oak trunk until it was reduced to a 5-foot stick I could use to take my weight each time I took a step down on the steep uncertain surface of the forest floor.

After about 15 minutes the slope relented, and I propped my makeshift hiking staff against a tree and continued walking briskly, until I stepped into a leaf-filled ditch at the edge of a dirt road. The cost of my folly was a twisted left ankle, painful, but not disabling. I sat for a few minutes in the dry leaves, waiting for the pain to subside and wondering if it would be worthwhile to return for my hiking-stick. No, I decided ruefully, and not worth spending time looking for another. Just stay on the roads and trails the rest of the way down, and halfway back up the other ridge to the cabin.

An hour later I was again sitting among my colleagues in the final session of the first Glenn Staff Retreat. I had my left leg propped on an extra chair and I was trying to make sense of my untidy notes scratched on a torn-off section of my breakfast place-mat for my presentation within the hour as I listened to MJ exhort us about the political importance of everything we do.

* * *

The main entry to the Hart Building is staked out every morning by 8 AM by the crews and cameras of a dozen media agencies waiting to ambush Senators or witnesses en route to the Intelligence Committee hearings on Iran Contra. At 6 PM the stakeout is still there, the crews sitting on the floor reading paperbacks, with neat piles of paper plates, sandwich wrappers and styrofoam cups beside them.

We hope Glenn will be on the Special Committee to investigate the sale of arms to Iran, the involvement of Israel, and the diversion of funds to arm the Contras. Glenn is shocked and dismayed that the President would allow arms to go to Iran; he is also anxious to protect the integrity of the government. In his straight-shooting style, he would like simply to bring North and Poindexter face to face with the Commander-in-Chief in the presence of witnesses and have them tell what they did.

In the meantime, several of my submerged personae offer comments:

First, the Oracle. I foresee a ruined old man, who has seen the world he believed in revealed as the stage set and scenario of a real-time adventure series, with scrims, projections, sound-effects, surprise-pink spots and animated sequences; a man who will die of old age
before he completes his second term as President of the United States.

Next, the Epistemologist. We see with everything we have seen before. Before we can even perceive and recognize events, things, sequences and consequences we have to have an agreed-upon set of markers to talk with, so we can store, retrieve and use common experiences in conversations that assign values, probabilities and payoffs to what we are seeing.

There is more. In the hardest of sciences as well as in the worlds of politics and history, we use what I call ‘Useful Conceptual Fictions’, or more recklessly, ‘Working Conceptual Hallucinations’ – metaphors, models, paradigms or myths – to think collectively about events. This is, for example, where Creationists run afoul of the scientific method, because they are unwilling to discard less useful models because they believe them to be Eternal Truths. Our social uses of Useful Conceptual Fictions explain the problem my son had, at age four, when he accused me one morning of buttering his toast on the wrong side. That assertion, I have always supposed, arose not so much out of a perceived difference between the two sides of the toast as from a testing of a model he made – in his own interests, of course. All knowledge is informed by interests.

And yet more: Did the President know what was going on? I don't think he knows what he knew. Actually, few of us do. The past is ephemeral; witnesses give very different accounts of the same event. Only what is written continues to say the same thing after you have argued with it. (I remember distinctly that it was my left leg that was injured on the Metro train last year. Yet my notes, despite many sly arguments on my part, say it was my right leg.) Our memories are constantly confounded by changing interests, conflicting reports, developing consequences, new information and social pressure.

Finally, by the President's own lights, lying is not a moral category but a logical one. The establishment of a particular myth or Useful Conceptual Fiction he sees not only as his right, but his duty. He would probably not like having his beliefs – about the way the world is – characterized as myths, nor would he understand that Truth is what we agree it to be.

Lastly, the Moralist. The whole game is given away by North and Poindexter invoking the Fifth Amendment, as well as Reagan's response of blaming the press and claiming ignorance. If North and Poindexter believed in what they were doing they should have had the guts to stand up and say "Yes. I did what I believed was right and good. I did it for these reasons... and I am proud to have done it. And if I am judged to have done wrong I am prepared to take the consequences my neighbors believe fair and just."

Failure to do that reduces them to sneak-thieves or hit-and-run drivers. Reagan apparently believes, or has never been allowed to doubt that the Presidency bestows on him the power to judge right and wrong for the nation and the privilege of managing information and events.
The question is not whether the President and/or his henchmen knew 'the truth' or even whether they managed information about the events, but whether their truth was loyal to the values of the people of the United States, who trusted them.

And the answer is No. They betrayed us. They wasted our nation's money, risked our nation's good name and credibility. And they promoted the killing of human beings in pursuit of a myth that we do not all share.

The Moralist speaks as a Utilitarian, rejecting the notion of a Morality handed down on stone tablets by a Wise Old Man in the Sky. By Occam's Razor we don't need a list of Do's and Don'ts to know right from wrong -- the consequences alone will instruct us. And the Christians' teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, said there was only one rule: Love your neighbor as yourself. Reagan & Co. fail that, too.

* * *

Thursday afternoon we got a call from Tom Brazaitis, Washington bureau chief of the Plain Dealer. Would Glenn do a phone interview on North, Poindexter and the NSC? I went to Phil, who said he would ask the Senator. Phil noted that Pat (aide for foreign affairs) wasn't there, but it didn't matter because the Glenn was up on the situation anyway. Half an hour later Phil buzzed me and said the Senator was making the call and I should come up to his office and listen in:

"John Glenn here. Tell me – you guys always find out before we do – has there been a new shoe dropped? ...Yeah, more like a centipede. ...Well, yes. The people in the NSC deal with both military and foreign affairs. Poindexter is the first straight military man they've had. ...Yes, but the really sad part is the President. Instead of saying 'We the People' want to get to the bottom of this, he's the one who started it. And now he steps back and acts like a spectator. ...The President is the Commander-in-Chief, and for these military men he ranks with or just slightly below God. I say in the first place he should just line them up, standing at attention, and ask them 'Now you tell me everything there is to know from day one, and that's an order.' Then, if they won't tell, he can at least say 'I tried'. ...No, of course you can't force military men to indict themselves. But this is a charade -- he hasn't even tried.

"I don't see how you can fire someone one day and make him a hero the next day. Or why you can't get information from a hero. It doesn't hold water. I don't take back anything North's earned, he's been a good Marine. But that doesn't absolve him from blame. ...You know, I hated to see a Marine take the Fifth -- he's either guilty or he's shielding someone -- it made me crawl inside. Not that I want to see that on the front page of the Plain Dealer. That's his right as a citizen.
"I want to regain a foothold in Iran. I favor contact with every nation in the world, like North Korea and Russia and China. But we should never go so far as paying with arms first, with a terrorist nation. That's crazy. ...What about Hussein? We're giving Iran arms to kill his people. This whole thing is incredible to me. We're doing this to get back three-five hostages and sending them weapons, TOW missiles that can kill thousands. Important and symbolic as it is to rescue our hostages, is that a fair trade? Just for humanity's sake?

"Is the Presidency in danger? My God, I think the country has to be in danger when 47% of the people think the President is lying about giving arms to Iran -- that's serious for the Presidency."

....there was more; (I took notes) and Brazaitis gave a good account of it in the Sunday PD.

The revelations and allegations continue: the money went to campaigns against contra arms unbelievers; the DoD has been providing intelligence support to Iraq against Iran; the CIA has been supplying arms and training to 'anti-communists' including Idi Amin, since the 1970s. The shoes that are being dropped belong to a monster that has remained largely invisible to us. We feed the monster with large amounts of money and praise for 'Defense', 'Patriotism' and 'Heroism'; with entertainment depicting murder, torture and mayhem; with our disregard for the behaviors of people in high places, and with our pre-occupation with material things and parochial events. I think the main reason Reagan wants to get the hearings over before Christmas is to take advantage of the distraction it provides. People in a stupor from overeating aren't very critical.

If you detect a note of cynicism in these words, you are not mistaken. It has been hard to keep the Cynic among us snarling peaceably in his corner. We have also failed to attract the attention of the Metaphysician and the Mystic, who have been engaged in a silly argument (which only increases our general nail-biting, hair twisting and touchstone-fiddling behaviors) over whether, in general, we can appeal to something beyond the Utilitarian to address the great misery in the world today, and specifically, if we can use the word 'numinous' to refer to it. * * *

A student reporter from a large university newspaper called the office wanting to ask Senator Glenn what he wanted for Christmas. Dale took the call. What Senator Glenn wanted for Christmas, he said, was to get the $2 million debt from his Presidential campaign paid off.

I don't think so. What should we want for Christmas? An end to killing, and an end to the myth that there is justice or goodness in killing or harming one another -- that first. We shall not accomplish this by climbing mountains, singing carols, paying debts or giving each other gifts. And until we accomplish this, the Star of Bethlehem and the Hanukkah Lights are not ours. * * *

The Washington Post is swollen with advertising supplements offering 'stocking-stuffers' for $25
to $49 and showing car batteries tied up with red ribbons. Vacant lots along Little River Turnpike have filled with conical evergreens that look unnaturally green in the winter sunlight; grown men dress in red suits and false whiskers and ring bells while collecting coins in shopping plazas, and the Giant food store has a rack in the entry for customers to donate cans of food they have just purchased to feed the poor.

When I was a child what I loved best about Christmas was the colored lights. Around Thanksgiving I would plead with my mother for permission to get out the Christmas tree lights and "test the bulbs." The strings of lights were wired in series so that when one bulb failed they all went out, and each one had to be taken out and replaced until the bad one was located. In a half dark room I would kneel at the edge of the rug, plug in the cord and with the sockets clacking softly, spread and cluster the chains of glowing red, blue, green and yellow lamps. As Christmas grew nearer my brother and I would beg our father to drive us along the streets where, in Lakewood in the 1930s, a few wealthy people had outside lights decorating their houses or lawn trees. It was dark at night then, even in the city, and the sparseness of the lights made them surprising and precious.

* * *

From Capitol Hill, or from the White House lawn, one sees no stars and hears no wind-songs. The night sky is bright with the lights of prosperity, and the drone of traffic is constant. Perhaps the curse of our time is that we fail to cherish the dark and the silence, that we want to control light, sounds and words, and the beliefs and lives of others. Yet I am unreasonably cheered by the farmer in Vermont who tolerates a moose enamored of one of his cows. "He's welcome here just as long as he wants to stay," he says, "I feel at times I can touch him, but I don't want to because he's wild and we want to keep him that way."

* * *

To Alys

December 20, 1986

Five days before Christmas. My attic is cold, by my choice (I sealed off the registers) and bright with winter sun spreading from the dormers and Handelian splendors from the radio. I am snuffling slightly with the household cold and considering the chores left to be done in my 'vacation': cook a 'hot dish' for a Christmas party I will go to this evening; make ginger cookies (the square ones with pictures embossed by the springerli rolling-pin) and a batch of vanilla-almond cookies to astonish the natives; tidy, then clean my room; collect, box and mail what are now going to be post-Christmas presents. Yesterday I finished and mailed 85 letters with cards, not giving anyone much personal attention although there are some I feel obligated to because they are ill, lonely or withdrawn.

It would have been fun to be with you and Seth for Christmas, yet since none of us properly has
a home it didn't seem quite right. My job consumes me, and my determination not to be
consumed by the job uses up what little I can salvage.

I have not yet made a step toward locating another job, except to determine that I need to go
over to the Madison Building to find periodicals that might have job listings that would interest
me. I also find myself tempted to hang on a little longer in Washington to enjoy the spectacle
and pageantry of the Fall of the Reagan Empire (if it falls).

* * *

Monday

I lost a day to this damn cold, which has not made me sick enough to be in bed or well enough
to get out and do things. I don't know why I care. My life has all been ad hoc, and I have never
been quite ready for any event, large or small. Yesterday, because it was the Winter Solstice,
we (Isabell and I) went out under the sky, down along the northern bank of the ravine, almost
level with the pale winter sun. The three resident crows mocked us briefly and flew off; it was
unnaturally quiet, without even the usual distant drone of the Beltway. I suppose it was because
everyone was watching football on TV. I let Isabell choose our direction, down, across the
creek and up the other side, to the abandoned playing-field with its silky grasses and starry
weeds, all alight with the setting sun. I wondered what I was doing in Washington, a small
switch in a huge machine that manufactures misery so that a few men can be wealthy and their
families can play at being gods and goddesses before they die.

I thought of the talk I had had with Annie Glenn, sitting on the raised hearth in Milt's family room,
while my colleagues drank beer and wine and ate rich pastries and watched a football game.
She and John had arrived late, she explained, in her halting, controlled speech, because they
had stopped in Fairfax to buy a TV to take to Lyn for Christmas, and they had the lowest prices
anywhere. How low? I wondered, thinking greedily that I needed a new monitor for the C-64 on
which I write. Oh, as low as $300 for a small color set. I should have known that it would be
nowhere near the $50 I figured I could afford. I said all I really needed was a monochrome set,
because I don't watch TV. Bungling my explanation of the difference between a receiver and a
monitor, we went on to talk about my kids, what they were doing, and how glad I was that at
least the two of you would be together at Christmas. Annie was very gracious, and genuinely
interested. I liked her very much.

Three days later I met her at one of the entrances to the Capitol. We were both headed for the
office Christmas party in the Hideaway office, but I was lost, and at the wrong entrance. She
was coming from the Capitol Physician's office, and invited me to come with her as she moved
her car closer to the entrance we needed. So I tagged along, in my grubby old trench coat and
streaked canvas carry-bag, beside her elegant casual black & white merino wool coat over a
gold-brocaded long vest pant suit. I gave her a copy of my Christmas card, which I confessed I
had made myself, and no, I couldn't write that small -- I'd reduced it on a copy machine. She
said it was a tradition in her family to give gifts that they had made themselves, and that Lyn still
did that. I mumbled something about doing what one can, and spotted a parking place for her. She eased her big car into it and we got out. She nervously checked to make sure she had put the car keys in her purse before she locked the door; I said I did the same thing.

I helped her with the things she needed to carry, and the guards waved us through the entrance.

She led the way through the labyrinth of corridors, past carts of firewood for the offices with fireplaces, doors hiding the hum of machinery, stacks of cardboard boxes, cartons of new electronic equipment, down steps and up ramps to the Senator's hideaway office. In the entrance hall was a buffet table with a haunch of beef under a heat lamp, a mountain of sliced ham decked with pineapple and dyed cherries, a large chafing-dish of chicken nuggets and a tray of half-moons of cheese, grapes, strawberries, melon balls and pineapple chunks. The caterer and two servers were there, also Annie's personal secretary. Annie talked to each of them, introducing herself to the two young servers, who were new. She sampled the foods and tasted the eggnog, and praised the attractiveness and excellence of everything.

Staff and their families started arriving, and Annie moved skillfully to greet each one, show them the view of the Capitol Christmas tree from the window, and aim them at the table of beverages (wine, beer, sodas, eggnog). Staff people talked about holiday plans and Milt's party, enjoyed the food and company. The Senator made a little speech in which he spoke of the importance of families and how we sometimes lose sight of such really important things because we get involved in too many other things. Then Celia made us all sing "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." As people left they picked up a be-ribboned box containing a 1986 John and Annie Glenn coffee mug, with Celia discreetly checking to make sure that the mugs went only to staff members.

So why am I disconsolate? Why isn't the humanity and goodness of Annie and John Glenn enough for me?

I picked my way back down through the trees, walking on every fallen trunk that was even partly headed back, scuffling through the dry leaves and studying the scars on the bark of the beech trees. I don't have any answers, but maybe this wild place is one of the reasons I have questions, and maybe what I do best is watch, and write what I see.

So, with some caveats, I will do that. The first is: Do not mistake what I write for The Truth. It is at best a truth, among many. Second, I can write, at best, maybe 1 percent of what I see. I select at random, for whimsical reasons, for convenience, for selfish purposes, and for what I consider noble ideals. The excellence of what I write is that it got written at all, not how.

You picked an odd fish for a mother, and I'm not anticipating any change. I only promise to do what I can. I wish I could have come to see you this Christmas, but it didn't feel right. I do miss
you. There will be a Christmas box, including a pretty brocade jacket Marty wanted you to have, and some cookies.

...if I go downstairs and bake them.

* * *

To Seth  

December 28, 1986

It is cool and still in my attic, the stereo providing soft clinking sounds of classical guitar from WGMS (oops, it has just decomposed into "There's a Hamburger Helper..." caroled by an enthusiastic chorus). Our friends left this morning, and not a moment too soon. It is not that they did anything wrong, only that having four giant people, plus an average size one, in this house eating, showering, sleeping and picking things up and putting them down was hard for me to handle. I also made the mistake of going to the museums with them on Friday and to Georgetown on Saturday. My feet are not up to more than an hour of walking and standing. Carole wisely pointed out that the first rule of any Washingtonian is “Never go sight-seeing with out-of-towners.”

Friday we went to the museums, but spent most of the time waiting around for each other, standing in line for lunch, waiting in the gift shop, waiting for a bus to get up to the Corcoran, waiting to get into the Shaker exhibit, waiting for others to get through, walking to the Metro, waiting to get into the Shaker exhibit only made me want to get out of the city to some deserted place where I could make my own furniture in silence and privacy.

Georgetown was worse. The streets were crowded with people, some wearing thousands of dollars’ worth of clothing, visiting shops that sold expensive clothes, jewelry, candy, shoes, leather goods, paintings, furniture and food. I went into the Banana Republic and found myself lusting after the shirts and good-looking jackets they had there. But the least expensive thing I could find was a scarf for $17, and I had only allowed myself $10 for the day. I went out and walked down M Street and found a couple of used-book stores. I didn’t find books I was looking for, but I did find some neat things I wasn’t looking for, so spent $8.71. Then I wondered what I was doing buying books I couldn’t afford and wouldn’t have time to read.

* * *

Christmas Eve it rained, a long hard-driven cold rain that flooded the little stony creeks of Northern Virginia, and our basement. At 5 PM I drove out to the Fairfax Unitarian Church, the car shuddering in the gusts of wind, to sing with the choir for the Christmas Eve service. It was one of those UU Religious Education extravaganzas, with kiddies underfoot everywhere, earnest middle-aged mothers stumbling over the readings (“This is the time of the Winter
Solace..") and tiresome group-sings of "Silent Night" and "O Holy Night" and unfamiliar carols for which only words were provided. At least Judy (the choir director) set a good bouncy tempo for the singing, and the pelting rain excused us from going outdoors and standing in a circle of 300 people lighting candles from one another while singing (again) "Silent Night."

I was more than slightly irritated by the whole business. But I was warmed by remembering the first year I took you (aged 3) to the Kent UU Church Christmas Eve service. When they turned out all the lights for the candle-lighting ceremony you remarked in a piping, audible voice: "Very dark in here" raising titters and chuckles all over the church.

Christmas Day we put a turkey to roast in the oven and went for a hike down into the ravine, which was the best fun of the weekend. We built a fine dam across the creek, talked to a pair of black poodles wearing Christmas ribbons who came to see Isabell (she was not impressed) and played on a natural see-saw of a fallen tree over a ridge of stones.

* * *

Wednesday noon I will leave for Ohio -- Voneida's cabin at Lake Piedmont first, then on to Kent. Isabell will go -- she is getting to be a good traveler, though she sleeps most of the time. We have finally licked her flea problem with a fine-toothed flea comb Dr. Baker gave us. This trip may be foolish, too. What I really need to do is take three days to sleep, read and do nothing.

* * *

This fall a decree went out from Phil that the Glenn staff should take to the hills of West Virginia in the first week of December for a retreat. And so on the first Thursday of the month I drove up to George's house and we went on in his car, two hours up the Interstate to Coolfont. George is well-read, bright and an excellent conversationalist and we had a delightful time.

After arriving and having lunch we had about 40 minutes before the first meeting, so we took off to walk up into the woods beyond the little artificial lake at the center. We set out climbing diagonally toward the top of the eastern ridge. About halfway up we came upon a meadow with thick rough grass about a foot high going all the way back down to the lake. I proposed that we run down the slope, which we did, laughing and racing each other like a couple of kids. About two thirds of the way down my foot caught on a small stump hidden in the grass, and I went over, head first, did a crooked somersault and landed on my feet, still running. I was surprised but quite unhurt -- no bruises or scrapes. A couple of hours later, however, I found I was quite stiff.

* * *

These holiday weeks at the office have been frantic for me. There are endless newspapers to be clipped, and I've had a sudden flood of kids writing things like "Please send me enough material for a four page report" or "I would like to know your opinion on Aides. I think they are a public problem and deserve everything they get." There are times when spelling is important, though I'm not at all sure that this youngster saw any difference between AIDS and Aides.
It is Monday night. Your box is packed with things in it for you and Alys, and some clippings for your father. The gifts are not comprehensive or fair, but what I could do. I wish I had time and money to do more -- please accept my good intentions.

* * *

JANUARY 1987

10 January 1987

*A* A letter-to-the-editor writer upbraids the *Washington Post* for defining the winter solstice as "the sun reaching the southernmost point on its annual travels" then falls into the same trap himself by continuing: "[It is] a scientific fact that the universe is heliocentric."

*B* In my dim past I once wrote to my hometown newspaper to complain about the obviously canned editorials they were printing. One of the young reporters called me after they printed my letter to thank me for speaking out on the subject. "Then," I said hopefully, "They're going to stop using them?" "Oh, no," he replied, "they're still going to print them, but someone is going to read them first."

*C* An Ohioan, a lady-housewife who styles herself a Master Graphanalyst, wrote to Senator Glenn asking him to submit a paragraph of his handwriting for her scrutiny, so she can write an article about his superior character and intelligence for her local paper. Dale and I agreed that Glenn shouldn't do it. Marty demurred: "Why not? It would be good publicity. Graphology is taken very seriously by modern psychology -- I took a course in it once, a psychology course. You can really find out a lot about someone by analyzing their handwriting."

Dale disagreed, and argued: "Yeah, but suppose she writes this article and writes that Glenn has hidden homosexual tendencies or something, then what? Besides, he won't do it."

Marty appealed to me, but I wouldn't play: "A lot of people, including me, put graphology right alongside astrology and water-witching," I said.

*D*

Washington, D.C. Senator John Glenn (D-Ohio) today introduced legislation [that would do x, y and z.]. "This bill will make a significant contribution to [whatever]," said Senator Glenn. "[A has caused b] which concern all of us."

In 1986, p million [people, lemmings, widgets, etc.] [didn't or did something]. This legislation will [fix that,] and [will not cost the taxpayers very much.]
"[This is a dandy bill] and I am proud to serve the people of Ohio and our nation by [introducing it.]" Glenn concluded.

*E* Then there is the story of the three umpires. (Those of you who have heard this before may excuse yourselves, if you remember the punch line.)

Three umpires are refreshing themselves after a ball game and fall to discussing balls and strikes.
"There are balls and there are strikes," says the First Umpire, "and I call them as they are."

"No," says the Second Umpire, "There are balls and there are strikes, and I call them as I see them."

The Third Umpire drains his glass and says, "You're both wrong. There are balls and there are strikes, and they ain't nothing until I call them."

*F* On January 16, Dale received the first request for Glenn's comments on the President's State of the Union Speech, to be given on the 27th. "Seems kinda early," Dale observed, "But I know what the President is going to say. He's going to say we have to make America more competitive. And Glenn is going to say: "Yes, but the President is cutting all those programs that would make us more competitive: education, research, job-training. I could write it right now."

*G* The Mansfield News Journal printed the following news item on 12/1/86, shown here in its entirety (the actual clipping was pasted into the letter):

**Paper ornaments**
Copley News Service

On Christmas Eve in Poland, lighted candles are placed on the Christmas Tree.
So are brightly colored paper ornaments.

...And this, Dear Reader, is how news is made.

* * *

I write news releases, more or less on the pattern shown above. These are distributed to the Press – the Washington correspondents of the nine major Ohio newspapers as well as the AP and UPI wires. On some occasions they go to the Senate Press and Media Galleries, to the Ohio wires, or the Press Gallery in the Ohio Statehouse. Smaller newspapers usually run the story just as they get it from the wire service. The Washington correspondents write their own stories after watching the proceeding on the Senate floor or in hearing rooms, and consulting
with Dale. They are careful craftsmen who are as objective as it is possible to be about events that exist primarily in the way they are construed.

When Senator Glenn ‘introduces legislation’ what happens is that he hands in a draft bill that has been worked on by staff members for many weeks or months. Wording of the bill is tailored and argued over at length with an eye to the Senator's position and how this legislation will reflect on him, as well as how it will address the issue. At the time the bill is introduced he makes a Floor Statement, in a rather formal style, which is also handed in to the Secretary of the Senate for printing in the Congressional Record. Floor Statements may also be made in support of other legislation and resolutions. Fairly often, Glenn will embellish or expand a Floor Statement that has been prepared by staff, usually effectively when he feels strongly about the issue. Floor Statements are a source of quotations for News Releases; not infrequently, however, the News Release is written first to include a good ‘sound bite’ which can then be incorporated into the Floor Statement. Dale always sits in on the final deliberations on Floor Statements, to make sure they are consistent, correct, well-phrased and attention-holding.

Is this ‘objective’ news management? Of course not. There’s no such thing – look at those stories above. First off, we describe events in fictions – useful fictions like referring to the sun rising or being ‘southernmost’. But these are delicate matters of social agreement. We all know the earth moves around the sun, yet we agree that saying that the sun rises or goes down is useful and acceptable. But we don’t agree that the sun is the center of the universe, even though our Solar System may be the extent of the universe that will ever be accessible or useful to us.

I have observed more than once that in Washington, to all intents and purposes, an event not reported in the press didn't happen. This is neither by design nor negligence, only an artifact of the sheer density of events. Even my feeble effort to provide you with vignettes and a sense of the way the wind is blowing founder utterly on the unavailability of time to process the past. I succeed in making stories of about .1% of the events that rush past me. I estimate that with the army of journalists here in Washington perhaps as much as 10% of what happens in the Legislative and Executive branches is reported.

Objectively? Only as objective as it is possible for humans to be. We can only perceive and talk in categories that are familiar to us and accessible to others who share our language. Each of us has a set of largely unexamined assumptions about the way the world is – shared, of course with many others: there is a sociology of perception. There is not, nor can there be among thinking, reasoning beings, one universal set of beliefs about the nature of reality, though men (gender specific noun intended) throughout history have spent vast resources and sacrificed many lives (usually not their own) to impose their beliefs on others. All of us, even journalists, have a set of moral values or imperatives: some measure of the worth or utility of things, life, people, and events. These too are broadly social, yet by agreement, in our society,
the individual takes responsibility for moral choices. What we notice, and what 'gets to' us is largely regulated by these values. Most of the constraints operate in subconscious or tacit registers. The journalist or writer of News-Releases does not rise from his couch with the dawn and say "Today I will perceive and write about the wisdom of Senator Honk."

But if each writer and reporter writes with a bias is our news then distorted? No, because there is little to keep the biases aligned, and what we get for news is a carpet of broadloom polychrome ‘coverage’ of great texture and depth of pile. What bias exists is mostly introduced by the constraints of time on radio and TV and space in the print media. It is variously estimated that 80 to 95 percent of all news stories prepared end up on the cutting room floor. Savvy about 'what the public wants', whimsy, sentimentality, personal foibles from ambition to flattery to revenge, ideological purity, inattention, religious zeal and chance all contribute about equally, and what is amazing about the whole process is that it works, and is driven from the top down by the market.

Does the Press create such stories as Watergate or Iranamok? My answer is no, and my analog is the Howard Beach affair. Journalists could not have commanded headlines and TV time if there was a strong consensus that any black who wandered into a white neighborhood deserved to be beaten and driven into the path of a speeding car. If we all believed that a President has the right to do anything he pleases, the behavior of Nixon or Reagan would not be news.

The final constraint on news is newness. Anyone in a Congressional press office, Capitol news gallery or media newsroom will tell you that there are only two categories of events: News and History.

* * *

The wind rattles the sash and keeps my attic cold and comfortable. Carole's cat is lying on my lap, lashing her tail occasionally to convey her displeasure at the small note I have stuck on the C-64 disk drive: NO CATS MAY SIT ON THE DISK-DRIVE.

Isabell is snoozing on the bed, after thanking me for today's walk in the ravine under a deep howling lament of the wind in the high trees. We found more pieces of broken honeycomb beneath the hollow beech tree. They were old and brittle, with no trace of honey or larvae. I studied the precise hexagons and wondered, not so much at the perfect engineering and flawless workmanship, but at the utter lack of variety or experimentation. But in survival there is no room for inventiveness or playfulness. The last creative bee, if there ever was one, died with its hive millions of years ago.

* * *

One of the kindly Unitarian ladies spoke to me after the first service at which another cellist had performed: "Wasn't it wonderful, the way he made the music resonate?"
Speechless, I must have looked miserable. "Of course," she continued, "he was a little insecure on some notes, but that's not important -- I was just thrilled."

What the hell am I doing wrong? I won't play until I have practiced to a certain level of performance, with control of the intonation and tonality of the piece, and with a technical mastery of the shifts and string-crossings, knowing that in performance I may lose some of it, but satisfied that I am able to play it well. This cellist had serious intonation problems, and should have been statutorily forbidden to play unaccompanied Bach. Some teacher or mentor should have instructed him further that it is not acceptable to play only the first half of the Prelude to the C-minor Suite and end on the dominant. And just because it is Chopin, and romantic, does not give the cellist who plays it license to slide into tones, never quite centering on the pitch or engaging the bow to make a full sound. I don't know why I expect more of people, but I do.

* * *

To Ginny Harvey and Beth Winter

18 January 1987

It was a good trip to Ohio, troubling only because I feel so much more alive there than I ever seem to be in Washington. I was set back, too, when a kind friend asked me where I lived in Washington. In that infinite instant allowed by private conversation I suppressed the answer that surfaced: "I don't live anywhere in Washington -- I work in Senator Glenn's office and I sleep and do my laundry in Alexandria and there isn't anything else."

And now I know why. Before the retreat Dale and Marty and I had talked about the time spent responding to requests for astronaut photographs, celebrity-auction items, birthday greetings and 'enough material for a 4-page report', and had agreed that we should ask Phil to assign those duties to someone else in the office. When I got back, facing 17 letters from high school kids, I pressed Dale on the subject.

Finally Marty left me a note suggesting that I write a list of all the things I do, noting the things that had in the past been done by interns and fellows. So I wrote a Job Description, including an estimate of time spent per week on each task, including making coffee. The most relentlessly time-consuming one is the MEDIA REVIEW. It takes eight to ten hours a week to clip, sort, assemble, and paste-up articles and to prepare and distribute copies.

The total number of hours (from low and high estimates) ranged from 36 to 87 hours, telling me instantly there is a reason why I am tired all the time. I made a polite cover memo to Phil, and
gave copies to both Dale and Marty on Thursday January 8. Dale said he would look at it and put it on his desk.

It has not escaped my attention that Dale and Marty both spend substantial amounts of time at the office pursuing new jobs, Marty with the NRDC and the Foreign Service, and Dale preparing to go back to Ohio. Marty tells me to just go ahead and take time to do my own job search, but I can't. I work top speed from 8 AM until after 6 every day, and I'm just exhausted in the evenings. I feel guilty if I take any time on weekends to watch TV or go to a movie. I'm ashamed that I haven't written any job application letters or even gotten hold of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* which lists jobs I might qualify for.

Most of my colleagues are helpful and supportive of what I do, even though I have little time for the friendly interactions that make office life tolerable. But even if my workload was miraculously reduced, and Marty treated me like a colleague instead of a flunky, I would not want to stay in Washington.

I don't have the resources to cope with urban life. I don't earn enough to be able to participate in the social life of people of my age and interests. I miss my kids and lack close friends – though without my wonderful house-mates I would have cracked long ago. I find the climate in Washington brutal – five months of the year I am half-sick with the heat. I also miss being able to participate with my neighbors in community affairs. I don't know that I would ever run for school board again, but I would like to have some energy and time to invest in community. In Washington, what people invest in is what they care about: money. I'd prefer to live in decent poverty and not need money to show what I care about.

Sorry, I'm mandering. I'm mortally tired and don't feel good. Half my weekend is gone and I have accomplished nothing -- not even a good night's sleep.

* * *

22 January 1987

This year being the 25th anniversary of Glenn's orbital flight, a good bit of effort is being expended toward placing him on popular TV shows. Besides "FastCopy", which has already been taped (and scratched for one date) Glenn is doing things for other nets and various Ohio stations. Last week Marty suggested we try to place him on the Johnny Carson and David Letterman shows. Then the suggestions metastasized: why not a cameo appearance on "Family Ties", or the "Bill Cosby Show," or "Cheers"?

"Family Ties is set in Columbus, Ohio, it would be a natural...they could have Michael Fox, the
yuppie, discover that his hero John Glenn is a Democrat." That had to be scrapped -- all the "Family Ties" shows for the rest of the season are already in the can. "Well then, what about the Cosby show?"

"No good," said Dale, "They tape it in LA. The Senator would never go out there just for that."

Kevin spoke up: "No, they tape it in Brooklyn."

Dale: "You want to bet a dollar?"

"Sure, I know it's taped in Brooklyn."

"You're wrong, and I'm going to call them right now. Marty, get their number."

It wasn't quite that simple, and it wasn't until the next day that Dale got through and discovered that though it had been taped in LA, it was now done in Brooklyn. "That's okay," he said, "We're both right, so nobody owes anything."

"Whaddyah mean," said Kevin, "I bet a dollar that it was Brooklyn, and it is, and you owe me a dollar."

And so the battle was joined, with Dale maintaining that the bet was over where the show was taped, and everyone else saying that it was on where it is taped. (I was at this point ignoring the proceedings, so these details may be fuzzy.)

Came Friday and Kevin wanted his dollar. So Marty suggested we have a court trial to determine the outcome. Dale snatched at the idea and Lewis padded it out: "Each of you choose one person for the court, and I will choose an impartial third person. The court will convene in the Press office at 5PM."

"Okay, I choose Marty," said Dale.

"No way," said Marty, "I'm not on your side. I'll give a verdict against you."

"Then Caroline."

Kevin chose Mark, and Lewis proposed and everyone agreed that Bill should be the third. At 4:55 Dale came to me and said "You come right in at 5...nobody has seen Kevin...I think he forgot...then you guys can throw it out of court because he didn't show."

At 5 o'clock everyone except Kevin -- Lewis, Ken, Patricia, Marty, MJ and George all crowded
into Dale's small office with us. Lewis picked up a ruler from Dale's desk and named it a gavel and called the court to order. George called Lewis to order, pointing out that this was a three judge panel, and Lewis wasn't one of them.

Dale: "Kevin isn't here, he forfeits."

"No, we dismiss without prejudice."

"Let's have the trial anyway."

"Here's Kevin!"

Lewis, notwithstanding the previous rebuke, said that each party should testify for one minute. Dale went first, unasked: "Look, I'm not asking for his lousy dollar, this show is clearly taped in both LA and Brooklyn, so we were both wrong, and nobody should have to pay. Kevin is trying to..."

Dale continued, with Kevin interrupting: "No, the bet was on where the show IS taped, and it IS taped in Brooklyn." Meanwhile Lewis was shouting that the time was up.

When that was settled Kevin got his turn: "He's just trying to weasel out. It was a fair and square bet... (etc.)" with Dale interrupting.

After closing arguments were heard (10 seconds each) Ken started tearing a sheet of paper into three pieces. "This will be a secret ballot. The judges can write their decisions on these." "Oh no," said Dale, "They have to announce their decisions one by one."

I thought about that for about a tenth of a second and started to give my decision, because I had no intention of being the last, and swing vote. But George said "No, let the judges deliberate in private, then announce their decision."

"Only if they tell us how they voted," insisted Dale.

Mark, Bill and I started to leave Dale's office, with Dale and Kevin close on our heels. But Marty said "No, no. You stay in here, and everyone else outside. And close the door."

Within the office our thoughts were far from justice. "How are we going to get out of this?" asked Bill, "I think Dale's wrong, but I don't want him mad at me."

Mark asked: "Couldn't we rule for Kevin, but charge him a dollar in court costs?"
Bill: "Yeah, but what would we do with a dollar? It wouldn't even buy beers for the three of us."

Marty, meanwhile, was gesturing through the window, circling her neck with an imaginary rope, and Dale was pounding on the door shouting that we only had 30 seconds more. Phil passed by outside, smiling indulgently, but not getting involved.

When Dale pulled open the door I said "Close the door. We'll send up a plume of white smoke when we're finished."

We racked our brains and finally came up with the idea ruling in favor of Kevin but requiring him to win his dollar from Dale in a game of Liar's Poker. This was snatched up gratefully: "Okay, we're ready."

"No, wait -- who's going to speak for us judges?" Mark asked.

"You are" we agreed. Bill opened the door and Lewis intoned: "Have you reached a verdict?"

Mark stepped forward bravely. "Yes. It is the opinion of this court that the plaintiff, Kevin, shall prevail in this case, but that he must collect his dollar in a valid game of Liar's Poker, to be played immediately. The decision was unanimous."

Kevin was brisk. "Okay, Dale, let's go."

"Wait -- I don't have any good bills," protested Dale.

I knew I had traded Dale a bill with four 8s on it after lunch, but he had already lost it to Ron. He lost another one then, and Kevin got his dollar.

* * *

To Richard Taylor of the Kent Friends Meeting

January 26, 1987

Dear Friend Richard,

Thank you for your note and proposed letter to Senator Glenn. I would like to propose a few informal guidelines for writing to Senators, based on my observations over the last two years.

It is always helpful to have the whole intent of the letter summarized in the first sentence. In the
case of your letter draft, I would suggest that the first paragraph contain a proposal for an office of Human Rights Ombudsman and a brief suggestion for an organizational model you think might work for it.

The second paragraph could then describe the need for such an agency, citing the deplorable record of the Civil Rights Commission under the Reagan administration. Your quote is appropriate, but the Senate staffer who reads your letter would probably want to know where and when it appeared. I would also recommend adding a short explanation about why an ombudsman would be more effective than (for example) restructuring the Civil Rights Commission.

The final paragraph could well include a reference to the interest of the FCNL (and other organizations), cite the disorder in the civil rights community and the potential leadership of Senator Glenn because of the bill he introduced last year to bring the Senate under the same civil rights rules that apply to the rest of the country.

What you will get in return is a letter from the Senator thanking you and describing in the first paragraph what you said in your letter. The second paragraph will probably comment on your suggestion, if only to say that he (Senator Glenn) is aware of the problem. Next will be a recital of his legislative good works and his hopes for them. If the aide is alert, she will pick up on your mention of his bill last year, and put a sentence in the Senator's letter recognizing it. Finally you will be thanked again and urged to write again.

Then what happens? In all candor, probably nothing. But something might, and I can imagine a scenario for it, so let's try it. The aide who handles civil rights in Glenn's office is a very sharp person (as most Congressional aides are) and would like to position the Senator out front on civil rights issues, because she herself believes passionately in justice. Having Glenn ride out on a white horse might do a lot for that cause. Patricia is a young lawyer, black, with impressive degrees.

However, on this issue she may be up against formidable obstacles, like getting the Senator's attention, for starters. It is not that he isn't interested in civil/human rights, that he doesn't set priorities or even that he is too busy. It is that, in spite of a staff of nearly 50 people, he labors under information overload. No staff person can make most of the judgments of value and priority that must be made by every Senator at every turn of a corridor, at the bottom of every memo, at each opening of his office door or ring of his telephone.

He is too busy, of course -- we all are, and have too many things to think about and juggle. With his lively curiosity and mind he is interested in everything that comes across his desk and a lot of things that don't. With his broad experience he has a lot of preferences, though some vocabularies are more comfortable for him than others. He sets priorities all the time, but never
in concrete; he tries for comprehensiveness and flexibility. He listens to his staff, at least the ones who have his ear -- all men, except for MJ. I don't know if they have his ear because they are men, or they are men because men are who he listens to. He is a strong supporter of the ERA, but I think there is a kind of deep-seated deafness to women, the product of a boyhood in the '20s and 23 years in the Marines.

If Patricia decides to try to develop a "Human Rights Ombudsman bill" she will first consult with George (the Domestic Policy aide). Both she and George know that to get the Senator's attention on this issue they will need the active backing of Dale, (Press) and MJ and no contest from Phil (AA). Presented with a lively defense of the idea, George would undoubtedly sign off on the idea, and Patricia, working with some other staff people would write a working draft of a bill. At some stage, probably quite early, Len (staff director of Gov't Affairs) would be consulted. Len might want to make the whole thing a Gov't Affairs Committee bill. Patricia and George would weigh the advantages of that, but it is unlikely they would be possessive about it if Len thought it belonged to GAC.

But for our purposes, let's assume that GAC isn't interested. After the provisions of the bill have been researched through CRS and negotiated among staff experts, a memo to the Senator and draft of a 'Dear Colleague' letter to go to other Senators would be prepared. George and Patricia would request time on Glenn's schedule to present the idea. This meeting would include Phil, Dale and MJ to offer opinions on the probable success of the bill and its value to constituents and the media. (I have never sat in on one of these meetings, so I cannot describe one in any detail.)

Most often Glenn agrees the proposal is a good idea and will want to know who else has bills related to this issue, where they are in committee, whether we cosponsored, what's happening on this issue in the House and 'on the other side of the aisle'. He may suggest changes, and he always asks questions like: "Is this the best name for this office?" "Where's the money coming from?" John Glenn does his homework.

Though he might make suggestions for major changes in the bill, he rarely says no completely. Some of my colleagues report that occasionally a bill proposal gets taken in, and the Senator says he wants to think about it, and it is never seen again. He gets from his staff bills that are well prepared and well-tailored to his interests and past successes. Staffers know that a bill that he is not whole-hearted about is easily overtaken by other bills that he cares more about. But he appreciates and respects the work done by his staff, and considers it carefully.

Once he has agreed to sponsor the bill a timetable will be set up, the 'Dear Colleagues' sent, and a news release drafted. The path of bills after they are 'dropped into the hopper' is well known, and it usually takes months, if not years to bring them to a vote.
Even after it is introduced, a bill may be dropped, most often in horse-trading among Senators: "Back my bill and I'll incorporate x and y from it into my bill." Glenn doesn't easily let go of things he feels strongly about, but he can be convinced that there are better ways to achieve his goals.

* * *

Sorry, I seem to have told you a great deal more than you asked. It interests me, of course -- not so much how it works, as that it works at all. The aleatoric component is daunting, yet when strong consensus exists, the cumbersome legislative machinery can move very swiftly to provide laws, or even a budget. The present inertia and white noise of Washington is an index of the lack of agreement about what is important, and how important, and what is dangerous and how dangerous.

Not that that is a particularly helpful insight. Nothing follows, except what the hell (I use the word deliberately) we agreed to by electing Reagan.

* * *

FEVREMBARY 1987

7 February 1987

"It's clear that God doesn't like Washington. If he did he would have sent us these snowstorms just before the election, not just after we elected the mayor (Barry) to another term."

Pat Shakow, an editorial writer for the Washington Post, was visiting the office and a guest of George's "Domestic Policy Productions" breakfasts. It was the first day since the snowstorms when discussions were not entirely given over to tales of snow clogged highways and Metro failure. Distrustful of DC drivers in any kind of precipitation and irrationally confident of the reliability of public transportation, I had taken the bus and subway to the Hill on Thursday, the first day of the snow. When 'liberal leave' was announced around noon, I ignored it. But at 1:40, when rumors started that they were going to shut down the Metro, I put on my boots, coat, scarf, hat and wool gloves and headed for Union Station.

The loudspeaker there announced that all trains were running on schedule and that no delays were anticipated, and indeed, within three minutes a train appeared. At Gallery Place we waited a little longer, but I still reached the Pentagon in 35 minutes, only 10 minutes longer than usual.

The Pentagon bus platform was jammed with long lines of commuters waiting for buses, but it was hard to tell where the lines began and ended, so I went to 17M sign at the edge of the platform and followed the line back to its end, perhaps 50 feet. As we stood in our respective queues jokes, stories of the mess on the highways, and weather and traffic reports from radios circulated among us. Busses appeared at intervals, and a line would move forward until the bus was filled; then the bus would sit there, unable to move out into the line of buses heading for the highways.
At about 2:50 a 17M bus pulled up and the people at the front of the line started boarding. I was lucky to get on, and to get one of the last three seats at the back of the bus. The aisle was jammed with people standing, and some of those in line didn't get on. Our bus moved out into the row of departing busses, and there we stayed for an hour. I traded my seat to a woman who had been standing the whole time. It took another 45 minutes to creep around the Pentagon exit roads and up the on-ramp for the highway, when everyone clapped for the driver.

It was a slow process dodging the stalled and abandoned cars, to Little River Turnpike, but we moved pretty steadily, and I got home just over four hour after I had left (congratulating myself on having had the foresight to go to the restroom before I left the office). They had, in fact, shut down the Metro lines about 4 o'clock because the third rails were icing up and stalling the trains.

Friday, undaunted, I took the bus and Metro again, arrived at the office only a little late, and got home in good time. Many of my colleagues didn't get there at all, mostly those who lived in the District and were dependent on their cars or local buses. The District had failed miserably at snow removal, without equipment, personnel or plans. It wasn't much better on Monday, but someone had sense enough to close all offices.

Tuesday morning the news programs announced that all Metro trains would be running 'a modified rush hour schedule' which sounded like they knew what they were doing. I asked Lauren drive me to the Pentagon on her way to her job, and as we saw all the buses stuck in traffic in the HOV lanes, we predicted a nearly empty platform at the Pentagon.

Not so. 'Modified rush-hour schedule', it turned out, meant half the trains, with two-thirds of the cars, at ten-minute intervals instead of the usual two-minute intervals. At 8:15, when I arrived, the escalator was not running, because there was no place to stand at the bottom – the entire vestibule and all the train platforms were jammed with people. Trains going toward the District came in packed to the doors and no one got off. People who managed to get close enough boarded outbound trains and traveled to the end of the line, to be on the train when it returned.

I was caught in the crowd at the bottom of the escalator outside the turnstiles for an hour and twenty minutes. I finally decided to go back up to the bus platform, go home and get my car and drive to the Hill. By then they had closed access to the subway platforms, and had pressed all available buses into service as shuttles to DC Metro stations. The Northern Virginia buses were running, but the line was very long for the 17M bus. One eventually appeared, loaded up and left, missing me by about 30 people. We waited in the strong cold wind, on the west side of the platform out of the sun. In spite of my wool knee sox, insulated boots, wool skirt and sweater, big coat, scarf, hat and two pairs of gloves, I got very chilled.

It was about 12:30 when I finally got home. I realized that if I tried to go back I would have to spend another half hour shoveling snow away from my car, and I wasn't up to it. I had a mug of hot
chocolate and a bowl of vegetable soup and two aspirin, and went back to bed with a hot water bottle.

Pat Shakow had a good bit more to say over bagels and coffee on that Wednesday morning: The Post receives ink in giant tank trucks, owns forests and paper mills in Canada, has 500 reporters and photographers, but only six editorial writers, who, with Herblock, occupy a separate corridor of offices. "It's hard to believe I get paid to do this," she said.

"The editorial board, headed by Meg Greenfield, meets together for two hours every morning to talk over what happened yesterday, what's happening today, and what each of us will write about for tomorrow. Then we have lunch together in Mrs. Graham's dining room, usually with guests. One day last week they had a visiting prince from the Middle East and Jim Miller from Treasury -- 'the Prince and the Pauper' somebody quipped.

"After lunch I spend two hours putting things together on what I'm going to write about. We have terrific backup in our own library and the databases available on our computers. I can ask for, say, all the newspaper reports of pregnancies in teenagers aged 13-16 in cities over a certain population between April and October of 1985. We also have one big advantage over the [New York] Times [editorial writers]. I can send a messenger over to the Supreme Court or Congressional offices and get documents within an hour. The Times ed board doesn't get the documents until the next day. [Capitol] Hill people always talk to you, even when they know you're against them -- they want to make sure you understand their position. Downtown [the White House] is bad; City Hall is awful; outside the government we get a good response.

"Then between 4 and 5 o'clock I write. Each of us must produce a coherent 500 word statement every day, before deadline at 7. The first day I wrote an editorial I took my work to Meg at 5:30 and said 'Here's a first draft' and she said 'You don't understand'. Luckily, she liked it and it was printed and I have been doing it every day since then.

"They have lawyers circulating on the floor as reporters bring in their pieces. We're always getting sued. The lawyers don't want you to say anything; the reporters want to tell everything.

"There's a lot of self-criticism at the Post: we get five or six pages from the ombudsman every week. And people call and write -- there's no screening of calls. Someone calls up and says 'I want to talk to that idiot who wrote the editorial on...and they put them through to me. I take all comers on the phone. We seldom reply to letters -- but we put them in [the paper] if we can."

We got to ask questions: what was the toughest editorial she ever wrote?

"Well, I don't write about things I don't support. If, in order to write about something I had to criticize a friend I wouldn't excuse myself, if I believed in what I was writing. You can't have private opinions in this work. When they were talking about limiting the pay of public defenders in civil rights cases
to $75 an hour I supported the idea. Friends called me up at 6 AM and they were not friends.

"But when Hinkley's father took all the blame [for the attempted assassination] I wrote 'This is a 27 year old man; don't take it all on yourself.' People called me up for days, and people I had known for years would come into my office, close the door and say 'I never told you about my son in San Quentin.' I guess I think I did some good with that."

How did she get the job?

"Meg invited me to lunch one day. I was working at [a downtown law firm] and making a lot of money. I said 'Do you think I could do it?' and she said 'I don't know.' So I've been there five years. Meg is a terrific person; she translates Virgil for recreation on long train rides.

"It was quite funny last week when Pat Buchanan sent her his piece announcing his candidacy for President. Meg called him up and said 'Are you sure you want to do this?' and he said 'I'll give it to the Times.' So we published it. Then Meg wrote that wonderful editorial endorsing him and he withdrew."

The next two years?

"I think the Supreme Court won't change much. Scalia is more liberal than Reagan thought he would be. Rehnquist has surprised no-one. I think the two oldest will hang in there -- they only have to last 18 months now. Thurgood Marshall complains that someone is always asking him 'How are you feeling?' I see a more activist Congress but it will be slow downtown -- you know, there were a couple of times last year when Byrd and Dole came to the Post and said "You have to help us -- we can't talk to him [Reagan]."

* * *

Winter had the last word 12 days after the first snowfall. Early in the morning of Tuesday, February 3, the snow melt from piles of snow flowed out over the highways and froze, and there were several accidents in the HOV lanes between 6 and 6:30 AM. The response of the Virginia highway department was to close the HOV lanes. By 7:30 when I joined it (unknowing, believe me) the regular lanes were completely jammed and moving about 5 mph. It took me an hour and 45 minutes to travel the 11 miles to the office. Later we heard that although they reopened the HOV lanes at 7:30 the congestion stretched 20 miles into Virginia and lasted until 10:30.

If there are any conclusions to be drawn from the snow fiasco they are these: (1) People in Washington take their jobs seriously and believe they can individually cope with the difficulties of snow and ice. (2) We lack the information and communications systems to manage reliably the transport in adverse conditions of hundreds of thousands of self-directing individuals twice daily across a 25 mile radius. Though we command the technology and can afford the hardware, we are unable, or unwilling, to agree that it is important to do so.
And indeed, the cynic asks whether all this Washington busyness is essential. It was easy, during the snow, to wonder if the country would be endangered if only 5000 people worked at the Pentagon instead of 35,000, if the rabble of lawyers, clerks and secretaries could be reduced by 50% without paralyzing the body corporate, or if the trade associations (lobbyists) would even be missed if they all moved to Los Angeles.

During the crisis more than one critic remarked that if the Soviets wanted to take over this country all they would have to do is drop ten inches of snow on Washington. Yet this is also a misunderstanding, forgetting that the people crowding the Metro stations and skidding around on the highways were there because they believed it was important to go to their jobs. We forget that 'making the trains run on time' was an accomplishment of a fascist regime. The Soviets, for all their experience of harsh winters would not do a better job of managing the U.S. Capitol in a blizzard, nor would their information and communications systems be equal to the task of managing millions of competent, confident, self-directing individuals. This TV fantasy 'Amerika' is hopelessly petty and parochial, a nightmare of spineless souls who believe nothing worth dying for, and so must kill to have something to live for.

* * *

The snow was too deep for Isabell to get beyond the cleared paths and the driveway, so when we took our accustomed walk on the first Saturday of the thaw, we had to pick our way over the mountains of dirty snow left by the snowplow to get onto Ridgewood and down into the woods. I had gone down to the ravine on the cross-country skis the preceding Sunday, and I knew there was a trail of sorts. It was still hard going. Isabell's tiny feet went right down to the wet ground and she got mired in sodden snow everywhere except when following my footsteps. I forded the creek in my waterproof boots, but she had to wade in the icy water. I felt bad for having brought her, and headed back sooner than I would have done normally.

The snow cover was thick and wet, and there was no open ground anywhere. The top of the snow was littered with shards of tulip-tree seeds and sweet-gum balls. The three crows that live in the ravine were chasing a hawk. The hawk glided west, then returned and the crows flapped, cawing, not letting the hawk land. Isabell and I climbed out of the fettering drifts into the trampled snow of the roadway and felt free.

* * *

Mid-February 1987

Note: To allow maximum access to tickets for staff, if you are single please limit your request to one ticket unless you have in mind a specific close personal friend to attend with you; if that applies, feel free to request two tickets.

note appended to an ACTION MEMORANDUM
Phil, Colonel (ret.) USMC, is the Administrative Assistant -- the top person in a Senate office. He is in his mid-fifties, with greying hair, a courtly manner and a military bearing. Under his leadership we have the MEMORANDUM and the ACTION MEMORANDUM, and both are subject to 'selective underlining' and clarifying [sic, sometimes] handwritten notes. For all his military background and assumptions, he is kindly, friendly and approachable. He defends his ideas with spirit but is never hostile or patronizing toward the ideas of others. He is an excellent conversationalist and has a very large vocabulary, though he achieves precision best in the oral mode (vide supra). However, the Senator listens to him, which is the only thing that counts.

* * *

Since the beginning of the session Dale and Marty have been spending the greater part of their work-days arranging and sitting in on interviews with Glenn about the Challenger disaster a year ago, and his own orbital flight 25 years ago. What this means is that most of the routine work of the Press department devolves upon me, including the radio news conference call each Wednesday morning. Twelve to fifteen radio stations get on the phone line; each news director can ask a question and they all hear all the answers and can tape them. The questions are ad lib, and it is up to us to guess what may be asked and provide Glenn with briefings on those issues.

Monday morning I make a list of likely issues, drawing on the clips from Ohio papers, the current 'hot topics' in the Post and Times, and the hunches of other staff members. I give the list to Ron, who requests briefings from the Legislative Assistants. Tuesday evening he returns the pack of briefings to me, and I make two copies to be ready for the morning.

The conference call begins at 9:30; Dale and Marty go in to brief the Senator at 9. This week, with Marty busy arranging interviews, I got to sit in on the call itself.

We knew he would get questions on Iran and the threatening pose of the Reagan administration on the Persian Gulf, on the Federal pay raise rejected by the Senate (Glenn defended the raise), on raising the 55 mph speed limit, and on the Clean Water bill. We thought he might also get questions on Terry Waite, on the Americas Cup or on an alleged drug-selling sting operation by the Cleveland Police.

Dale and I went in about 9:05. MJ was joshing with Glenn about someone saying that he controlled all his staff members, and Glenn was demonstrating a Svengali pose. When he turned to Dale and said "Well, what have we got here?" Dale jerked his hands up as if on marionette strings and handed the Senator the pack of briefings. Glenn laid them out, solitaire style in columns on his desk, with the topics at the top of each page.

"What's this about radio obscenity?" I had chased that one down. A Cleveland radio station had been picketed by a handful of Arabs who had taken umbrage at a rock song they felt reflected unfavorably on their ancestry. I said I doubted anyone would ask about that; Dale said "yeah, but you never know."
Glenn leafed through the pages, reading and underlining with his blue felt-tip pen, asking about some of the smaller issues. Finally Dale said "Those aren't going to come up, Senator," and the talk turned to the hostages, Terry Waite, and the movement of U.S. Navy ships in the Persian Gulf.

At 9:25 Patricia and Ken came in to observe, and the Conference Call operator called in. I took the names of those who were on the line and revised the list for the Senator and put the call on hold. Glenn looked at the list briefly, then picked up his phone and said "Good morning. This is John Glenn in Washington. Let's see, who's first? Carol Harm. Are you there, Carol?"

He listened to her question. MJ was fussing with his small tape-recorder and getting it in position beside the briefing papers. "Yes, I'm very concerned about that. We want to cut back on terrorism, but here we are, in a posture that suggests that we are going to attack. Of course, it may be a bluff, but bluffs are dangerous, especially in the Middle East. Besides, the forces we have there aren't counter-terrorists forces -- they're conventional forces, and they're only effective when you have a distinct target and goal. But we don't. You can't tell the terrorists from the ordinary people, and you can't blow up a whole city because there might be some terrorists there. We're putting people in harm's way, and we may be only engendering more terrorism."

The next question was on the attempt to raise the speed limit to 65 mph in rural areas. "I opposed it because the 55 mile limit saves lives," the Senator said.

Ohio Public Radio asked about the pay raises for Congress, the Judiciary and Executive branches. Glenn said "I'm a little cynical about that. I floor-managed the bill, and I call the behavior of the Senate 'Profiles in Cowardice.' The vote in the House was meaningless -- 'vote no and take the dough' -- they knew they would get the money anyway. I voted for it because I don't want to see public service only for the very young and the very wealthy."

Then Cleveland Public Radio weighed in with a question on AIDS research. We had not provided a briefing and he was on his own. "I think it is most important that research go forward. This is a disease that is not just transmitted sexually. I think we have to support any promising research, and I think we're going to have to check travelers and immigrants for AIDS -- we could probably do it for measles. I think we have to do everything possible to protect our overall population."

Next: "Yes, our civil rights laws are being ignored. We need enforcement. We're in the hardest part (of ending racism) right now. We have the laws, but we have to enforce them. It's the responsibility of the Executive Branch, and Reagan hasn't enforced them. But it's more than that. How do we make people want to live within the law? How do we make this part of everyday living? But this Georgia thing is intolerable."

Terrorism returns: "I don't like this buildup to hit unidentified targets, and bluffs don't work. I've asked for more information. Terrorism won't be solved by military confrontation; it's the wrong tactic for the foe. In this case we have clandestine forces, dispersed. We made this mistake before. I
could see some sense if we had a specific target, but we can’t go around shooting things up just to make a point. Besides, a show of force doesn’t work. These are religious fanatics who believe they’ll go to heaven if they die for their cause. ...Well, there are things we could do if the rest of the world...if nations would agree to cut off the tourists, business, trade to nations harboring terrorists, we could ratchet it down. But we need an agreement among nations.”

There were some unexpected questions: the Supreme Court decision on pregnancy and maternity leave? "Well, we want women to move up career ladders, but I don’t know – can they be off three or four months?"

Are the Soviets ahead of us in manned space flight? "We’ll have the lead when we get going again. We’ve always been better in overall technical ability…” He lapses briefly into the language of ‘a curious, questing people,’ and ‘basic, seminal research’. "And we’ve gone back to the way it was – the astronauts have the final say, and they’ll get comments from them on everything. That was how we did it."

Dale signals that he can take one more question. "Clean water? I will vote to override. The President can’t be for clean water and expect the good fairy to come down and make it happen. It was one of his campaign promises -- he said we needed it. And it won’t get any cheaper."

"We have to wind things up here, but let me go back to Iran for just a moment. We keep hearing different versions, and subplots and accusations, but let’s just remember one thing: It was the President who got us into this by trading arms for terrorists. And that’s flat wrong."

* * *

During Lauren’s vacation in Florida Nelson joins Isabell and me on our weekend walks in the ravine. Nelson is not content just to run around and sniff tree-trunks. He pursues his favorite prey, with which the ravine is lavishly supplied. He spots one or scents it beneath the leaves and barks triumphantly, then pounces. The hapless stone is then nudged or pawed into motion, and soon subdued. Nelson trots off carrying his prey, inert as ever, in his mouth. He often chooses stones too big for his jaws, which elicits more frantic barking and pawing. Coming home up the street we play dog-soccer with a dry stick about a foot long and an inch thick (one that makes a nice wooden clank on the pavement). When Nelson drops it, I kick it forward; he chases it, takes it in his teeth and carries a little way, then drops it again.

Today about halfway home, he got tired of the game. I kicked the stick some distance ahead and he went for it, but instead of picking it up, he peed on it.

* * *
Spring today, from 9:30AM until 11:30AM. It is now summer, and will be (sigh) until November. It has been a tolerable winter, which helped a little, except that I have had an infection which has left me feeling rotten about myself and unable to do much toward finding a job to get me out of Washington. I have sent out three inquiries, long shots, and received no response at all.

The past month at the office has been hellish. Absolutely nothing came of my memo about job descriptions, except that Marty found herself busier than ever, and unable to do the radio show, so that got added to my duties. The kid-letters have kept coming, and I suggested to Dale that they could be done with ROBOS on CMS by the support staff, and he said “Good idea, write me a memo.” But it had to wait until the 25th anniversary flap was over.

So the kid-letters piled up, and the ones we call ‘problem’ letters (endorse my book, send me a handwriting sample to analyze, why do you watch documentaries? send me an old necktie, describe your favorite precious stone, etc.) piled up, and I barely kept up. I conned Patricia, Elaine and Kathleen into doing some of the VIP letters, and dealt with the rest by getting to the office at 7:30 AM – at 8:30 the phones start to ring. I wrote all the news releases there were during that time, answered endless questions for Adam Condo, Tom Diemer, Bill Hershey, Jim Hannah and Tom Price, and acted as a buffer between Marty and Murphy over scheduling. I also nursed the telexpier through a serious illness, and then spend another week with its doctor, who kept pestering me to find out if it was still working.

In the midst of this I wrote a letter for the Glenns’ former church in Webster, Texas, and one to the city of Euclid, Ohio, for their celebration of the Constitution. Everyone liked them, and I modestly admit they were pretty good. The MEDIA REVIEW was late three weeks running, including this week, but there was an extra issue of 50 pages with articles about the 25th anniversary celebrations. The week of the anniversary started with Presidents’ Day, a holiday. I went to the office intending to work for four hours and stayed seven. Tuesday I set up the radio show, instructed the GAC staff on the preparation of an opening statement for the hearing on Wednesday. About midday Marty decided that we had to have new bios printed for the Media Availability on Thursday. I searched out the file, wrote the revisions, negotiated with the Service Department, made two trips to the basement and got that in hand. Phone calls, copying, and bailing out an intern filled the rest of Tuesday.

Wednesday morning Marty decided I should go to the GAC hearing and she would do the radio show. “Take the flag, and save a seat for Bill Hershey.” I went over to Dirksen at 9:30, carrying the flag, and put it in the stand. Len objected; I moved the flag. The room filled up -- all three nets were there -- and there were not enough seats. There were a lot of kids from Close-Up there, who scarfed up the releases intended for the Press, then fell asleep in their chairs. I had a seat, but Dale had me give it to a journalist who got there late. But then when another seat became vacant,
he motioned me to take it. It was an interesting hearing, about the arrogant people at the National Security Council and State Dept. who wouldn’t permit GAO audits.

Back at my desk at 12:30 I returned all the calls that had come in during the morning. One Florida radio station put me on hold with their live talk-show coming over the phone: "What about in cases of oral sex or anal intercourse...transfer of bodily fluids..." I went down to the Service Department and brought back 500 new bios.

Dale, meantime, had been sequestered in the Senate Chef writing the opening remarks for the Media Availability on Thursday. He brought them back for me to type into the computer at 3:30. With the phone ringing constantly and Marty leaning over with threatening looks if I didn’t answer by the second ring, it took me until 5 to finish them. Then I found that Printer 3 was down, so I cued it to 5. Someone had put letterhead in the plain-paper tray of 5, so I cued it again to Printer 2. At 5:10 I had the printout and I dashed down to the Copy Center to get 100 copies. Their machine was down, but they called down to the Service Department, which agreed to do it for us.

I ran all the way down to the Service Department, and was prepared to wait (and rest) until it was finished. But they said it would take a half hour, they would call me. I went back upstairs, ignorant that at about that time all the phones on Capitol Hill went out. We found that out soon enough, and as I knew they couldn’t call me, I went down to get the statements. They, in the meantime had sent someone up with them. Then I printed out a speech version, checked out and packed up a tape recorder, and was ready to go home at 7:15.

Thursday I left home at 7 to be at Air & Space by 8. The Media Availability at 9 went off without a hitch, and by 10:30 I was back in the office. I called all the Ohio delegation to invite them to the anniversary party on Friday (two showed up). I spent a couple of hours trying to get a phone coupler to work to transmit the tape of Glenn's remarks that morning to three Ohio radio stations. I answered phones, wrote a couple of letters, and kept running out to the reception area to greet the next camera crew while Marty was supervising the taping of a previous one.

Friday I left home at 6:30 so I could see Glenn on the Today Show at the office, then get a head start typing the speech for the Mercury 7 Foundation dinner that evening. Marty was ferrying a houseguest somewhere and wasn’t there and Dale was with the Senator; the phone rang incessantly. At 9 everyone crowded into Dale’s office to see the Senator on CNN.

At 10 Marty arrived but went right downstairs to edit a tape. She had been feuding with a woman (a truly nasty piece of goods) from the Smithsonian Associates who insisted that she had to have certain tapes immediately. This woman had kept me on the phone repeatedly on Thursday, accusing me of protecting Marty. The Smithsonian woman started calling again, every three or four minutes, and I finally had to switch the Press office phone to the front desk and only answer calls on my line. I managed to find time to write a few sentences for my presentation of cartoons by Ohio cartoonists to Glenn at the afternoon party.
That began at 2:30, in one of the GAC Hearing Rooms. There was a lot of Press there, and we made it into the Style Section of the Post. We got back to the office about 4 o'clock, and Phil declared it a 4:30 day.

On Monday snow shut down the office again, but after Carole and I shoveled her car out I decided to go to the office and get caught up, again. I figured the cafeteria wouldn't be open, and that I would come home when I got hungry. But it was open, and I ended up staying 'til 5.

I worked on the clips all morning, and was just ready to go to lunch at 12:30 when Len called: "We have to get out a news release about tomorrow's hearing. I'll have someone bring it down about 1 o'clock."

I hurried downstairs and waited through long lines (few food service worker had come in) and took my sandwich back upstairs and waited. At 2:45 the GAC staffer turned up with this strange statement:

I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE INCREASING NUMBERS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS...I AM PLANNING A SERIES OF HEARINGS...MY WITNESSES WILL BE... – all in caps (hard to read) and the only mention of the Tuesday hearing was in the next to last paragraph, with no time or room number. I pointed out these shortcomings.

"Well, this has got to go out right away; can't we make an exception this time?"

I told him: "Not by me we can't, but I'll sign you onto our computer and you can rewrite it right now."

He declined, saying it would be quicker in his office.

At 4:15 he brought it back, much better, except that he has still neglected to put in the time. But I say okay, I can fix that and have it ready for you to take to the Press Gallery in ten minutes.

"Oh, I have a meeting. I thought you'd take it over."

I fixed and made 50 copies, but he decided he wanted to take it over himself after all, so all I had to do was call the wires and the Ohio press corps.

* * *

When the Tower Report came out on Thursday we planned a satellite feed of Glenn's response. Julie in the Columbus office was out sick, so it fell to my lot to make all 26 calls to give the coordinates and time. Then during the feed at 4:30 they accidentally cut us off, and said they would send it up again at 5:50. I printed a copy of the list of phone numbers, cut it into three pieces with the scissors and gave Dale and Marty each a piece. I finished all my calls, then did half of the calls Marty hadn't finished; Dale did all of his, and we finished at 5:45.

Then at 5:51 the phones started ringing again: "Where's the feed?" They had changed the bird and the coordinates and not bothered to tell us. When I left a little after 6 Dale was sitting his chair,
looking worried. As it turned out, however, Glenn's statement was picked up from the Gallery by the networks, and went out on the NBC A-Feed, so most of the Ohio stations got it anyway.

* * *

To Susi Lanyi in Oberlin

March 9, 1997

The whole business is tawdry, driven by ambition, greed and lust for power. Reagan is a very ordinary, rather unobservant person who enjoys his fantasies and is charismatic enough to persuade others to play his cowboy and toy-soldiers games. He has no idea how wrong his actions have been, and is apparently incapable of shame or remorse. And he is only the tip of the iceberg, an iceberg of great depth and hardness: arrogance – the belief that we know how things will work and what the consequences of actions will be, and the confidence that all the apples are ours for the picking.

I am constantly reminded of how little we understand and how badly we do things. The Gruter Home situation you wrote about had come to my attention in the Ohio papers when it first came to light. From this distance, it was impossible for me to know that the truth might be. I only knew that in every way, our society's treatment of those we arbitrarily define as 'retarded' is shameful. But the problems are deeply embedded in our culture, myths, values and language, and we can only mount holding actions against those armed with budgets and rule books.
I passed your letter along, though I doubt that there is much Senator Glenn could do except express his displeasure at the way things have been handled.

During my years on the Kent Board of Education our school district was plagued (I lack a better word) by the mother of an autistic youngster. She expected the public schools to right all the wrongs she suffered because her son was unable to communicate, or to succeed academically. I do not mean to sound harsh, but the misery she produced in thrashing about on Tommy's behalf was considerable. She told one of Tommy's teachers who had had a miscarriage that it was God's punishment for her failure to teach Tommy to read.

This mother found fault with everything the board did. We had established a class with special teachers for Tommy two years before PL 92-142 went into effect, but it never satisfied her and she entered a lawsuit against the board. The suit dragged through first an Impartial Hearing and review by the State Board of Education, then Federal Court in Cleveland, and finally the Appellate Court in Cincinnati. The board spent over $350,000 for lawyers and transcripts, and Kent Schools were upheld at every step of the way.

I have always believed that we (Kent Schools) did our best -- which may have been not very good
at first, but got better quickly. Starting from very meager clinical data and almost no educational data about autistic children, we moved very rapidly away from a 3-Rs curriculum to a skills-for-living program. Our classes had no more than six children with a teacher and two aides. The children learned and we learned.

The first time I observed Tommy's class he was 8 years old, and was struggling to match piles of two or three cards with numbered cards. The last class I observed was when he was 17, and they were learning how to measure rice: "Pour some rice out of the box into the cup. Look at the picture of the half cup and look at the rice in your cup. If there is too much rice, take some out of the cup. If there is not enough rice, put more in." It was a step-by-step pedagogy of everyday actions we take for granted.

As the result of the lawsuit and the opinions written by the judges PL 92-142 was refined, and precedents were set that will guide future educational programs as well as future legislation.

Yet the price was high, and the burden fell on the ordinary folk of one small school district. $350,000 would have bought a lot of textbooks, smaller classes for the 2000 other students, or a substantial raise for our teachers. There was almost no resentment from our teachers, even though the boy's father was a teacher at the high school. We were also lucky that we could afford it -- many school districts would have been bankrupted by such a cost.

There were some ironies. Because of the outstanding programs we developed, families with autistic children moved into our district, giving Kent Schools a statistical incidence of autism about 10 times the national level.

We as communities need to develop some consensus about what we care about and how we are to provide for one another fairly. We are a schizophrenic society, sentimental about our future in 'gifted' children, while warehousing, often at the parents' expense, those children we deem retarded. We agonize over the suicides of a handful of teenagers while tolerating a President who assures a steady supply of deadly weapons to known terrorists so that they can kill hundreds of children and teenagers at one time. These inconsistencies are not superficial, and no amount of 'knob-twiddling' is going to make them right. As we act toward the least among us, so shall we manage our living, worldwide.

* * *

I want to get out of Washington very badly, and I have been writing letters to likely places proposing myself for public information jobs, or 'special assistant' positions. Last weekend I cobbled up such a letter to S. Frederick Starr of Oberlin. I only know about him what I read in the Washington Post, (his views on the student protests against investment in South Africa, his opinion of l'affaire Danilov, and his jazz-band tour of Russia). I am not sure I would like working for him, but I know I would enjoy being in Oberlin again.

* * *

I started this in reply to your lovely letter about your adventures 'Down Under' and here is another note from you already. I've had the office cold this week, but I am feeling better and looking forward
to a fairly normal weekend. I am playing for the Fairfax Unitarians -- some Faure pieces, and Vivaldi, and so I must plug in an hour of practicing between bouts of word-processing. (That's a stupid phrase. One processes ideas, not words. It's like calling a tomato-plant a water-and-sunlight processor. The product of a word-processor could only be a dictionary.) And sometime today Isabell and I will take a walk down to the little stony creek to look for spring beauties and hepaticas.

Isabell declines to send greeting to Grumpi -- she is nervous about creatures of feline persuasion. We have one in our household here, a chaste and rather dull lady known as Babycat.

*   *   *

March 14, 1987

Dale spent a day in Oxford, Ohio, as a guest lecturer to political science and journalism classes. With his usual thoroughness he read up on current issues before he left, including the Tower Report and some of the briefings on international affairs from our office. When he returned he admitted he had been apprehensive about being 'shown up' on current affairs by the professors, but that he was relieved to find that he was way ahead of them. Even allowing for Dale's normal confidence, I'm sure he was. I find that I know more about, and can make more sense of events and people on the national scene than I ever believed possible. And although I do not socialize much outside the office, I find this general expertise is widespread in Washington -- in casual conversations on the Metro or exchanges overheard in the cafeteria.

How come? By my guess, it's the Washington Post. The Post, with 500 reporters, immediate access to reports from Congressional hearing rooms, the White House, the floor of the House and the well of the Senate, the Supreme Court, the Pentagon, and the corridors of numberless agencies and departments of the government. The reporting is never complete or free of bias, and there are many errors, of fact and of emphasis. Yet the existence of a text read by everyone in the Federal government creates an awareness, and a kind of consensus about what is going on that gives people in Washington a place to stand to move the earth. That text is provided by the Post, and the difference between Dale and the professors in Ohio is that he reads the Post every day, and they have access only to the New York Times. It is not that the Post publishes the truth -- there is rarely any 'truth' revealed at a hearing or in an interview that was totally unknown beforehand. What the Post does is places issues and ideas in the public discourse where they may be tested and put into play in the development of public policy. Bias, except in the case of prior restraint, is irrelevant. What is important is that something get printed, read and talked about. Of course, the Post readership is a well-informed, articulate and litigious crew, suffering foolishness badly and ready to correct the Post at the drop of a comma, to which the Post responds by publishing the complaints, never blushing and never apologizing. The Washington Post is the Proteus of the Capitol: changeable in form and identity, but yielding truth to the persistent inquirer. It is difficult to come up with an idea or angle on an issue that will not be treated in its pages by someone -- editor,
columnist, reporter, or writer of a letter to the editor. It's a national treasure.

* * *

For two years, since I have been in Washington, there has been a man picketing every day in front of the Supreme Court. He wears a pair of sandwich boards covered with red lettering that presumably expresses his disagreement with some decision made by the Court. Although I have several times walked up close enough to resolve the letters on his sign clearly, I cannot decipher any words. The letters, all caps, are crowded together without spaces and fill the lines from top to bottom, so one sees no words, only closely packed rows of letters. Even working from the assumption that he was against this decision or that, and looking for key words, I have never been able to identify a single word, or make any sense of his message.

It might serve as a kind of metaphor for my experience in Washington. I think it is the lack of empty spaces setting off words and lines in my daily experiences, and the tendency of everything here to be proclaimed in caps in red ink that makes my life here so indecipherable. There is no time to reflect, no silence that allows one to hear small sounds and weak voices. There are no spaces unfilled by buildings, streets, cars, people. I don't want to live like this; I can't make any sense out of my life.

It is why I want to get out of Washington. These two years have been very difficult and the past winter has been particularly discouraging. I work long hours with much stress and little satisfaction. What I do does not seem to make much difference in the world. My health has been undermined, mostly by periodontal problems I couldn't afford to have treated, and by lack of time for exercise or recreation. I have not made a lot of friends, and only been frustrated by the busyness of myself and those I would like to be friends with. Most of all, I have had nothing much to look forward to -- not even, on my salary, visits to my kids in California.

Last week I sent off an application for a job at the North Carolina School of the Arts that I read about in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. I have no idea whether I have any chance for it, but its mere existence and the fact that I have sent an application cheers me a little. Also the encouragement I've received from people at the office.

If I didn't have this to hope for, I would be in bad shape. The periodontist says that I need $1650 worth of work to keep from losing my teeth. I have known for a long time I needed periodontal work, but I had no way to pay for it. I had no health insurance at all before I came to Washington, and when I first joined Kaiser last year they had no dental benefits. When they announced that a dental plan would be available I thought the periodontal work would be affordable -- I would only pay 40% of the cost. So I went to their periodontist. At 40% it means he is recommending $4000 worth of work. On my salary of $20,600 (note the whopping 3% raise I got this year) I take home $15,004, and $1650 represents 11% of that -- just about all of my discretionary money.

I will manage somehow. The greater injustice is that there are so many people who cannot manage dental or medical care priced by what the rich or insured can pay, and who will lose their teeth, or
their health, or their lives. I don't see Congress even trying for some kind of universal health care. Instead we get billions for military hardware. And according to testimony at one of Glenn's recent hearings, we don't even know where half of that money is.

* * *

Eileen's car died one Saturday night in the left lane of the 14th Street bridge. She was rescued by a Good Samaritan, who put out flares, tried to start her car, and finally tried laying-on of hands and vocal prayer. It didn't work.

* * *

March 27, 1987

My computer monitor bleated once and bright line popped up on the bottom of the screen: THE SENATOR HIMSELF SAYS THIS IS A 5 O'CLOCK DAY!

It was 2:45, and I was staring at a document from my FAVRITE file entitled FAVBOOKL. This was the letter I used in responding to inquiries about John Glenn's favorite book that also had a paragraph about the importance of libraries. I was trying to decide whether to send it as it was to the St. Mary's Community Library or add something about the 200th anniversary of the Constitution. I had just finished sparring with Adam Condo of the Cincinnati Post over some materials he needed, taken a call for Dale from Meg Greenfield of the Washington Post, and lied to a radio station in Savannah about the Senator's whereabouts. (Is it better to tell them that there's no point in even asking, or to say that he is in a hearing and isn't available?) I decided against any addition to the letter and punched the keys to make the system format the envelope, then watched the computer talk to itself (and me): GO TO PAGE E1, COPY TO WHERE? COPY IN PROGRESS, ENVELOPE PAGE COMPLETE, and with another set of punches, sent it all to the printer.

The phone rang again, Celia, the office manager and Glenn's personal secretary: "You're a music lover, aren't you? Diane wants to talk to you."

Diane, (now in law school but working part-time for Annie Glenn. She was Glenn's personal secretary until last summer) came on the line: "Jake and Sally Davis can't use their tickets to the Slava Celebration this evening -- do you want them?"

You bet! The concert in honor of Mstislav Rostropovich's birthday at the Kennedy Center! I did some quick calculations about the logistics. A 7:30 concert, with an hour to get home on the Metro and bus and an hour to get back in time to park. I realized I didn't have time to rustle up anyone from outside the office, so I asked Eileen (Legislative Aide for Trade and Manufacturing) and she was glad to use the other ticket: "Oh, I'm not ready for class tomorrow, but I'll skip it if necessary to go to this."
George came by my cubicle. He had told me earlier that the Choral Arts Society was rehearsing a Penderecki piece written especially for this occasion, but that the members of the chorus would not get to hear the rest of the concert.

I got away at 5:05, leaving Dale and Marty both on their phones, and scurried down to the Capitol South Metro station, where I endured a lofty and elaborately polite argument between two gentlemen blocking both sides of the escalator, which caused me to miss one Yellow Line train. But despite that I caught the 5:40 bus at the Pentagon, got home at 6, fed Isabell, ate a bowl of cottage cheese and fruit for my supper, and, with some makeup stuffed in my purse (my roomies think I should wear makeup) I left at 6:30. For once I made no wrong turns, got across Memorial Bridge and into the parking garage ($4) at the Kennedy Center at 6:50.

The people going up the escalators were dressed in tuxedos or evening gowns in rich colors and fabrics -- brocades, taffeta, chiffon, be-pearled or sequined satins, velvet -- and furs, (despite the 70° weather), jewels, gloves, stoles or scarves. Some women wore makeup that looked like it had been applied with trowels, making me decide I didn't want to put on mine. The lobby was jammed; many there were more casually dressed -- the outdoor types in their LL Bean wrap-skirts and elegantly tailored denim jackets, and the young cosmopolitans in printed cotton lawn or embroidered muslin. There were also a fair number of dumpy middle-aged men and women in slightly too-tight suits or dresses, tired-looking but clean and correct. Souvenir programs were being sold for $1; people drank cocktails from plastic glasses or ate M&Ms from gloved hands; aged and infirm dignitaries in black-tie tooled across the foyer in electric carts. We were all waiting for the hall to be opened by the Herald Trumpets from the U.S. Army Band.

My seat was easy to find -- front row, right side, just in front of the lectern that Gregory Peck would use. Above center stage hung a great teardrop of ferns and flowers, dark red and yellow. Similar, smaller arrangements stood along the front of the stage, and closer examination revealed that the flowers were cymbidium orchids. The risers for the chorus were in front of the stage. There were a few musicians in tails on the stage, one playing the Russian hymn on the glockenspiel, another practicing scales on the double-bass.

Eileen arrived after a few minutes, excited. "I came in with them (Rostropovich and party) -- he was that far away from me -- with cameras and everything. They went up the steps...I wonder where they are going to sit." We craned our necks around to see the VIP box at the back, garlanded with ferns and orchids, but it was empty.

The hall was filling quickly, and we watched the people. Wealthy, plump, painted and expensively dressed and coiffed: these are the Beautiful People. I felt out of place, a Plain Person whose feet hurt.
At 7:40 the hall was filled and all the National Symphony players sawing and tootling in their chairs, but there was no sign of anything happening. Then a few minutes later a gracious, masculine loudspeaker voice said tentatively "Ladies and Gentlemen, Ladies and Gentlemen, Please welcome the First Lady of the United States, Nancy Reagan, and the person whose 60th Birthday we are celebrating tonight, Maestro Mstislav Rostropovich." We stood up and clapped, and watched the two distant figures seat themselves in their box.

As soon as everyone was seated, Leonard Bernstein, preceded by his classical round pot-belly, strode onto the stage and with an impish grin launched the orchestra into the overture he had written for the occasion. It was a terrible piece, but not, as it turned out, the worst on the program. It sounded like the worst bits from all his other overtures, and included a segment of audio-tape with political speeches, the fragment of the Russian hymn on the glock, and the entire orchestra shouting ‘Slava!’ at the end. I trust the work will find its place in the obscurity it deserves. Bernstein, however, thoroughly enjoyed it, and the audience loved it.

Gregory Peck appeared at the lectern over our heads and, whistling slightly in his dentures, welcomed everyone and explained that the Maestro was known as ‘Slava’ to his friends, which includes everybody.

Next up was the Bach d-minor concerto for two violins, with Ann-Sophie Mutter in an electric-blue strapless dress and her perpetual frown, and Sir Yehudi Menuhin -- frail, wiry and elegant, his hair wispy. He conducted, but was unable to make the National Symphony sound like the English Chamber Orchestra, no how. Altogether it was boring, but Menuhin still makes me grateful for his playing.

They were followed by Isaac Stern and Eugene Istomin, Beethoven Sonata #1, Op.12, the first movement. Stern played very slightly out of tune, and Istomin played this early work as if it were late Beethoven. Then Stern was joined by Jean-Pierre Rampal in a Vivaldi concerto (certainly one of the ones he wrote 400 times). I had the distinct impression that they were sight reading, but it didn’t matter because watching them was so entertaining. Rampal is a big bear of a man, and Stern just about came up to the stud in his shirt.

I was getting disillusioned. I found most of the playing rather poor, and the audience was ecstatic. I was wary of the Penderecki, coming up next. I had never much liked what I had heard of his music, though I thought I had never heard decent performances. The Choral Arts Society filed in, the women from the left and the men (including George, who sings bass) from the right and perched themselves on the risers. A stagehand in a tux had brought in a music stand and set it the center aisle right in front of the chorus, and Penderecki himself walked in at the end of the line of men in the chorus. He is a compact man with a well-trimmed beard and serious demeanor.
'Song of the Cherubim' was outstanding -- a luminous piece, beautifully crafted and strong, and performed with precision and grace. At the end, Penderecki bowed to Rostropovich, and bowed again to Norman Scribner (the conductor of the Choral Arts Society) and joined the line of basses walking out.

[Patience. We are not yet halfway through the program.] Closing the first half of the concert was a lanky near-albino Scandinavian cellist, Frans Helmerson, who played the second and third movements of the Franck sonata. It was well done, but pointless, and not suitable for that great barnlike hall.

During intermission the tuxedo clad stagehands removed the risers and steps that gave access to the stage. I stayed in my seat, my feet not feeling like hiking out to the lobby.

The second half opened about 9:30 with Cristobal Halffter conducting his own fanfare for brass instruments, "Slava, Peace Be with You." It was a blatting, squawking piece that started fortissimo and made a long crescendo. Halffter conducted with no discernible beat, only a series of sweeping gestures, rising from a position of crouch. At the climax (Peace Be with You) he pulled inward in a spasm of intensity embarrassing to watch. (He and Ann-Sophie should confine themselves to audio recording.)

Best Performance of the Evening hands-down to Yo-Yo Ma and Murray Perahia for the "Bei Mannerin" Variations (Beethoven). Their playing was even, witty, good humored, fresh, and technically very fine.

Sir Yehudi conducted the Stravinsky "Circus Polka" with verve and style, and seemed to take a certain wry pleasure in the funny musical quotes -- Schubert's Marche Militaire, for one. Next all the cellists of the orchestra, plus Ma, Helmerson and Gary Hoffman put on the Villa-Lobos 'Bachianas Brasilieras #5' with soprano Benita Valente. She outclassed the cellos heavily. The final work was the Shostakovich "Festive Overture" conducted by the composer's son Maxim, a friend of Slava. Maxim is not so much a conductor as a dancer-clown-acrobat-actor and whirling dervish. Vigorous is too pale a word to describe him. The members of the orchestra, however, paid little attention.

During the Shostakovich Rostropovich came down the aisle with Nancy Reagan and both came out on the stage, where they were joined by all those who had performed (except the chorus). Kathleen Turner presented Nancy Reagan and Rostropovich each with a dozen 'Slava' roses. Gregory Peck then took Nancy Reagan's roses and gave her a baton. She walked to the podium and conducted the orchestra in "Happy Birthday to You" in which the entire audience joined. She was lovely and graceful in a long, lime-green dress, and she gave an easy, unskilled beat with great aplomb and modesty. Slava, meanwhile, was busy kissing everybody on the stage on both cheeks, which took quite some time.
I have omitted all the little speeches and homey stories spoken between the musical selections. Clearly this man is greatly admired for his musicianship and much loved for his human qualities.

I first heard him play in Cleveland in 1956, on his first American tour. He played the Dvorak and Saint-Saens concerti, better technically and more brilliant musically than any of us, cello students at Oberlin, had ever heard before. We went backstage after that concert and found a scrawny shy Russian wearing owlish glasses and a drip-dry shirt still damp from his exertions. He was very friendly and pleased (in Russian) that Oberlin students had come to hear him play. He autographed our programs; I still have mine.

He is still a great musician, and a considerably skilled entrepreneur. He has won support and acclaim for what I still consider a second-rate orchestra. But this is apparently what the Washingtonians want.

The only thing that puzzled me about the evening was the absence of his wife, Galina Vishnevskya. If she was there, we didn't know it, though his sister and her husband were introduced.

The Washington Post ran a review of the rehearsal, but not the concert itself, in the Style section. I suppose it would be indelicate to criticize all these world famous musicians. Anyway, the audience was well satisfied.

Back in my car afterward I slipped off my shoes and drove in my stocking feet along the lighted highway, still full of traffic at 11:30 PM. The radio offered a choice of a Strauss waltz or some Slavic-neurotic symphony. I switched it off.

* * *

APRIL 1987

April 8, 1987

This week Annie was to make a speech to parents of special ed kids in Zanesville. Though I have been writing her speeches, somewhere a decision was made that Marty should write the speech. Nothing was said to me until Marty asked me if I had any speeches of Annie’s that might have some language she could use. I said "Sure, just wait a minute and I’ll help you get them out of the computer file."

I went to my terminal and used COPY to put a couple of speeches I thought she could use into my Work-in-Progress. (This was to ensure that I would still have them after she had accessed the files on the Honeywell system. It is complicated to explain, but this ill-designed computer system allows everyone access to everything in Files, but not to what is in Work-in-Progress in individual accounts.) Then I went over to her desk and showed her the SPEECHAN file, and how to MOVE (I
didn't want to take time to explain the difference between MOVE and COPY) it to her WIP. I explained that she could go ahead and rewrite anything that was there, or take out parts and move them around or to a new document, anything that was useful to her. Back at my own terminal I renamed the speeches and put them back in Files.

Marty wrestled with the opening for several hours, and made a beginning that fit pretty well, and Dale approved it. Then she came to me to find out how to format it for the printer so that it could be enlarged on the copier. I had previously created a little script for that, to give to legislative aides when they wrote things the Senator would have to read from, and I printed that out and gave it to her.

I guess my script wasn't as clear as it should have been, and the pages didn't turn out quite right. She was at lunch when the pages came off the printer, so I revised my instructions and had her try it again when she got back. (This was an opportunity to get my instructions fine-tuned.)

In the meantime, I was writing and rewriting two News Releases and seeing that they got out by Riding Page, distributing the clips, revising our phone lists, fielding calls from the Press: “Is the Senator really going to the National Enquirer breakfast?” “What time is the hearing tomorrow?” setting up the Radio Show (Marty finally said I should just do it every week, which is what I wanted, because I can now plan for it and not have to interrupt what I have scheduled for Tuesday afternoon to make the calls) – writing congratulatory letters, filling auction requests and helping people with the printers or teletypewriter.

I have serious misgivings about Dale leaving and Marty becoming Press Secretary. She is very bright and good at the cajolery and negotiation that is an important part of PR, but she doesn't seem to have much sense of the nuts and bolts of information management, either on paper or in computer files; she lets thing pile up, unfiled and unidentified, and seems not to understand the First Principle of File Use: Always leave files in better condition than you found them.

In fact, that's a first principle for almost everything we do, and is why I spend time every day making sure that every process or protocol I use is described and stored in the computer in a file called HOWTO. It's available to everyone on staff, and will be there for the luckless person who inherits my job if I manage to get another one. My protocols may not be the best or most efficient, but something is better than nothing.

My other reflection about the situation is that Marty has been put in an impossible position – elected to a post without having to run for it. She was dissuaded from taking the job with the NRDC by being promised Dale’s job when he left. I’m not sure who decided that. It is hard for me to imagine, for example, that Phil would have been promised the AA job before Ed left. Of course Phil got no such promise, which made him very alert and careful in his preparation for getting the job. Marty would be in a much better position if she had been working for a year to earn her selection as
Press Secretary when Dale left.

So I think she is very insecure and Dale is a little nervous. I think that most people in this office, if they need a news release or something from the Press office, come to me. I have to believe that Dale knows that, but it would be bad form to talk about it, so we don't. One of the reasons I want to leave is that I don't want to be in the position of cleaning up after her after Dale is gone. Once he is gone, she will have to police her own behavior.

I forgot to tell you these stories -- funny, I think, and certainly characteristic.
The day Woody Hayes died I got to the office about 8:15. I had heard the news on my car radio while jammed in traffic on the 14th Street Bridge. When Glenn came for his coffee (the coffee closet it right across the aisle from my cubicle) he said some things about Woody being a great coach even though he had a terrible temper, but he really had a heart of gold, etc. (I jotted down some notes.) By and by Phil came along, and said we should gin up a statement on Hayes, so I did that, using Glenn's own words as much as possible.

When I finished Phil said to take it right in to the Senator; he studied it for a minute and wrote a few words on it. Dale came in, looked over Glenn's shoulder and said "That's fine."

As Dale and I were walking back to the Press office, Marty arrived, breathless: "Woody Hayes died this morning -- we ought to have a statement."

Dale: "We know."

Marty: "He was coach for 27 years and he won hundreds of games and ...."

Dale: "We know."

Marty: "Well, are you going to write a statement?"

Dale: "We already did."

There was more fun to come. Dale decided to gussie up the statement a little: "We'll get coverage on every TV station in Ohio with this. We need one good line, one thing that everyone remembers about Woody so they'll say 'That's it! That's Woody!'"

But twenty minutes of thinking did not produce the line he hoped for, so I suggested 'Heart of gold, will of iron, personality of brass'.

"That's good," he said, "but it should be 'will of steel'." We batted it around some more, and finally
settled on 'heart of gold, mind of steel and a style that was pure brass'.

Dale hiked over to Dirksen and sneaked in behind the Senator at the hearing to get his approval. "The Senator wanted to change the last part -- he said it was ungrammatical -- but I think it's all right. Anyway, he went with it."

The day the FEC announced that Glenn could use his Senate campaign surplus for the Presidential campaign debt I was again the only Press person there. Dale was in Ohio, and Marty was staying home to wait for the building inspector so she could press her suit against her landlord. It fell to me to draft the Senator's statement, which I wasn't well prepared to do, because I hadn't been privy to any discussions about the issue. I did a couple of sentences and took them in to him. He rewrote them pretty extensively, then drew a whimsical face on the page. I saved the page, of course (and made a copy) and showed it to Marty when she arrived later. She looked wistful: "You should save that. It'll be worth something someday."

Actually it was worth a lot to me right then.

*   *   *

To Don Anthony

April 12, 1987

I just happen to have a pirated photocopy of the Penderecki, which I send herewith. The scrawl on the front is the composer's autograph, which George collected, and he means to have framed. George has been singing in the Choral Arts Society for some 12 years and has done several Penderecki works with them, including the Polish Requiem from its early stages. George is 50, a lean balding man, blue eyes, a shy smile and a fine bass voice. He is one of the dedicated polymaths of Washington, with degrees in law and economics. He has worked with the Joint Economic Council, with another Senator and with a manufacturing technology office. He's divorced with a daughter, 20, and a son, 17. Since he learned of my interest he has given me tickets to the Choral Arts concerts. I enjoy his company enormously. He has a sensible, temperate way of looking at things within a larger passion for how things work, and the ability to enjoy whatever he is doing, from talking to the Senator to laying tile in his bathroom. We have wonderful conversations without the slightest hint of romance. I have no intention of starting anything, and I don't think he has either.

George's first assistant, Eileen (tall, very bright, about 28 years old) had invited George and me to go with her to see a friend playing the role of one of the Three Little Maids from School in the Arlington Players production of "Mikado". We had dinner before the show at a beer & hamburger
restaurant nearby. Conversation turned to marriage.

Eileen: I guess I'd like to be married, if only so I didn't have to worry about how to spend Saturday night. [stifled gasps from the veterans of matrimony]

Me: Well, you know, I don't think I've ever seen a marriage I'd be willing to be in.

George: I never thought of that before, but I think you're right. Even my parents -- that is, my father and stepmother -- they have as good a marriage as I have seen, but I wouldn't want to be in a relationship like that.

I showed George my sketch of the Slava concert. He thought I was a little hard on Rostropovich. "He is really such a wonderfully warm and enthusiastic person, it's impossible not to like him."

* * *

Interesting about your friend's house. My first response was 'where did the money come from?' revealing my underlying anxieties, not just of the moment, but of most of my life. With your letter came one from a former neighbor in Kent who is now living in Middletown, Connecticut with her husband and a five year old daughter. They are trying to live on about $20,000 a year and can hardly make it, even living in subsidized housing. On top of it all, her father in law is dying of a cancer too long neglected because he couldn't face the humiliation of poverty to get medical attention in the early stages when it might have been curable. I get very angry to watch honest, earnest, beautiful people ground down, disappointed, left hopeless without even the energy to protest the injustice they endure.

My anger is compounded by my own situation in which I have just enough to have a modest place to live, enough food, a non-air-conditioned car, health insurance, and the choice of a trip to the West Coast to see my kids or periodontal surgery. I don't really get to make that choice, which is why I wept in the periodontist's office, embarrassing him and humiliating myself.

There is another job possibility on the horizon, at a community college in Michigan. I am half-blinded by the proposed salary range: $51,045 - $59,995, but I think I could do it. I still feel uneasy over what I do in the Senator's office -- write pretty letters to important people, write lucid prose explaining his newsworthy activities, and a lot of hand-maidenly, motherly, and entropy-reducing behaviors.

On Wednesday I am driving to Hartford to see my brother and his family, and hear him sing the St. John Passion with his church choir.

* * *
To Vic Arnold

April 25, 1987

Curses on this cheap TV, which is showing me a screen shuddering all over, with sharp white lines fluttering from lower right to upper left, and soft waves surfing up from lower left to upper right. This is a $30 Salvation Army special, bought to replace the one given to me in 1984, which ran two years beyond its predicted demise, but did, finally, die. I cannot find $150 to buy a new one, neither in my purse nor in my heart, because I want an 80-column screen, which means a real computer monitor, at $270 (for monochrome). The reason for the 80-column screen is WYSIWYG. That's pronounced Wizzywig, and is the acronym for What You See Is What You Get, and would enable me to see the whole width of the text I am working on.

+WAIT! THIS IS YOUR CONSCIENCE SPEAKING. A FRIENDLY LETTER NEVER STARTS WITH CURSES. NOT EVEN PASSIVE CURSES.
- SHUT UP. ANYWAY, THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A PASSIVE CURSE.
+ YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. AT LEAST BE CIVIL.
- I AM.
+ YOU AREN'T. YOU MIGHT AT LEAST THINK OF YOUR FRIENDS WHO DON'T HAVE WORD PROCESSORS. NOW TRY AGAIN.

I had a very nice trip to visit my brother Vic and family in Connecticut. It's so good to get out of Washington.

+OH, CONNECTICUT IS ONLY LESS WORSE THAN WASHINGTON?
- OKAY, OKAY.

It was a good trip. I got back about 5PM Sunday, after driving through heavy but steady traffic, with no delays. I am finally learning to talk to myself about where I am going and how I am going to get there, which keeps me from missing turn-offs and helps me learn and remember route numbers, landmarks and street names. When I first came to Washington my driving and navigation produced such grim outcomes I almost gave myself up to premature senility.

I have begun to realize that I have always had someone else in the car with me when I drove new routes and in unfamiliar cities, and had constant conversations about where we were going and how we would get there – plus another observer to look out for signs and markers.

The week since I got back has been busy, both in the office and for my job search. I sent off another application, and had flurry of excitement over a position I had applied for in North Carolina.
The personnel director called me Thursday and said I was one of four candidates shortlisted from 113 well qualified candidates, and asked if I could come down next week. But when I called her back on Friday she said they were having difficulty scheduling the other candidates for next week, and the Chancellor would be out of town the following week, and she would call me again next week.

I don’t like the sound of that. It bespeaks a certain lack of consensus and resolve within the Search Committee. I can (and do) invent all kinds of scripts about what might be happening, mostly centering around power-plays in academic politics. Working as I do now in public politics I tend to forget that academic politics would be better named palace politics. The manipulation of power, for Senators and school-boards alike, is tempered by the election process, with the attendant necessity of keeping up at least the appearance of fairness, even-handedness and honesty. But I am trying to be optimistic. I think I would like the job, and I think I could manage the machinations of that kind of polity. I am not in the habit of seeing people as good-guys and bad-guys, only as people with differing agendas and incomplete skills of conversation and understanding.

In the same vein, I want to say that one thing that has impressed me in Glenn’s office is the very high level of mutual respect and social skills, as well as articulate expertise and broad general backgrounds. I genuinely like everyone I work with, including John Glenn, and I do enjoy the work, despite occasional exasperations. I am not seeking to leave because I dislike the job or the people I work with, but only because I want more space, time and quiet. I also want to be closer to the ground, in the sense of making some direct differences in the way I and my neighbors and friends live.

I am glad to have the opportunity to see the United States Senate from the inside. If nothing else it has cured me of the ambition of running for higher office. I suppose a lot of people, like me, have looked at what a Senator or President does and said to themselves: "I could do that. Why shouldn’t I be a Senator?"

I can answer that question now. I could do that, but it would cost too much. Not money (though it would certainly take more money than I could ever hope to have) but in songs not sung, music not heard, adventures not taken, stories not told, flowers not planted, conversations not held, silences not shared.

I admire -- but do not envy -- John Glenn, and Dale, who has been my boss for the last two years and is going back to Columbus to establish residence so that eventually he can run for public office, probably the U.S. House. He is willing to pay the costs, and I wish him well.

Anyway, it was good to visit with you, Peg and Heather. I enjoyed the bike rides and the naps and
the chance to talk and be comfortable with family. It's nice to be related to neat people.

* * *

April 25, 1987

There. I just called the document 'nemo' to get on with it. There are many things I want to write about, and I have just spent 20 minutes watching the cursor blink in the top left hand corner of the screen while I was trying to think up a document name that is easy to remember. My Latin is shaky, and I am still not adjusted to having an hour of my life filched by Daylight Saving Time, so this may be a misuse of the term 'nemo'.

This week in Glenn's office has been notable mostly for the time spent watching the TV monitors during the highway bill override ceremonies. By no means the least entertaining parts of the proceedings were the explanations C-Span put on the screen to edify the viewer about Senate rules. At one time motions were stacked four deep, with a change of sign at each node, so that Senators had to vote No on a motion to table in order to vote Yes on a motion to reconsider, and so on down through the pile. Great fun, too, was freshman Terry Sanford's gaffe and subsequent discipline in the Senate woodshed. I don't know if such maneuvers are necessary to democratic proceedings or if they are merely an artifact of the formalism of the Senate coupled to the a two-party system.

* * *

The Post OUTLOOK section this week gives pride of place (upper right corner) to a speech of Norman Lear in which he confronts the primacy of 'the bottom line' in our society, and the wreckage produced by short-term goals, exploitative individualism, and the fundamental assumption that money is the measure of all things. Elsewhere in the Post a story about the Pope's exhortation to people in South America to seek non-violent means to achieve social justice stands beside a story headlined U.S. SENDING 600 STINGER MISSILES TO AFGHAN REBELS.

The bankruptcy of public morality is evident everywhere -- in the AIDS epidemic (but not, as I will argue presently, in the homosexual behaviors of a small minority of American men), in the surrogate mother/abortion rights controversies, in problems of drug use and textbook control, as well as the perennial problems of war, and of the poor.

Let's start with AIDS. In biology, organisms arise and flourish through mutation and natural selection to exploit the resources available in a particular niche. Since the time, a few billions of years ago, when organisms first started feeding on one another instead on molecules of matter in water or air, there has been a fine line between feeding on others and eating them all up so there aren't any more -- then starving. Successful species develop strategies -- diversification, migration,
reproductive tricks – to keep themselves going in various kinds of scarcity.

Diseases, too, must develop a means to bring new hosts within reach or more often, to bring themselves to potential hosts. They are quite resourceful when it comes to fighting diseases, and the most successful are bacteria and viruses that knock out, at least temporarily, the human immune system. The AIDS virus we are now dealing with is ‘smarter’ than most viruses, at least in the short term, in permanently (apparently) destroying the immune system of its host.

Probably such smart viruses have risen many times among human populations, and have outsmarted themselves by either killing all the hosts in an isolated geographical area, or by failing to kill a few who were for some inheritable reason able to keep their immune systems going. The sparseness and isolation of human populations, as well as cultural constraints on intercourse (in the wider sense) with strangers prevented the spread of such diseases beyond the tribes or villages in which they arose, so that in time the disease itself died out.

But with the increase of trade with faraway places, local, parochial diseases could be spread world-wide. One of the first consequences of Marco Polo’s opening of trade with China was the Black Plague, which swept over Europe barely 50 years after his first journey. (Plague has two vectors, rats and fleas, which made its spread easier once it was established in a geographical area.) Measles was spread to non-immune populations (such as American Indians) by explorers in pursuit of trade goods.

But the most interesting diseases are the venereal diseases spread primarily by sexual intercourse — syphilis, gonorrhea and now AIDS -- because fundamental to their success in Western society is a set of cultural values that allows and even encourages promiscuous sexual behavior by males. The sexual exploits (literally, the exploitation of native women) of adventurers are a principal fiction-fodder of modern Western literature, and white young men grow up with the expectation that they are entitled to sex whenever, wherever and however they want it.

These folkways alone, however, would never have gotten the AIDS epidemic out of Africa. It also required the airplane and the anticipation of profit to transport numbers of men who lacked moral or utilitarian constraints on their sexual behavior to where there was an infected population and then bring them home again to spread the infection here.

That Genie is out of the bottle now, and there is no way to put it back. Research may eventually provide a vaccine; condoms may protect some individuals and abstinence others. But what have we learned from this, and how can we do it better next time?

Or take the case of Baby M. The court proceedings have revealed only a morass of righteousness, jealousy, greed, dishonesty and pride, as well as the bankruptcy of the perceiving
morality as "God-doesn't-like-it". GDLI may have a certain utility for the individual sect member, but in a pluralistic society we can only allow utilities of values shared by all. Indeed, most of what we now call morality is social utility: standards of behavior that produce good outcomes for society.

In these terms Mary Beth Whitehead's case was wrongheaded from the start. Having made a contract of her own free will, she was not entitled to break it on the grounds that it was 'immoral'. People make bargains all the time, and civil society is based on the binding of people to do what they have agreed to do. In fact, the management of human societies is dependent on the control of future events through the use of planning and prediction, which are agreements about future actions.

People often make bad plans and predictions, or bargains, and civil society is based on the understanding that, in exchange for the right to make bargains with others, the individual accepts the outcomes entailed in the bargain. A great deal of lawyering is bought and sold for the purpose of making contracts very precise about the predictions in them. But these issues are not about justice, and neither was the case of Baby M. The judge did the right thing: he addressed the questions of lawfulness (the validity of the contract) and the morality, or social utility -- the welfare of the child measured by the values of our society.

In education -- that is, in our secular common schools -- the only valid morality is social utility. Trouble is, a lot of folks conflate the Christian ethic with utilitarian goodness, despite Christianity's rather poor record in that respect, and believe that if we just taught 'Creation Science' and held prayers in school, all our problems would be solved.

James M. Wall, in a recent editorial in the Christian Century irritated me more than usual by saying that the reason famous athletes take drugs is that they are afraid of failure, poor things. That's pretty fanciful, and wrong. Famous athletes, I suspect, take drugs because they imagine themselves to be all powerful and able to 'handle' anything. I don't think adolescents take drugs out of fear of failure, either. I think kids who get hooked on drugs are already failures, and take drugs to ease their pain. Then we have Jim and Tammy Faye. They had everything: sex, extravagant living, money, Jesus, and an extraordinary arrogance.

So are there any lessons to be drawn from all this? Yes, but not easy ones. The first must be humility. We just can't know enough about the consequences of any values, beliefs, systems or behaviors to be certain they will produce a utilitarian goodness, even in our individual lives, let alone on a national scale. We must come to grips with our fallibility, think smaller, and scale down our ambitions for profit, comfort, power, growth, security, so that when we make a mess it is not of a global order of magnitude. We need to cherish diversity -- of the resources of our planet, of habitats and lifestyles, and of beliefs and values.
But most of all we have to end our obsession with power and death. That we tolerate, let alone participate in, the expenditure of astronomical sums of money, vast amounts of human time, and uncountable lives in preparation for wars that can only destroy us shows the terrible travesty we make of our lives. Somehow we have to edit out of our beliefs and vocabulary any morality or utility that encompasses the suffering or death of our neighbors. Although we are fully human only as social beings, we must nevertheless continue to locate moral responsibility in the individual, limiting their power to impose their beliefs on others.

Finally, we have to get clear in our heads what we mean by the words we use in our conversations. I see one imperative: we must place Justice and Love above and apart from our notions of utility or morality, above Freedom, Law, Security, the Pursuit of Happiness or Opportunity or Wealth. And we must finally recognize that in Love and Justice, our first loyalty and obligation goes to our neighbors -- our global neighbors as well as the family next door. Only so can we live justly, morally, lovingly.

This is scrappy and unfinished, but I might as well send it so I can get on with the really interesting things that are happening here - the Iran-Contra hearings.

* * *

MAY 1987

May 8, 1987

Several people have asked me why I don't go back to Kent, or why, in looking for a job in academia, I don't consider Kent State. Let me tell you why.

In addition to a regrettable proclivity for shooting first and holding trials afterward, there has always been a pettiness and arrogance to the administration and processes of KSU. Back in 1950, when I was an undergraduate, the campus police were visibly armed with mean-looking pistols as they patrolled the hallways for errant smokers, and at night they flashed lights into parked cars to flush out couples 'necking' -- a forbidden activity. Nothing much has changed. Listen:

Spring term of 1985 I came to Washington on a John Glenn Fellowship. I was a graduate student, and I had been encouraged to enroll that term, for special studies, to get credit for the paper I would write when I returned. Although I doubted I would complete the paper, I did register. I had a tuition waiver (because my father taught there for 25 years) so that the only fee I had to pay for the Fall Term 84 was the bus fee ($12 for the privilege of riding the campus buses). When I went through registration for the Spring Term, the person at the fee table recognized me: "There's no reason for you to pay the bus fee -- you're going to be in Washington and not here to ride the buses."
It made sense to me; I didn't pay the fee. About six weeks into the Spring Term I got a letter telling me I owed KSU $12 for the bus fee. I called them up, explained that I was in Washington, and the person I talked to said she would take care of it. I heard nothing for quite a while, and then in the fall I got another bill for $12. I threw it away. I hadn't been riding their damn buses, and furthermore, I had taught courses for the Experimental College for eight years and never received any pay -- but the university collected tuition and state subsidies for my teaching.

This spring, in the course of applying for some jobs I sent requests for transcripts to Oberlin, Ohio State, and Kent State. Ohio State responded promptly, in one week. I heard nothing from Oberlin or Kent State, but assumed they had been sent in time for the earliest deadline on April 27.

On Saturday, May 2, I received a letter from the Assistant Director of Financial Affairs and Bursar at Kent State, mailed on April 30, saying that I was 'ineligible' to receive transcripts because I owed Kent State $12. To add insult to injury, I was addressed as 'Mr. Arnold'.

It is hardly possible to imagine a policy more mean-spirited. I hope that the community college that was supposed to get the transcript can be a little more humane. I guess if they toss out my application because KSU didn't send a transcript I wouldn't want to work there anyway.

I have no intention of paying the $12 -- ever. And I will also take care that Kent State never gets a penny from me.

Bizarreries of the Capitol, next:

A: The Hart and Dirksen Senate Office Buildings are contiguous, connected by corridors on every floor. But not every corridor goes through from one building to the next, and one often has to duck down a deserted stairwell to get from Point A to Point B. On the G-Level wall of one Dirksen stairwell appears graffiti in red ink: YOU KILLED LINDER IN NICARAGUA.

Proceeding downward, however, at B-Level one finds, in the same red lettering: LINDER LIVES.

B: Driving west on D Street at 6:15PM, I saw a figure silhouetted against the light, but the bare feet, ankle length dress and Kathryn Hepburn top-knot were quite visible. As I got closer I could see that the dress was of a hand-woven fabric with intricate designs, and the wearer had a full black beard, covering half the bodice of the gown.

* * *
Did you hear that Gary Hart, Jim Bakker and Ted Kennedy are founding a new university? It's to be called 'Frigham Young U.' That, according to Dale, was told to Glenn by Jake Garn, who complained that he couldn't use it in Utah.

As our information systems get better, our decisions get tougher. Take cholesterol, for example. A couple weeks ago the Senate staff Health Awareness Project set up a cholesterol testing machine in the Russell Rotunda, and offered free blood cholesterol tests to all staffers. I duly went over, stood in line, and got my finger pricked. The technician put the little tab of paper with my blood on it into a computer-machine for analysis.

"It takes exactly three minutes," she said, and turned to the next person in line. That person was feeling damaged by having her finger pricked, and threatened by the prospect of having it done again, and so the technician tried soothing with conversation. This lasted, by my watch, a little over five minutes. When the techie took out my sample and read off 265, alarms, bells and whistles went off in the heads of all the technicians and 'counselors' present. Their general opinion was that I was a candidate for an instant heart attack, and without even knowing what I eat, scolded me for eating it. Then they ordered me to go to my doctor immediately.

I wasn't impressed, only annoyed. The technician was pretty careless, and I have never had any signs of heart disease, and none of my blood relatives have died of heart attacks, at least not under the age of 90.

In fact, the tendency of my relatives to live long enough to get horrible diseases like cancer and Alzheimer's disease make me wonder if I should increase my cholesterol in hope of a swift end. Not too soon, mind you – I'd like at least 25 more years. Although I probably don't drink enough to either increase my risk of cancer or reduce my risk of heart attack, I draw the line at taking up smoking. But everyone has to die of something. In any case, I don't want my decisions taken for me by the medical establishment, especially not vigilantes of an ad hoc screening program.

The interesting background of this is that individually and collectively we now have information that makes our choices harder, not easier. The information itself makes better predictions about probabilities and possible outcomes of alternative courses of action. And we have better access to the information. The upshot is that we can now foresee some events in our futures. This is proving to be no blessing. Our lives are not more satisfying or richer, only more vexed and anxious.

Take the question of being tested for AIDS. Which of us wants to know the time and manner of our deaths? Or how about earthquake prediction? If we could say with 50% accuracy (as we may well be able to do right now) that there will be an earthquake of X magnitude at Y location on Z date, should we? Are we willing to protect the lives, livelihoods and interests of the people who live at Y, and constrain those who would exploit them?
Or take the fellow in Florida who killed six people in a shopping mall, and who probably had Alzheimer's' Disease. Or William Casey, late of the CIA and ContraGate, who had a brain tumor. If we can establish that mass murderers, crooked bureaucrats, sociopaths, white supremacists and soldiers-of-fortune are afflicted with brain diseases, are we better off than when we label them 'criminals'? Are people with brain disease harder to deal with than people possessed by devils?

Take Gary Hart and the Press. Our press processes -- investigative journalism, mass media, market orientation -- make it difficult for public figures to avoid public scrutiny of their private lives. But it is still possible to be discreet. Gary Hart could have met his lady friend in less public places. He could also have anticipated that public knowledge of his womanizing would be the end of his campaign.

Central to our information processes in this country are the media. Gary Hart, and a lot of other people, forget that in the classical sense, a medium (singular of media) is something that mediates between other things. Newspapers do not, for the most part, invent news. They do select, distort, enhance, accelerate, steer and manage news, as any media -- even a pipeline -- may do to anything that passes through it.

The Miami Herald picked up the Hart liaisons not because the newspaper had an interest in them, but because WE were interested in them, and the Herald predicted, correctly, it would seem, that we would buy their paper to read about them. The one who pays the paper calls the tune. Hart whined that the stories 'broke the link' between him and the voters, further showing how badly he misunderstood the nature of the connection between the candidate and the public. Presidential races are only marginally about issues. They are centrally about interests. We elected Reagan not out of ideological zeal but out of the expectation that we would be better off. We are indignant about Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, insider trading, the PTL Club, and Gary Hart because we recognize that stealing, cheating and hypocrisy are not in our interests, either individually or collectively. We need trust almost more than we need money. We want to be safe from betrayal and duplicity. We want to go to sleep at night secure in our beliefs that tomorrow will run on the same rules as today, and that we will have the same standing among our friends and neighbors.

So Gary Hart is, as people in press offices are wont to say, history. What about John Glenn?

A lot of people have been asking that question. Glenn has a lot of obvious advantages as a presidential candidate. He is very trustable -- he doesn't lie, steal or cheat on his wife. He and Annie met more or less in a playpen, became high school sweethearts, married in their early 20s and have never had "marital difficulties". Annie is his partner in everything. He admits he cried when she finally conquered her stuttering and called him on the telephone for the first time. She comes to the office with him most days, and when he is ready to go home, he buzzes her desk and challenges her to a race to the elevator, or makes a mock-plaintive appeal to her to "get me out of here." They obviously like and trust each other very much.
Glenn is very open and honest. He is conservative in the sense that he is a rule-player and tends to be cautious about innovations. But he never rebels against things just because they are new, and is always willing to study new ideas. He has a somewhat idealized notion of representing the interests of Ohioans, tempered by his own strong sense of justice, and his willingness to probe beneath the surface of proposals.

Political savvy? Yes. Twelve years in the Senate has given him a good sense of the expediencies, utilities and imperatives of the political process. Name recognition? No problem. Fund-raising? He hates it, and he is made miserable by the debts from the last presidential race. That's a problem. Charisma? I think he'd do just fine, except compared to a professional actor -- a category which, in my lexicon, includes orators, salesmen and TV preachers. Personal health and stamina? No problem there either.

Does he want to be President? I'm sure he's ambivalent. He sees the tawdri ness, sloppiness, elitism and dishonor that have tarnished the office and knows he could do it better. He is genuinely concerned about the welfare of the American people, about the economy, and about the future of the human race, and he would like to have a hand in making things better. But not liking fund-raising means he doesn't do it very well. He is loyal to long-time associates and unlikely to replace them with the high-powered operators who may be necessary to run a successful campaign. He won't wheel-and-deal for support, would not want to neglect his Senate duties for campaigning. And he doesn't want to lose again -- if he entered the race, he'd want to win. And that means, I think, that he'd have to be drafted at the convention before he would run again. There has been a lot of talk in the office and in the press. The Hart antics were watched very closely. Talk in Washington, always cruel, referred to Hart as unable to keep his pants on and the rest of the Democratic candidates as "The Seven Dwarfs."

So in the office, Dale, chomping on battered giving-up-cigarettes cigars, fielded phone calls that came not only from Ohio newspapers, but from the South, West and Midwest about Glenn possibly running, and carefully crafted a speech for Glenn to give May 8 in Independence, Missouri on receiving the Harry Truman Award. Dale wanted the speech to say all the right things for a presidential candidate without actually declaring that he was one, and he wanted to make Glenn look like Prince Charming compared to the Seven Dwarfs. But first Dale had to get the Senator to approve the speech -- the *sine qua non* of the speechwriting business.

It worked. By Wednesday of Gary Hart Week the speech was approved, and Dale set about hawking it to selected newspapers, starting with the *Washington Post*. That effort went aground when Mark Shields followed Hart back to Colorado. But then Robert Webb of the *Cincinnati Post* picked it up and wrote an op-ed about it, after Dale had talked to him several times on the phone. (After each call Dale would come out of his office and do his gentle "ThisizBobWebb" imitation.)

On Friday morning when it became evident that Hart was going to withdraw we made a last minute one-word change to the speech, just to make sure Glenn couldn't be accused of attacking Hart:
"...those who say one thing in public and do another in secret..." was changed to "...Presidents who say one thing...etc." A good thing, too, because that line was quoted in several articles. Of course, the implication remained that we didn't want candidates doing that either.

Changing the Senator's version of the speech was easy -- cross out one word and write in the other. He writes all over his them and puts in underlining and notes anyway. But the 25 press copies that were already printed had to be changed, and that was a problem.

In order to reduce the bulk and weight of the press copies (because Glenn would be carrying them himself) I had had the eight pages of the single-spaced text copied double-sided at the Copy Center. We didn't want to just white-out the word 'those' and patch in 'Presidents' because we didn't want the sharp-eyed reporters to notice that we had changed that word -- that would give the game away. So Dale unstapled the copies and removed the sheet with page 3 and 4 on it while I coaxed and cajoled our copier into making two-sided copies with the corrected page 3 on one side and the old page 4 on the other.

Bill Hershey, the Washington correspondent for the Akron Beacon Journal, a grave, bespectacled, handsome veteran of the Peace Corps, wrote a Glenn-for-President article after Tim Hagan and Ed Feighan (Cuyahoga County Commissioner and U.S. Representative, respectively) announced their support for Glenn. Immediately thereafter Mary Rose Oakar and Dennis Eckart (two more Dems in the Ohio delegation) joined the chorus. It is not altogether clear whether their jumping on the bandwagon was from enthusiasm or from prudence in the face of rustlings in the grapevine suggesting that Dick Celeste was going to try for 'favorite son' from Ohio. If they had already declared for Glenn they would be spared the embarrassment of either endorsing Celeste or declining to do so. Hagan, Eckart, Feighan or Mary Rose may have their eyes on Glenn's Senate seat, of course, but I think their support is genuine.

* * *

I usually get to the office about 8 o'clock in the morning. MJ is always there before me. She is a petite, small-boned woman with long blonde hair severely dressed. She is about 50, unmarried and a Roman Catholic; she wears elegant clothes in neutral colors. She knows every Democrat in Ohio and keeps Glenn informed of the political nuances of every action and piece of legislation. She has instant access to him at all times, and she often travels with him. He won't travel with a retinue -- usually it's just Annie and MJ. If he will be holding news conferences or media availabilities Dale goes too. MJ accompanied Glenn during his presidential campaign in 1984.

One morning last week when I stopped by her office she started talking about the possibility that Glenn might want to try again for President: "I hope he doesn't do it. Nobody knows what I went through last time. He doesn't want to make those hard-nosed decisions. I just don't think he has what it takes to go after the money. I don't know what I'll do if he decided to run again."

I do. She'll be right there beside him.

* * *
Sunday it was hot. The costume for the hike in the ravine was a loose tunic top with pockets to hold the things that go with us -- glasses, a small hand lens, a plastic bag to put treasures in, a couple slices of old bread to feed the fish, my Swiss army knife, house key, and Isabella's 'necklace' (she doesn't like a leash) -- a pair of cutoffs with torn edges, knee-socks (for protection against *rhus toxicodendron*) and my old holey running shoes, to walk in the stream.

We walked down Ridgewood Street, Isabella free of her necklace as soon as we were safely away from Braddock Road. We were soon greeted by a dog wearing a bandana, who was summoned back into his yard. We went past householders mowing, washing cars or setting out plants. The traffic noise faded, and the chiming of a wood thrush could be heard high in the oak trees.

At the bottom of the street I noticed that the Sunday paper was still lying in the driveway of the house with the NO TRESPASSING sign, so I turned in, crossed the driveway and climbed up the bank to a trail I knew went along the fence and over to a little stream that feeds into Indian Run. Isabella looked doubtful for a moment, then ran after me. Large oaks, beech trees and tulip-trees, a thin understory of dogwood, scrub sassafras and spicebush, almost bare dry ground, knobby with roots, pebbles, broken twigs and dry leaves; a few veined hawkweeds. We climbed down a rough plait of beech tree roots to the trickle of water over the rocks at the bottom of the narrow gully. Only Isabella got her feet wet there. I balanced on branches and tumbled rocks until we got down to the creek. Just upstream from us the water clattered over a small broken dam. We watched for a few minutes, then started downstream. I had a crooked knobbed stick I found in a snag. For a short distance we had to detour around a huge tulip tree fallen into the creek. The ivy (not poison) was ankle deep, the may-apples and jack-in-the-pulpits up to my knees. I sprinkled breadcrumbs into the pools under tree-roots, and little striped fish flashed like knife blades around them.

I saved a triangular flat stone with a hole through it; other flat stones I skipped across any pool wide enough for a couple of hops. I found other stones that I could crack into pieces to find rose, peach, and gold colors inside. My shoes got soaked in cold water; my arms were scratched by brambles. I sat for a while on a bank of dry sand watching tulip tree blossoms float by on the clear brown water. Isabella waded in the shallows and followed small paths through the may-apples. My bag filled with pretty stones and sticks, and a tennis ball for Nelson. We turned back, climbed out of the ravine and onto the street. I was hot again, my shoes and socks soggy and itchy, my bag of stones swaying from my walking stick, and Isabella at my heels, too tired to wander. There are worse ways to spend Sunday afternoon.

* * *

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Milt looked worried: "My passport's expired!"

That was Thursday, 4:30 in the afternoon, and John Glenn had just come from a briefing on the Persian Gulf situation and announced that he was going to Bahrain Friday evening and Milt would be going too. Milt, the aide for military and defense affairs, had ignored the letter we all received from the Secretary of the Senate in January reminding us to get our passports renewed.

"Don't you worry," said Ernestine, "You go down and get your pictures and bring them right back up here."

"Now?"

"Right now. You just run down to G-Level, where you got your I.D. -- they'll do it right away. I don't know if I can get it over to State tonight, but there's plenty of time tomorrow." (Ernestine, the only case-worker in the Washington office, works with State and the military.)

Thursday afternoon we had to hold an impromptu radio news conference call to replace the one that had been canceled Wednesday morning. Everyone wanted Glenn's comments on the USS Stark, and to ask him if he was going to run for President. The conference call then got cut short because the Senator had to go to the floor to vote -- votes had been stacked at the end of the day so they could get through them quickly and recess for the Memorial Day weekend. There were rumors about that a Senate fact-finding mission was going to the Middle East. We actually knew that Glenn would be going, but it had been decided not to release that information, because there was still a lot of wrangling over who else was going, when, and how. By 5PM we were getting calls: "Is Senator Glenn going to the Middle East?" Answer: "A trip is being planned, but the plans are incomplete at this time."

Friday morning the word was out: "What time are Glenn and Sasser leaving this evening?" Marty looked worried: "We didn't leak this, it must have been Sasser's press secretary." She went off to a planning session in Phil's office and finally came back: "We can say Glenn is going, 8PM from Andrews, with Sasser and Warner; they will go to Bahrain and Kuwait, possibly other places, the itinerary is not complete; they will return the following Saturday...No, don't say that. Say Wednesday -- that's when Sasser is coming back, he has a fundraiser."

Marty and I divided the list and called all the Ohio press people and tried to answer their questions: "Yes, we're trying to schedule a press conference. No, we don't have a time yet."

Veronique of the Brinkley Show called: "Could the Senator be on the show from Bahrain if we can get a satellite hook-up?" Yes, call us back.
“Good Morning America” wanted him by satellite on Monday, but called back 20 minutes later to say that the visas of their crew in Bahrain had been suddenly terminated and they wouldn’t be able to do it.

At lunch time I ran down to the North Servery and brought back sandwiches for Marty and me to eat at our desks while answering phones. Her sandwich got cold while she kept running in to the Senator’s office to try to get him to agree on a time for a news conference in the Senate Media Gallery. By 12:30 we knew that Sasser was going to the Media Gallery at 2:30, and Marty tried to get Glenn to agree to go at the same time.

"...but I don't know if we'll be finished with the briefing by then," he said on his way out the door to go to the State Department briefing. Jim Hannah of AP called and told us that the monitor in the Media Gallery said ‘News Conference with Sen. Sasser at 2:30’ and asked if Glenn would be there. All we could say was that we thought he would.

At 2:15 Marty left to meet the Senator at the gallery, to superintend the news conference (if Glenn got there) and I was left answering the phones. At 3 o'clock I started getting calls complaining that no Senators had showed up for the news conference at 2:30. Then I got a call from Marty, who said the missing Senators were no longer in the briefing but were meeting with Byrd, maybe Glenn wouldn't be going until the middle of next week, and the news conference would be at 3:30. The State Department called in on my line and said Milt's passport was ready. I transferred that call to Celia, who sent it to Ron, the curator of interns (we have five this summer, two of them high school kids) to send one to State in a taxi and bring back Milt's passport.

Meanwhile, the teletypewriter ground out another clipping suggesting that Glenn should run for President, which I took over to Celia’s desk. MJ was sitting beside Celia, looking sad and anxious.

"If he doesn't come back 'till Saturday," said MJ, "he'll miss the commencement at John Glenn High School, and this is the 25th Anniversary one -- he just can't miss that..." She trailed off, moist-eyed.

"Oh well," said Celia, "After all, it's pretty important to the nation for him to go."

I went back to my desk. The phones were still ringing. The editors and reporters back in Ohio were more interested in whether Glenn was going to run again for President than in the Middle East trip. The lawsuit of Glenn's 1984 bank loans for the '84 campaign had been settled out of court two days earlier, and Dick Celeste had just flitted off to Europe, leaving behind the odor of Presidential aspirations. The Ohio pols all wanted to know what Celeste had said to Glenn (as elder statesman and most famous Ohioan) before he left, and what Glenn's plans were for another try at the Presidency. (What Celeste said to Glenn was nothing, and Glenn has no plans except to try to pay off the $2 million from the last run.)
The news conference with Glenn, Sasser and Warner finally took place at 4:05. We couldn't see it in the office -- C-Span was off the air for the recess and CNN didn't carry it. But ten minutes later Glenn, Milt, Phil and Marty were back in the office. Only Sasser was going that evening. Glenn and Warner would go next Wednesday, for a week. Most of our Ohio people already knew that -- they had been at the news conference. We made a few other calls; Marty called Veronique at the Brinkley Show and learned that they still wanted Glenn, from Washington.

The decision that Glenn and Warner should delay their trip was taken by the Democratic leadership, but it wasn't altogether clear to our staff why it should be done that way. Consequently there was a lot of handwringing over how to explain the sudden change of plans. Apparently Sasser, who was to head the delegation, had insisted on returning Tuesday for his Wednesday fundraiser. That would have given them an on-the-ground time of about 30 hours to visit four countries. But we couldn't say that.

"How about 'It's Ramadan, they won't be able to talk to anyone this weekend'?" That fell through, because Ramadan didn't end until the following weekend. Finally I suggested that we say that Glenn and Warner would make a more in-depth study of the situation after Sasser had given an overview.

At 6 o'clock I left. Marty, who had hoped to leave at noon for here Memorial Day weekend was still there, waiting to get in to see the Senator and get him to cancel his plans to go to Florida for the weekend so he could be on the Brinkley Show on Sunday.

She succeeded, but on Sunday the Brinkley Show was pre-empted in the DC area by the Indianapolis 500, so we didn't get to see it until Tuesday morning when ABC sent over a tape. However, Phil and Milt, who had gone to the show with Glenn, joined us after the show on Sunday at Eileen's law-school graduation brunch. It had gone well, Milt reported. "Of course we couldn't go in the studio when the show was on, but the Senator took us in beforehand and showed us everything. We watched the show from the green-room, along with all the guests -- they wait there, just go in for their segment. There's this whole table of food and drinks, and four big TV monitors, all showing the same thing: the show. So we were talking to Sam Donaldson and George Will and Tom Wicker. The Ambassadors didn't talk to us, of course, they were just in and out, very formal. I really liked George Will, he's very sharp. Sam Donaldson, too -- he was great -- he said the National Enquirer was going to publish the pictures of Hart and Donna Rice. He also brought up the subject of the Senator running again [for President]. But it was Will who quoted -- well, paraphrased -- Glenn about the last campaign. You know the one: 'I got humiliated, my family run ragged, I racked up $2 million in debts and gained 16 pounds, but other than that it was a great experience.' Anyway, when Sam asked the Senator if he would run again if his debts were paid off Glenn said 'I'll be looking for a thousand from you, Sam.'"

Glenn's position on the Middle East crisis has been that we must be careful and think through first
how far we are willing to go to protect oil shipping in the Persian Gulf. He was blunt on the
Brinkley Show: "Are we willing to go to war over this?" But later in the week, on Good Morning
America on Wednesday, he was more bellicose: "Are we going to talk like Rambo and act like
Bambi? Show the flag and get 37 of our boys shipped home in body bags? We've got to be
prepared to back up whatever we decide on."

So on Wednesday morning, with his departure less than 12 hours away, alarms were going off in
the Glenn office. Dale was back (he had been in New Orleans, his prize for being on Jeopardy),
was concerned that with only Milt, the retired Navy Captain, at his side, Glenn would see only
military problems and solutions, and lose sight of the wider political and international
consequences of his public statements. Even though Pat was going to go along (which took an
even more amazing passport feat by Ernestine) Dale toyed briefly with going himself or sending
Marty along on the trip. That idea foundered, not for lack of enthusiasm by Dale or Marty, but on
the complications that might ensue if a press person went on the trip but not MJ, who considers
herself the Keeper of the Public Image for Glenn.

That Wednesday morning I got to the office in time to see Glenn on “Good Morning America” at 7
AM, then to work on a commencement speech for Denison University in Granville and John Glenn
High School in New Concord for May 30. These aren't legislatively or politically important
speeches, so Dale asked me to write something for them -- "and why don't you include some of
that stuff on the Constitution you've been doing."

I had started on the speeches four weeks ago, and had written one draft when Dale tossed on my
desk a generic commencement speech from Byrd's office. "There's some good lines in this -- I like
the Bobby Kennedy quote at the end." I had started another draft, but had had no time to work on
it during the week Dale was gone. I planned to go to the office on Memorial Day to finish the
speech, but when it became apparent that Glenn would be in the Middle East on May 30, I asked
about the speeches. "Oh, he's not going to either...they're canceled." So I didn't go in on the
holiday, and I put the speech folder away and turned to more pressing matters. Then on Tuesday
evening Dale said "How's the speech coming? Tony Celebrezze wants it by Thursday."

No one had bothered to tell me that Celebrezze was going to read Glenn's speech.

* * *

JUNE 1987

9 June 1987

It is the chandeliers in the Kennedy Center that are wrong – great clusters of solid glass fists that
hang ponderously and glare fixedly with an industrial brightness. In a breeze they would not chime, only clank; if one fell on you it would knock you senseless. These lumps of glass make light heavy and clarity blinding, and spoil an otherwise well-proportioned and graceful space.

I was there for the Benjamin Britten *War Requiem* with the National Symphony and the Choral Arts Society, courtesy of George, who sings in the chorus. The logistics of the piece are awkward, with the necessity of disposing two orchestras, a large chorus, a boy-choir, three soloists, a harmonium and the conductor so that they can all see one another and be seen by the audience. It was accomplished with the boy-choir and harmonium in the first tier over the stage on the cello side of the stage, and everyone else on stage. The soprano, Galina Vishnevskaya, wife of Rostropovich, stood beside him at center stage, with the tenor and baritone beside the smaller orchestra on the violin side. The flies above the stage were draped with microphones on long flex lines -- I counted 11 microphones. I was sitting on the left side, about half way down, with a good view of all the performers, and with a score (also courtesy of George).

The program opened with an unfinished work of Britten 'Let us now praise famous men'. I can see why he didn't finish it -- it wasn't going anywhere. (I have a box full of things from my composing days that started bravely but never developed a life of their own, or any need to be finished.) That work was further marred by an abrasive soprano, but served the purpose of seating the latecomers before the major work started.

The reading of the *War Requiem* given by the company was smooth and well-oiled, coherent, competent and focused. (I must be learning to accommodate the chronic bad intonation of the NSO winds.) Rostropovich was in control – not always the case in a performance medium requiring the consent of the conducted – and clearly passionately involved in the music. Of course he always is. This time I liked his passion. Usually I don't, finding it rather adolescent.

Or maybe I was frozen in the underlying shame of offering the consolations of a faith based on love to those who die in terrible wars. Maybe to the extent that the composer and the poet make us aware of our utter wretchedness, they take from us all hope of salvation. If the things we have done are unforgivable, is the liberation of death the only remedy? What is the moral duty of a Klaus Barbie or a John Demanjuk, or any of us who stand by while others are murdered?

The house was full. At the end of the performance the applause was protracted, while Rostropovich ranged around the stage kissing people. Many listeners seemed moved, and the conversations in the exits were subdued. I watched the healthy secure, comfortable people passing through the Hall of States, baffled by my inability to forgive them, or myself.

* * *

Now where were we? The Glenn office has never been more interesting or more uncertain. The North Carolina college I had applied to for a job sent me a brusque letter announcing the appointment of someone else (unnamed), leaving me wondering if I did something wrong, or
worse, if it was just chance, and I may have to stay in Washington for the rest of my life.

A second rejection letter, from the Michigan job, raised the specter of my age and my 15 years of inexperience. I suspect that administrators, faced with hundreds of applicants for one job, just eliminate everyone over 50 and everyone with less than 5 years of experience.

* * *

I have been putting in 10 and 11 hour days because Dale has been out of the office in the process of moving to Columbus. I finished the speech Glenn was going to use for two commencements in Ohio but didn't, because he went to the Persian Gulf. It was sent to Ohio Attorney General Tony Celebrezze who was supposed to give it at Denison University in Glenn’s place. But apparently Celebrezze substituted one of his own law-school commencement speeches.

More positively, I had the satisfaction of having a short letter I wrote published in "Speechwriter’s Newsletter." It seems to be generating some admiration, but I am not hopeful about the efficacy of Golden Eggs at generating jobs for the Goose-that-Lays-Them.

Finally, a Mother's Day phone call from Seth disclosed that he is now making the same take-home pay that I am -- about $1200 a month. Good for him, at 21; discouraging for me, at 56.

I guess you will have to be content with a few stories: Monday morning (after the Senator had returned) about 9:30 "Nightwatch" called on Marty's line (she expects me to answer her phone, and calls me her assistant) and asked to talk to her. Her response was to snap at me, in front of several people at the coffee machine, "Didn't you call them on Friday like I told you?"

Yes, I had called them and told them Glenn wouldn't be on their Monday night program. They were calling, as it turned out, to ask him to reconsider. (He wouldn't.)

But later, with Dale back in Washington, we got into a spirited discussion over just what Glenn had said at his news conference after returning from the Gulf. The Sunday Post had got it wrong, saying that he favored a pre-emptive strike, which he doesn't. He recognizes that one way to deal with a deployed and armed missile that threatens us is to remove it before it can do any damage. But he also knows that to announce or threaten such an action before there is any certainty that the missile is there would be precisely the kind of bravura folly that could get us embroiled in another Vietnam.

Marty was at that time on her phone (she answers it herself when Dale is there) and I could hear her polite put-off. We all use it when dealing with student reporters from some college newspaper who ask for "just a five minute interview." When she finished, Dale asked "Who was that?"

"Oh," she said, "Some reporter who wanted to know what Glenn said about the Persian Gulf. He said he'd heard him (Glenn) on ‘All Things Considered.’ I told him to call NPR – they were at the
news conference." Then she added, "This guy's name was I.F. Stone."

"I.F. Stone!" Dale and I said in unison.

"Who's that?" asked Marty.

"New Republic, and I.F. Stone's Weekly. Only one of the great liberal journalists of the century. He must be retired now – call him back," said Dale, "No, give me his number, I'll call him." Marty, in a small voice, "I didn't get his number."

So it fell to my lot to call CRS and get it. The Congressional Research Service is very gracious about trivial requests: I.F. Stone lives in Washington, and they looked him up in the phone book. But it wasn't quite that simple – we didn't know where he was calling from. (CRS probably looked him up in Who's Who before the turned to the phone book.)

* * *

John Glenn left for the Persian Gulf trip from Andrews AFB about 9PM Wednesday May 27, with Senator John Warner (R-VA). They returned a week and about 6 hours later, in the small hours of Thursday, June 4. At 9AM that morning, looking ruddy and cherubic, Glenn was back in the office facing a day of meetings, debriefings and media appearances. His schedule called for meeting with the Senate leadership and Armed Forces Committee members in the morning, a noon meeting with his senior staff (including Milt and Pat who had been on the trip, and who dragged in late, tired and sunburnt) to hammer out his position on the Persian Gulf situation.

The AP reports on news conferences in the Gulf had not revealed any particular direction or coherence, and there was some dismay among staff members that "he sounded just like Reagan," or that his statements were "complete waffle." We had scheduled a news conference for 3 o'clock in the Senate TV Gallery.

Dale, the one person on the staff trusted by Glenn to give order and momentum to his thoughts, was in Columbus, but in any case, the senior staff meeting was successively postponed until 4:45, long after the news conference had taken place. The result was nearly a disaster.

Glenn has a basically wholesome belief that if you just explain all the nuances to people they will understand why one course of action may be preferable in Situation A and another in Situation B, and so on, down to at least Situations J and K. But the Fourth Estate thinks in headlines and radio/TV journalists hear in 20 second sound-bites. Dale's great contribution at these senior staff meetings has been to plunge a fork into the bubbling stew of ideas and come up with a tender, juicy, meaty and tasty morsel -- a 'quotable quote' in a favorite tautology of the office – that has the full flavor of Glenn's thinking.

So following the news conference, at which there was no prepared statement as is customary, and
to which Marty didn't go because she was sparring with 'Nightline' and 'McNeil-Lehrer' over which one would get Glenn that evening, and with 'Good Morning America' and 'The Today Show' over his appearance on Friday morning nobody was sure what he had said.

Some TV stations carried the news conference live, and before it was over, our phones started ringing: "How can John Glenn back our military intervention in the Persian Gulf -- he'll get us into another Vietnam." "How come Senator Glenn is wimping out over the Persian Gulf? Is he going to let the Soviets take over?" "I thought he opposed reflagging [he does] and I heard him say we should be doing it."

After that came the reporters: "My tape recorder went on the fritz just when he was talking about the Gulf being just like Vietnam. Did he say 'quagmire like Vietnam'?"

"What does the Senator think about the PD story about Celeste?"

"Is he going to run [for President]?"

And finally, an angry Tom Brazaitis who asked if it was a new policy of Glenn's to run away from news conferences and refuse to answer questions, or if that was Marty's idea now that she was press secretary.

I, of course, was empowered to answer none of those questions, except to say that Glenn wouldn't consider running for President again until the debts from his previous campaign had been paid off.

Friday was more of the same, adding the story that Chinese Silkworm missiles were threatening shipping in the Persian Gulf ("Does Glenn favor a pre-emptive strike on them?") and the news that Gov. Celeste was coming to Washington Monday ("Would the Senator meet Celeste then?")

No, and No. But it wasn't simple. Monday morning Dale was standing at Celia's desk arguing with MJ over just how to word the sentence explaining why there would be no meeting between Glenn and Celeste that day. I threw him the phrase 'logistical problems' and he took it.

1 -- Especially editors. The Akron Beacon Journal recently ran a story headlined 'Glenn, Sawyer move to save OBES'. Trouble was, Glenn's name appeared nowhere in the story. It's Metzenbaum who is on Labor and Human Relations.

2 -- They always want an exclusive, and they want to take turns, exactly. In this case, at about 4:50 Nightline dumped Glenn in favor of Alan Greenspan, and we took McNeil-Lehrer with Sen. Warner. This had to be coordinated with Warner's press office, too, so Marty had her hands full.

* * *

On Sunday, June 7th, the Glenns hosted their annual (well, most years) press picnic, and I was
assigned to go out to Dulles to meet Julie, our press assistant in Columbus who was coming to meet the Ohio Washington press corps. It was a typically steamy-hot day, and my distaste for flying got a big boost. Julie's Continental flight was canceled and she was put on a United flight. But nowhere was it possible to find that out – even the attendants at the arrival gates (where the great slug-like busses arrive from Midfield) didn't know anything about flights from Columbus. Also Julie was expecting Marty, not me, so it took 90 minutes and Travelers Aid to get us together.

The picnic was attended by about 60 news folks, and was kept 'off-the-record' – an informal contract binding parties not report on what is said in conversations. It was a fine party. Tables were set up on the lawn behind the Glenn's house and wheelbarrows filled with ice and beer or sodas were scattered around. Barbecued chicken, ham, green salad and macaroni-and-cheese were served from a buffet tended by caterers. After dinner there was a short tribute to Dale, hastily organized by Marty. It included a Karnak routine featuring Dale himself, with the obligatory bad puns. The biggest laugh of the evening was when, in response to boos for an especially bad pun (Answer: Early withdrawal. Question: What did Gary Hart experience for the first time in his life?) Dale turned to the audience and intoned in his Karnak persona "May your first-born daughters grow up to be executive assistants to Tom Ferguson."

* * *

This Sunday I drove to the Hill to attend the small silent meeting at William Penn House, knowing that only there did I have any hope of finding what was missing from the “War Requiem.” There were only five of us there, all women, and only one under 50 years of age. Three of them come fairly regularly, to avoid the crowd at the Florida Avenue Meeting, where week after week, someone talks about Jesus.

It was already hot, and the AC wasn't on. The windows of the bay were open to the sounds of cars rushing past, and the whooping scream of an emergency vehicle. Yet the Silence was there, and space to reconsider the questions that had been gnawing at me all week. How do we forgive? Can utilitarian goodness ever be enough to rehabilitate those whose follies are selfish, small and banal (Jim Bakker, Gary Hart, Reagan) or arrogant and vicious (Oliver North, Eliot Abrams) let alone those who have done things that are irrevocably despicable? When Reason, Truth and Justice fail us, where do we turn? Only one person spoke during meeting, making a metaphor of the polarity of light in our limitations in apprehending the Light.

After the meeting rose we introduced ourselves. The visitor from England, here to visit her son, asked if someone could help her locate the address at which she was to meet him before the parade. Yes, the Gay Pride Parade. One of the elderly Friends bent over the map with her, and a way was found. After Friendly conversation and handshaking all around we parted, down the creaking staircase, out into the hot sun.

* * *
Days like this are called ‘3-H’ days -- hot, hazy and humid -- to which I add a 4th: horrid. My salvation has been the air conditioner which is now working, as well as my patient housemates. They not only give me a free hand with the thermostat, they have encouraged me to move my C-64 down to the dining room, which is a good bit cooler than my attic. It has been 92° today, with a damp hot wind, and presently, according to the weather radar, there will be thundershowers. I shall have to shut down the computer when they come along and take up my mending, or some other non-electronic activity.

I have been getting up at 5AM weekdays, so I felt as though I had lain slothfully abed quite long enough at 6 o'clock and got up. I put a loose thin cotton dress over my underpants and pulled a pair of knee high support stockings with the feet cut out over my calves and went out barefooted to potter in my garden beds. I put the soaker-hose on the peppers, zinnias and portulaca in one bed, swept the terrace, trimmed some overgrown sumacs, mulberry and rose-of-sharon trees, retrieved a set of tomato-cages from the basement and set them out for the cantaloupes to climb on. Then I put the sprinkler head on the hose and watered the zucchini, melons and miniature corn. I checked the cabbages for worms, pulled some weeds and repotted one of the indoor plants. By 7 o'clock it was too hot to work anymore, and I went in and made breakfast.

For a small-town girl with a limited income this is as nice a place as I could have wished for to live in, in a big city. Though I have to spend two hot, noisy, anxious hours a day to get to work and back, this house affords me a place to grow sunflowers and squash, space to rest my eyes on trees shading mowed grass, and easy access to a wild ravine with great trees and a creek.

Much credit, too, to my housemates, who are open and easygoing, and without whom I probably would not have survived the stress of Washington. I have learned all over again that we are social creatures and our perceptions of the world – indeed, our very individuality and uniqueness – are inextricably woven into the fabric of our social being. It is the dilemma posed by Seth’s infant accusation that I had buttered his toast on the wrong side: in a world in which we agree that either side of the slice of toast is equally suitable for buttering, one individual’s perception to the contrary is likely to be given short shrift.

So my first bit of motherly advice for your 23rd birthday is: Don’t try to live alone. Which you aren’t, of course, so on to the second bit: Invest in your family and friends. A quick delimitation: (you do know the difference between ‘define’ and ‘delimit’, don't you?) Let ‘family’ equal those people with whom you share living quarters, food, good times, hardships, plans for the future, and mutual trust. (The locus of the family may well be the bathroom, but is more likely the kitchen.) This family subsumes what I call the clan, which is genetic relatives, and it avoids the fascist, Reagan doctrine.
definition of a family as consisting of father-the-god, mother-the-servant and 1.8 children -- the .8 child being the female one.

The properties of ‘invest' I leave to your discretion, convinced as I am that there is no way to script in advance the rights and wrongs of human relationships. But I will make some general observations on my own behalf, which it is my motherly prerogative to discourse upon.

The first is that I have never seen a marriage I would be willing to be in. Not my own parents’ marriage -- but not for the usual reason, which is that most marriages are not relationships of equality and one person, usually the woman, is not an equal but a subordinate. I think my parents achieved, within the social constraints of their time, a good level of equality in decision-making, planning and control over family resources. But they were too totally dependent on one another, so that after Naomi died, Dwight simply could not manage his own life. This is a judgment on the balkanization of our lives by the quest for success, money, power and prestige. It was not a lack of inner resources that defeated Dwight after mother died -- in fact, it was this inner strength that kept him going after he lost everything that made life worth living for him: his wife, his profession, his home, his sharpness of mind. What he lacked was a family (in my expanded definition) with whom to live and have a being. I might have changed that in 1976, by moving with you kids into his house with him. I couldn't do it, not for any ‘good reasons' but only because I felt it wasn't the right thing to do. It was the wrong side of the toast for me, and I held the butter knife. I guess I still think I made the right decision, but it is something I have to live with.

My other advice rises from a general unease over what a mother should say to a daughter in an age of AIDS and the likes of Jim Bakker, Gary Hart, and Oliver North. Of that array, I consider AIDS the most benign: it is a mindless virus that is easily circumvented, and I assume you know how. The other three are more damaging, and their kind is widespread on this planet. They believe they have the right to the use of any woman to advance their personal interests or pleasures, and that such behavior is above reproach or even scrutiny.

I don't imagine that you will be propositioned by a Gary Hart, or find yourself in the employ of an Ollie North, but there is no shortage of men who consider it their birthright to exploit women. I am particularly outraged by the continuing antics of married men, with their lack of shame or repentance or even recognition that their behavior dishonors and humiliates their wives, whether or not the press reports it.

So my advice is cynical. 1) Don't do anything you wouldn't want to explain on 20/20. (Especially not to Barbara Walters -- if you saw Donna Rice last week you will know what I am talking about.) 2) When in doubt, try masturbation first -- it's a good way to separate urgency from importance.

Less acidly, I hope you will not live in fear of AIDS. It is a terrible disease, but humans have always lived and will always live with the possibility of swift and certain death. All that has changed
is that we now do statistics better, and most of us can now read and understand simple probabilities. In the 19th century, tuberculosis was the popularly feared way to die (some great works of art were created around it — “La Boheme”, for example). The odds against the overcrowded, malnourished poor of the 1840s were probably even greater than those of sexually promiscuous drug abusers in the 1980s, but they didn't know about it.

There is another significant difference: in the 19th century there didn't seem to be the concentration-camp mentality that is afflicting our society today. That's a throwback to the days of fear of leprosy. It's scary part of the disease to me, along with the greed of those who plan to profit from the fears of the public.

Medical science has at least advanced so that we no longer purge and bleed people who are already weakened by disease. But such advances are offset by our impersonal, warehouse style of health care and our barbaric system of pricing medical services out of the reach of the poor and unemployed, and children and old people.

Finally, for most people on earth, there will never be butter on either side of the toast. I kept thinking of that as I watched Donna Rice defending her behavior with Gary Hart.

* * *

June 28, 1987

After lunch I often stop in the little Sundry Shop just off the Dirksen subway platform for a chocolate fix. It is a tiny space crowded with candy-bars, packs of cookies and crunchies, aspirin, gum, toothbrushes, greeting cards, magazines and cigarettes. The clerk perches on a stool behind the cash-register and has a small radio for company. Yesterday when I was getting my Hershey-with Almonds bar I recognized the Bach D-major cello suite -- the sixth of the unaccompanied cello sonatas, and the one I would be working on if I ever practiced. It is, of all the suites, the most characteristically Bach-like, and is recognizable as a work of the mind that created the B-minor Mass and the Musical Offering. It is also the longest and most difficult of the suites, the most challenging and the most rewarding. For me, it has associations that go back to my Oberlin days, and brings memories of my teacher Jack Frazer -- a man I loved very much, and who taught me a large measure of what I know about how to be a human being.

Jack Frazer was born in 1900, and was in his mid-fifties during my years at Oberlin. I was not required to live in the dormitory (because of my advanced age – 22 when I arrived) and lived with Jack and his wife Mela for four years. Although Jack had no advanced degrees, he was one of the best educated persons I have ever known. It was from him I got my lifelong habit of reading the (London) Times Literary Supplement. Most evenings he could be found sitting in his favorite
armchair reading the TLS, a glass of bourbon-and-water at his side, right leg crossed over the left with the foot describing slow squares in the air. Later he would put down the magazine and go upstairs to his study; after a few minutes the voice of his cello would start the Allemande of the D-major suite, all sinews and steel, sweet, bright and sad. Then he would play the Prelude, and the other dance movements. He played for himself then; I listened, unbidden, not altogether knowing what I was hearing. Now that I am in my mid-fifties and seeing, as he did, that my playing will never get any better, and knowing that it is not good enough, not what I wanted it to be, I know. He made his last concert appearance in 1955, in the Brahms Double Concerto, with Andy Toth and the Oberlin Orchestra. It was a fine performance, but Jack knew that it was at a level he could not sustain. He wouldn't accept a lesser level.

* * *

Pat looked pleased: "We're making progress. He (Glenn) said 'effective deterrent' instead of 'do a lot of damage' about sending battleships into the Persian Gulf this time." Pat had been listening to the tape of the radio news conference call on Wednesday, but before we started getting calls saying that Glenn said the USS Missouri was being sent to the Gulf. He hadn't said that, and as of that time it wasn't, so we were puzzled by the calls. Then I remembered that on Monday Tim Ahern of AP (one of their top national reporters) had asked for a phone interview with Glenn, which had finally taken place late Tuesday.

Setting up an interview is a process that involves first getting the information — who, what, when, where, topic and aides — then getting the Senator and top staff to agree to do it. After that Kathleen finds a time to fit it into his schedule. The actual interview is preceded by a briefing time, with the aide for the issue as well as the Press Secretary. When Dale was here he was always present, and he always took Marty with him, grooming her for his job.

When I was getting Ahern's request ready I asked Pat, who had been with the Senator on the trip to the Persian Gulf, if Glenn should talk to him. "Yes, but I've got to have five minutes with him right before." Marty and MJ concurred, and the interview form went to his desk with that notation. It didn't get listed on Tuesday's schedule because the request arrived after it had been printed late Monday afternoon, but Glenn agreed to find time to call Ahern between votes sometime Tuesday afternoon.

I spent Tuesday afternoon fielding phone calls and writing some minor letters. We get about 40 calls a day, and about half of those are from members of the Ohio press corps who want to know what's going on: "When is that Star Wars research amendment going in?" [It will be a floor amendment and will go in whenever the Defense Authorization bill gets to the floor.] "What were the environmental problems listed in the DOE report on the Mound-Miamisburg plant?" [I read them from the report.] or "What's Glenn's stand on 21-drinking age?" [that anything that saves kids' lives is worthwhile, but I bucked that one to Lewis, our bearded blithe spirit who handles transportation, because this question is in reference to the Supreme Court decision that highway funds can be withheld from states that don't have 21-drinking age laws.]
About 3 o'clock Tuesday, Jim Hannah of AP called. The DC Court of Appeals had handed down a decision on Glenn's appeal of the FEC ruling that he had overspent his matching funds in the Presidential campaign in 1984 – would we have a comment on that from Senator Glenn? I relayed the message to Marty and MJ; they phoned the campaign staff and lawyers, and conferred. We don't want to say 'disappointed' and anyway we were expecting this outcome. Marty made a lot of notes and consulted with Dale in Columbus, but at 3:30 she handed me her notes and asked me to draft something, get it approved by MJ and the Senator and send it out to all the Ohio correspondents. She was going to work on a roast for Bill Bradley being sponsored by Independent Action.

I wrote a very brief statement with two endings because it wasn't clear from Marty's notes whether another appeal was being considered. I had Celia hand both in to the Senator and MJ. Twenty minutes later Celia brought them back to me. The one with 'an appeal is being planned' ending was rejected. The other one had the last sentence crossed out and rewritten in Glenn's own hand. So the final version consisted of four sentences -- two by me, one by Marty, and one by John Glenn:

I have learned today that the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has issued the opinion that my Presidential campaign committee was in technical violation of FEC spending rules in 1984. [my sentence]

Virtually every other Presidential campaign since 1980 -- including President Reagan's campaign -- has been required to make repayment for overspending in various states. [Marty's sentence] While I believe that the use of matching funds by Presidential candidates must be closely regulated, the fact that this particular rule has been the subject of such frequent litigation suggests that the rule is, at best difficult to apply, and at worst, unworkable. [my sentence]

I hope there will be early clarification and simplification of this law as the next round of Presidential campaigns gets under way. [Glenn's sentence]

Of course we cannibalized phrases from one another -- I got 'frequent subject of litigation' from Marty, and Glenn got 'clarification and simplification' from my draft.

So Jim Hannah got the statement first by telecopier, then the others. I read it to Chris Burnett because the Columbus Dispatch doesn't have a telecopier. Adam Condo of the Cincinnati Post and Tom Price of the Dayton Daily News were on vacation. It was after 5 o'clock when I finished the last of the call-backs, and the remaining hour of the day went to sorting, filing and discarding papers, newspapers, magazines and memos, and editing the instructions for writing a news release. I didn't even think about the phone interview with Ahern until the next morning.
Wednesday, I arrived about 8:15 and the interview form for Ahern's interview was on my chair, with "Done JHG" penciled on it. I filed it and forgot it. It wasn't until we started getting calls from San Francisco radio stations and newspapers that I realized that Glenn must have talked to Ahern about sending the USS Missouri to the Persian Gulf. But I couldn't find out what he had said in the interview. Celia said Glenn had made phone calls between 5:15 and 5:45 and nobody was in the office with him at the time. Our office doesn't have computer access to the news wires. (We could have, and I worked hard to get us on the Mead Data System that would have provided a modem and dedicated printer – free, because it was a demonstration system -- but no one thought it was important.)

I wasn't able to find out until Thursday morning, when Bill Mathews at Navy Times called about something else, but offered to telecopy me the Ahern story. It was as I had expected – Glenn was quoted talking about how useful a battleship would be in the Gulf ("...those 16 -inch guns would be perfect for shelling onshore targets"). But Glenn did not say that the Missouri was on its way.

I showed the article to Pat and Milt. "Yeah," said Milt, "well, it's not so bad. At least he didn't say 'take out Karg Island' (the shipping point for Iranian oil)...it could be a lot worse."

On the cover of Friday's MEDIA REVIEW I put a cartoon by Jim Borgman of the Cincinnati Enquirer showing Ronald Reagan leading Uncle Sam into a space between two minarets labeled 'Iraq' and 'Iran' with robed Arabs lobbing bombs at each other. Reagan is saying "Let's just go stand in the middle of this." The cartoon was captioned 'Some guys just know how to have fun.' Marty told me later that Senator Glenn "just loved that cartoon."

So what does Glenn believe? That we should reflag Kuwaiti vessels? Send in the U.S. Navy? Stay out of the Persian Gulf until we have a policy to pursue there? (In a staff meeting Glenn referred to Reagan's Mideast policy as "ding-dong diplomacy.") That the U.S. will suffer if deprived of Gulf oil? That the Soviets are planning to take over in the Gulf? All of the above, but none of them unconditionally.

When he returned from the Gulf trip John Glenn said "We think of them as people in bed-sheets who live in mud huts, eat dates and drink camel milk. But it's not like that – it's like Las Vegas, with high rise complexes that cost hundreds of millions of dollars, and with international phoning by satellite."

1 Most of the staff disagrees with Glenn on this one, favoring either states' rights, or Federal control of the driving age rather than the drinking age. But Glenn is concerned about 'borderline bloodbath' -- where kids from 21-drinking age states cross over to 18-drinking age states to buy booze and smash up their cars and themselves -- a grisly, if somewhat fanciful image. But in an age in which we tolerate wheeling-and-dealing in arms for more efficient killing of people deemed undesirable for their beliefs or their geographic location,
and contemplate the incineration of millions of human beings as a last resort in the defense of freedom, I'm grateful for a Senator who still sees flesh and blood sometimes.

* * *

After watching for 30 months the endless *ad hoc* tinkering of the Congress and the brainless juggernaut of a fanatic Administration, I come down wholeheartedly on the side of the tinkerers. They are inefficient and slow, but small damages are repairable and can be contained or reversed. It seems to me that the ‘Reagan Revolution’ establishes precisely the centralized, end-justifies-means-decision-making that tyrannizes people in South Africa, Iran and many communist and socialist nations today. It is not a question of left-wing or right-wing. It is a question of whether individuals are willing to die for what they believe, or only kill for it.

* * *

The *Post* carried an op-ed piece by an expert in oil supplies who said, in effect, ‘don’t get into a shooting-match in the Persian Gulf – we don’t need that oil very much in the long run.’ It made me think of Kent State: we’ve done this shabby scenario once before. In 1970, a bungling state government sent armed men into a small closed community with internal conflicts and killed four young people. The stage is bigger, but the story is the same, a situation-tragedy of our time.

* * *

**JULY 1987**

2 July 1987

The Senate is in recess, after a frantic day of tossing in bills, votes and floor statements, and amendments on major bills. The confusion in the office was compounded by a breakfast meeting of Senator Glenn with Governor Celeste. This meeting has been pending for six weeks, while the Ohio press corps sniffled about, panting and growling. Marty was blindsided on it -- she was instructed not to reveal anything while news was being leaked, or spilled, from other sources. Immediately after Celeste left the office, Glenn told 14 Ohio radio stations on a conference phone call about the meeting, and that they had discussed their respective Presidential aspirations. That generated phone calls from all of the big dailies and half of the TV stations in Ohio. I was dealing with three news releases from GAC, lopping run-on verb phrases, removing caps and otherwise tidying them up to conform to the *GPO Style Manual*, sweeping out unnecessary adjectives, jargon and non-sequiturs, and suggesting plainer verbs and blander nouns (‘to change’ rather than ‘to scrap’ and [Iran-Contra] ‘affair’ instead of ‘mess’.) When I got them in shape I copied them and sent them out by the Riding Page.

By midafternoon both Marty and I were exhausted, and greatly dismayed by the announcement of the nomination for the Supreme Court of Robert Bork. Patricia (Judiciary issues) wrote a four-sentence statement (three of which were ‘who, what, when’) for the Senator, and Marty and I
called it to all the Ohio press. Marty noted that the English language had a new verb 'to bork' – meaning to have the President nominate a Bork in the middle of a particularly busy afternoon. Probably the greatest utility of the verb will be as an insult: "Bork you!" though the passive form will certainly be much used, as "I've been borked."

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Outside a dining room window of my house the tall bright heads of bergamot, brought from my house in Kent, sway in the breeze. Beneath them, though I cannot see them from here, is a patch of tiny lobelias, a blue so deep it seems to go right through to another dimension. Behind the house my 4 ft. by 12 ft. farm has already produced 30 zucchinis, is showing cantaloupes as big as softballs, and will soon have tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, miniature pumpkins and giant sunflowers. If I must be in Washington, this is a pretty nice place to be.

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I get up between 5 and 5:30AM so that I can spend an hour at the C-64 before I leave for work at 7:15. First I take Isabell out for some exercise -- either a quick run down Ridgewood, or 20 minutes of weeding and watering in my garden patches. Isabell prefers the run.

Last Tuesday, as I was grubbing up crabgrass from the strip of sunflowers, dill, morning-glories, cabbages and potatoes just in front of the fence-for-keeping-in-dogs, I noticed Babycat in the sparse grass under the quince tree, playing cat-fashion with a small furry creature. I thought it might be a mole (our neighbor Barry has had moles in his garden), but I was curious, because Babycat has no front claws. I went to investigate. It was not a mole but a tiny deer-mouse with big dark eyes, erect ears and a slim string of a tail. Babycat held it between her clawless paws, then released it only to reach out and bat it back when it tried to run. The mouse tried to escape again, and stopped, quivering. The cat pounced and tossed it to one side, playful, but not particularly interested. The mouse alternately darted and froze, watching the cat -- and me. I picked up Babycat and admonished her. With one farewell glance at her toy she turned to me and purred; the mouse made three zig-zag dashes and disappeared into the thicker grass of the lawn.

***

New phones are being installed in Senate offices. In place of the old sets that weighed about one and a half pounds, we now have hollow plastic boxes with numeric keypads and nine rectangular buttons bearing numbers or gnomic inscriptions, attached to a small flat handset. Each one weighs about eight ounces; they bleat rather than ring. In order that we may use these marvels efficiently, we are sent in groups to class in the catacombs under the Dirksen Building.

We sit around a long table with eight phone sets on each side and two at each end. On the back of each phone is a card with five numbers on it, and each of us has put our names on a little prism of cardboard in front of us, so the trainer can identify us. The trainer’s name is Joyce; she is young, dressed for success in a severely tailored suit and delicate blouse. She speaks with the faint drawl of a traditional telephone exchange operator giving general information: The HOLD works this way; you can release a call without hanging up the handset, etc.
Then the practice: "Everyone on this side of the table, down to...Mary, is it? ...oh, Marty – sorry, Marty – dial the five digit number of the person opposite you."

All the phones on my side of the table start to bleat, and are answered dutifully. Then we call from our side of the table. "Now what" asks our instructor, "did you notice about dialing – what's missing?"

No-one can think of anything. "It's the tones of Touch-Tone dialing!" Fear shows on the faces around the table -- how can we get, like, our bank balance? No problem, says Joyce, you use the numeric keypad, you'll get tones for that, it's only the call dialing that's silent.

Next we learn call conferencing, to transfer calls from one phone to a third one, and allows all three to be on the line. We learn how to cut the first person out while determining if the third person wants to talk to her. "Now, Cathy, call Celia and ask to speak to Lewis. Lewis, I want you to refuse the call."

The call is placed and Celia plays her part: "Lewis, Cathy would like to speak to you."

"Cathy who?" asks Lewis, with a grin. Celia (who has done this training twice before with other Glenn staffers) gets back to Cathy and asks her who she is. Cathy joins the fun: "Cathy from St. Elizabeth's" (the notorious mental hospital in DC where John Hinckley is detained). Celia relays the message, and Joyce tells Lewis he has to talk to her.

"Oh, all right," grumbles Lewis, "I'll play with her mind for an hour." The call is transferred, and Lewis intones, for the benefit of his rapt audience, "This is God." General mirth.

* * *

The best form of government, said Tom Jefferson, is one "too weak to aid the wolves, yet strong enough to protect the sheep." Just so, but how do we know which is which? And when the sheep rise to the defense of the wolves, what recourse do the rest of us have, except to toss out the metaphor and try again.

Here we are, in the middle of the month of July, Anno Domini 1987 (by one reckoning), a time 200 years after the adoption of the Constitution of the United States of America and just before the population of the Earth will reach 5,000,000,000 human bodies, most of them hungry. And what are we doing? Watching Oliver North defend his actions in planning and carrying out a private foreign war for a President who claims to know nothing about it.

Sheep, maybe. The Glenn office has been getting our share of callers angry at mean old Congress for questioning that fine patriotic young man. However, I doubt that even a sheep (could it reason and talk) would propose, as one caller did, that North should run for President
with John Glenn as his running mate.

Wolves, never. Wolves would not sell fangs to tigers in exchange for freeing hostages and use the profits to finance a war of rats against weasels.

Oliver North is a walking example of McLuhan's thesis that if you push a system to its extreme limit it flips over into its opposite. In his zeal to do the President's will (if not the President's bidding) North has worked to create a private tyranny dedicated to a Cowboys & Indians scenario. This particular Useful Conceptual Fiction is not shared by the American people, and therefore had to be kept secret from them and their representatives in Congress. Yet North has come to this subversion of our principles of participatory democracy by pushing all the UCFs (myths, if you prefer) to their logical conclusions: patriot, good soldier, good husband and father, good citizen, etc. North is a man who would never treat a woman or man with disrespect, yet he has planned and executed a rape of the American people (to say nothing of the Nicaraguans) unprecedented in history. And I, for one, fail to see the difference between Ollie North and an obedient henchman of the Fuhrer in Nazi Germany.

I don't know what the outcome of this is going to be, in a society in which people buy magazines that discuss the fictional adventures of fictional characters in TV soap-operas as if they were real, and vote for a Ronald Reagan even though they do not understand or believe in what he stands for, and even though, apparently, they recognize that he lives in a fantasy world. I hope, perhaps over-optimistically, that most of the adults in this nation believe that the greatest problems in the world today are war, poverty, disease and want, injustice, ignorance, exploitation and bigotry, and not, as Oliver North and his ilk believe, communism and socialism. Yet these shared conceptual fictions (evil communists intent on world conquest who must be 'wiped out' by heroic American soldiers) so useful on a small scale for making local events manageable (kill the rats that steal the grain) may lead us, lemming-like, to drown in an ocean of our own beliefs.

After 1970, Kent State didn't begin to recover from its wounds until a new chief of security, seconded by the new president (Glenn Olds) announced that the most serious security problem on campus was not communist subversion but theft from dormitory rooms.

* * *

I still do not have another job, but I am already looking back on my experience in Washington as if it were over. I have great respect for the people who work in Congressional Offices – a high level of performance is in evidence everywhere and the country is in good hands, generally. There are things that make me uncomfortable, even in Glenn's office, but they have to do with systems and structures more than with people and shared beliefs. Of course, we as individuals with beliefs are the ones who design and execute, or fail to change, the systems in which we work.
One of the things I had not expected was the relative youth of the staff in Glenn's office. I consider it a strength, though it makes for some thin places in understanding issues and the interests of the public. One of the thin places is that the youngsters come from middle-class urban or suburban areas. They are sympathetic, outraged, even, at the abuses of the poor by the powerful, but they have never been hungry or faced the loss of their homes. And they are largely unaware that they have succeeded mostly by chance of birth, and on the backs of thousands of other kids. But the young staffers are competent – good at their issues, articulate, attractive, healthy, hopeful, high-spirited and dedicated to what they do.

Perhaps I may be forgiven for listing here some of the things that have bothered me from the start about this job. It is not intended as a condemnation, only as a map of some of the weak places in the fabric.

I have been very uncomfortable with the hierarchical relationships in the office. They close down the information systems necessary for individual autonomy, and eventually they destroy trust. I also dislike the inaccessibility of the Senator to many of his staff. This is partly mitigated by Glenn himself, who likes to range around the office talking to people. But decisions about my job are always taken by Dale, Phil and Celia, before I am even aware that they are talking about them.

No job descriptions exist, nor any goal-setting or evaluation. Salaries are supposed to be secret even though they are published in the semi-annual report of the Secretary of the Senate. People gossip and conceal actions from one another. Though our loyalty is to the Senator, some staff members believe they have the right to impose their version of ‘what's best for the Senator’ on others.

When I arrived in Washington I had never worked in an office before and had some pretty fundamental things to learn: transferring telephone calls and figuring out who was who and what their moves were in the office games. I was never given a job description, either orally or in writing, and when I wrote one for myself no-one was interested in reading it. In the course of time my job came to be whatever Marty told me to do, plus everything else that was not clearly the responsibility of someone else. I was occasionally scolded for 'not prioritizing', but since I was never in the conversations about what was important and why, I never got better at it. I spent much of my time as a typist, as a technician with the computers, printers, copier and telex, and in relaying information generated in one place to another place.

I was a little encouraged last year when a staff retreat was held – an opportunity, I thought before the event, to find out who we are, what we want to do, and how each of us could contribute to our common goals. Alas, no such explorations took place. The entire event could have been replaced by a large bulletin board. The best part of it was that I actually got to hear
Glenn talk, extempore, about a large number of issues.

* * *

As of this week I am no longer in the Press office. I have not concealed my hope of getting out of Washington, and the Press office has been re-organized without me. Lewis, who has been a legislative correspondent for two years, is the new deputy Press secretary. He will do well. He wants to learn a new trade, he is very sharp, and he has a sense of humor. I'm not sure how Marty feels about his appointment. She had been maneuvering for three months to hire a 'speechwriter' as deputy. Lewis made an end run around her candidate, who was playing coy for a bigger salary.

Lewis will do well, too, because I wrote down everything I did in the Press office, and how I did it. I made lists and indexes of lists. I wrote down the script for setting up the radio news conference calls with 18 Ohio radio stations. I left instructions for formatting and printing speeches, for writing news releases, for keeping logs, requesting interviews, ordering photographs, operating the teletypewriter, and all the technical processes I was responsible for. These systems may not be the best for Lewis, but they are a place to start – something I never had.

I will now be doing letters and texts that do not fit anywhere else in the office. I will handle letters from kids: "Dear Mr. Glen, what is your job my class is doing a Project. Your Friend, Jason", for VIPs – 91st birthday of Frank Lausche, roast for Dennis Eckart – and others: "Dear Senator, I am making a quilt from the neckties of famous people..." "Here is my 450 page manuscript on the Battle of Midway..." "Are there any unbiased newspapers left?" "Is the earth really round?" [Yes, Senator Glenn can say, I looked when I was in orbit and it is.]

I will write speeches on non-political topics for the Senator or Annie to give themselves or to be sent when they can't attend events. I will also be editing things like biographies for Who's Who and writing statements for other occasions where Glenn's words are needed.

I have been doing these things all along, as time permitted (which it usually didn't, and many letters went unanswered). I have a stock of protocols for responding to such requests, too, including a stock letter on my computer for youngsters who write in asking for information they could get from Who's Who ("When were you born?") or the Constitution ("What are the duties of a Senator?") or from standard reference sources ("When did Ohio become a state?"). This letter says, in most polite terms 'Go to the library, kid.' Someday I intend to write an open letter to the teachers who put kids up to committing these idiocies. I will go to great lengths to answer a youngster who asks "Do you believe in freedom of the press?" But a Senate staff is not a free research service for kids to use instead of learning to find out for themselves.

I am grateful to be under no pressure to leave and to have a manageable work-load with known limits.
I spent 4th of July weekend at Lake Piedmont in Ohio, fishing and swimming with my friends Ted and Swanny. Ohio was wonderfully green, with the bright flowers of early summer -- orange butterfly-weed, sky-blue chicory, yellow St-John's-wort and evening primrose, pink clover and pale lavender vetch. The first morning I went down to the dock before 7 o'clock, to opalescent water under a thin haze, and a great blue heron grazing in the reeds under a slanted willow. The big bird regarded me gravely for almost a minute, then composed his wings and flew, slow and stately, across in front of me, northward. I watched him disappear into the mist, then grubbed up a worm from Ted's supply in an old paint-can, baited a hook and caught a blue-gill. I discovered there was no stringer, so I put the fish in the bailing-bucket of the rowboat.

Presently Ted came down to the dock, bringing a net cage. He caught a catfish and another bluegill, and I caught a sunfish, and we had enough for breakfast.

Ted cleaned the fish on a newspaper on top of a barrel, stunning them first with a couple of thwacks on the head with the handle of a kitchen knife, holding the catfish with fish-pliers, all the while discoursing on the anatomy of the fish and his special tricks of filleting. The newspaper grew ragged and bloody, the eyes in the severed heads stared up into the trees. Swanny fried the filets in egg and cornmeal and we ate them with scrambled eggs and toast, coffee, peaches and blueberries.

* * *

to John Perry, an Oberlin classmate who surfaced in Baltimore.

July 20, 1987

Lest you think I have thrown you in at the deep end and abandoned you, here are some water-wings. I have been a closet epistolist for years, but when I came to Washington 30 months ago, it was almost impossible to keep up with a lifetime of friends in a few evenings of correspondence, even with my own C-64 at home. So I started cannibalizing my own letters – writing to one person, then using big chunks of that letter for other people. But that got to be tedious very quickly. Now I write about one four-to-six page letter a month, take it to the copy shop and make copies for 40 people. I scrawl personal notes on the bottoms of many of them, and for a few I add an extra page – Thou seest.

The story so far: I have been writing about events in Glenn's Senate office, about Washington and the world, and about how I live – pretty plain stuff. I have about 120 letters now, and I might
publish them someday, if I can persuade myself and an editor that people would be interested in reading them. (People outside the Beltway, that is. Washingtonians will read anything.)

Although everyone I meet in Washington is lively, bright and competent (making Washington rather like a grown-up Oberlin). I do not like it here. Besides being a big city, which I loathe for the noise, dirt and traffic, it is very expensive and brutally hot. Even with air-conditioning, I am miserable seven months a year with the heat and humidity.

I still own my house back in Kent -- more a private retirement plan than out of any real hope of returning to it. (I applied for a job at KSU, but I'm not at all sure that I want it.) Seth and Alys are both in Santa Barbara. I would like to see them more often (it's been 18 months now), but I have no special desire to return to motherhood.

*   *   *

July 23, 1987

The last question on the radio news conference call was from WAKR in Akron: How come the Armed Services are turning away night high-school graduates?

John Glenn was surprised. "I haven't been briefed," he admitted. "I didn't know that. It was my understanding that evening high schools had to meet the same standards – had the same accreditation – as daytime high school. If the requirements are the same, there shouldn't be a difference. I'm chairman of the Manpower Subcommittee, and I'll certainly look into it."

"Tell Phil," said Ron, "He's Manpower, and he needs to know." Phil already knew, and he started to give me his paternalistic put-down: "Yes, I've talked to the principal of that school (the evening high school in Akron). He's a black former Army officer. He was here some time ago, sat right in that chair. He seems to have a chip on his shoulder about the kids in his program who have trouble getting in (the military)," Phil sighed. "But the statistics are all there: recruits who have graduated from evening high schools or taken the GED are high-risk recruits. And the Armed Services aren't social programs – not supposed to be, not designed to be, and can't be, when national defense is at stake."

I agreed with that, but suggested that nevertheless young people in Ohio might be laboring under an injustice, because evening high schools are required to meet all the standards for regular daytime schools, which is not the case in every state. There are many states where evening high school programs may be nothing more than cram-sessions for the GED.

For a moment Phil was hooked. "Well, it might be possible to break those statistics out by state ...but it would hardly be worth it. I can't see the Senate rewriting legislation to allow for that."
"Okay," I concluded, "but at the very least it should alert us to inequities of the educational system, specifically how we can meet a national goal of having well-qualified recruits without national funding or direction to schools."

In truth, I didn't say it that well. I used different words, stammered and wasn't very precise. I can think on my feet, but the right words and phrases for impromptu eloquence do not trip off my tongue. I'm not as good a conversationalist as I am a writer. I walked away from this issue. No amount of eloquence would have made a difference in the outcome.

But there is an injustice here. There are a lot of kids (many of them black) in the Akron area for whom a job is as remote as Mars, and who see the Army as the one hope they have for breaking out of the poverty and pointlessness of their lives. Yet for me the prospect of making it possible for more young lives to be chopped into silage and stockpiled for fodder in case Ronald Reagan wants to put on a movie-scenario war in Central America, doesn't inspire me to start a crusade. Nor am I galvanized into action on behalf of the undereducated male teenager, after reading the report this week that the average pay for a male high-school dropout is $19,000 a year, and for the average female college graduate it is $20,000 a year.

So I went back to my desk full of kid-letters and tried to figure out a title for my new job responsibilities. Chief Epistolist? General Factotum? Lord High Everything-Else?

Tuesday the office got the new Newsweek that had an article about the Pakistani arrested for efforts to get maraging steel for use in a reactor that makes weapons-grade nuclear materials. Glenn has been fighting to hold off on aid to Pakistan until they demonstrate that they are not building a nuclear bomb. Late last week he had talked to Dave Newell of Newsweek by phone, but without either Marty or Len being present. (Len was the architect of the 1978 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.)

Patricia was the first to see the Glenn quotes in the article and came back to the press corner. "Did you see this? ‘Pakistan has given us the finger.’ Did he really say that?” Marty took the magazine and read the line. “Did he really? Yes, he did. I mean, I wasn’t there, but I’m sure he said it. It wasn’t me – I didn’t give them that. Has the Senator seen this?”

He saw it soon enough and came back to our corner gleeful and unrepentant. "See what I said!"

Then he saw Lewis sitting in his new place as deputy press secretary and looking grave and worried. "It’s all Lewis’ fault," said Glenn with a grin, "I never said anything like that before he became deputy press secretary – Lewis made me say it." He filled his coffee cup and returned to his office, but returned a few minutes later, still brandishing the Newsweek. “The best part’s on the next page, where I said those guys (his fellow Senators) talk tough and carry Q-tips.
That's the best line right there."

* * *

"We lost big today, the whole trade bill. And he did it himself – he offered more than he needed to for compromise, too soon, and he lost it all. He could at least have saved ACTA." Ron and I were walking down 2nd Street, he to pick up his two-year old son Jay at the Senate Day-care Center and I to get my car from the 'peon parking' down by Union Station. Ron was musing on what had happened that day. ACTA (Advanced Civilian Technology Agency, an analog of DARPA) had been built into the Governmental Affairs Committee trade bill crafted by Glenn and Len. The whole thing had gone down on the Senate floor in a showdown with Hollings, Chair of the Commerce Committee.

I asked Ron if the Senator knew how it happened. "No," said Ron, "He blames it on Hollings. But it's really the committee's (GAC) fault. They should have had Glenn consulting with Commerce before it was reported (out of committee). It (Glenn's trade bill) is entirely within the purview of GAC, but it isn't smart to propose reorganizing the entire Commerce Department without, at least as a courtesy, letting the Commerce Committee know what you're doing. The Senator didn't get that advice."

Why? "Well, the staff people on GAC aren't team players, they're too independent, they know everything, and they think other people don't know what they are talking about. People probably don't, at least not in that depth and detail, but that's not the way the Senate runs."

Glenn's trade bill was reported out of GAC by an 8-0 vote, a month before the debates on trade bills started on the Senate floor. There were 688 trade bills introduced in the first six months of this year, so perhaps it is not surprising that this one escaped notice. It included a number of worthwhile features intended to establish a framework for coherent, long-term policies in R&D for technology, trade, and economic development. It would have reorganized the Commerce Department into a Department of Industry and Technology, and replaced the U.S. Trade Representative with a U.S. Trade Administration – still in the Executive, but with broader responsibilities and authority. It wasn't especially threatening to the Administration; in fact it seemed quite a sensible step toward outcomes everyone wanted.

Hollings: "In all candor, the distinguished Senator from Ohio [Senators, like the bi-colored python rock-snake in "The Elephant's Child", always talk this way to one another] never mentioned anything about this to me or anyone on the Commerce Committee."

Glenn: "I cannot believe what I just heard from the Senator from South Carolina [the gloves are off now -- no laudatory modifier preceding 'Senator']...I find it a little disingenuous to say that we set out and sprung this on everybody, when that is just the opposite of the truth." Then Glenn offered to drop the Trade Administration part of his bill and cut back on ACTA, but that lost him the support of the ranking Republican on GAC. The vote to table [send to oblivion] was 73 - 21.
The Marine Corps Evening Parade is dedicated to the pride, discipline and esprit which have animated the Marine Corps since 1775, and to "the Marines who have gone before us."

The entire office staff was invited to attend on July 17, when Col. John Glenn, USMC, Ret. would be the guest of honor. We received a two-page memo from Col. Phil (also USMC, Ret. and our 'Chief of Staff' in the Glenn office) detailing appropriate dress – "coat and tie for men/equivalent for women, or tasteful casual attire" – and arrival times, with an indecipherable map. (It landed us in Anacostia on the first try.)

Carole, my soon-to-be ex-housemate, went with me as my guest. She was in the throes of moving, and felt at first that she was inappropriately dressed in white pants and a sleeveless black sweater. She has a very keen eye for such things. She soon relaxed, as there were a number of much more inappropriately dressed people there. I played it safe with my Dress #2 (of two summer dresses) -- navy blue with white dots, broad white collar and red bow, white shoes, white purse.

We parked at the Navy Yard as instructed in the memo, and joined the queue for a shuttle-bus. In about ten minutes we were boarded by a solemn stiff young Marine onto a charter Metro bus, over Carole's protestations that she wanted to ride in one of the merde d'oie Marine Corps busses.

At the Barracks another Marine stepped smartly up into the bus, welcomed us and gave instructions for those with reservations, those without them, and those who were confused, then stepped down and offered a gloved hand to all the women and each elderly man as we got off the bus. The sidewalk was too crowded, but there were handsome Marines in full dress uniform urging us not to walk in the bus lanes of the street. We rounded the corner and made our way past the lines at Gates 09 to 05.

At Gate 04 we joined George and his friend Melissa in the line, where our names were on the roster. When George got to the head of the line he said "George K, with a K."

The officer checked off his name and said to the ramrod straight Marine standing beside him "Lieutenant Green, Please Escort Mr. K And His Lady To Section 2-B." (He spoke in capitals, I'm sure.) Lt. Green offered his arm to Melissa, and they proceeded up the narrow walk between two hedges, past a small formal garden with a central pedestal holding a pyramid of four cannonballs.

Carole and I were next: "Lieutenant Black, Please Escort Miss Arnold And Her Guest To Section 2-B." I got the arm with the gloved hand, according to strict protocol – age takes precedence over guest-status. The young lieutenant and I made the proper formal conversation: "Is this your first
visit to the Evening Parade?" "Yes. It is a lovely evening and I am looking forward to the
program."

At the security checkpoint I was relieved of my purse, which was investigated by a young woman
Marine while our escort stood discreetly between us. After our purses were returned we walked
through a metal detector and into a long grassy courtyard. Another female Marine handed
programs to Carole and to my escort. We turned left. At the bottom of the steps leading up into
bleacher-like seats we (and my program) were turned over to another officer, and finally directed
to places on a long black plastic cushion next to George and Melissa. Soon after that Marty's
parents and her boyfriend were seated on the other side of us.

Marty herself, as press secretary, was off somewhere dealing with Marines and the Media. She
had hoped to capitalize on the Iran-Contra sideshow and get the media to contrast John Glenn,
the Good Marine, with Oliver North, the Bad Marine. Glenn, of course, refused to play that game,
although he had privately expressed dismay that North had showed such contempt for Congress,
the Constitution and the American people. I'm sure the Marine Corps was just happy to call
attention to one of their bona fide heroes. In any case, the Media were granted permission to go
onto the field at certain points in the program and 'shoot' Glenn, but no interviews took place
before or during the evening.

It was a pleasant mild evening, already dusk by the time we were seated at 8:25. The grass was
dark green and lush, and carefully mowed. Two squirrels cavorted briefly, and then disappeared
into the hemlocks in front of the arcade that ran the length of the barracks opposite us. In the
center of the arcade was a tall flagpole with a brass bell at its foot. Around it were wooden folding
chairs, music stands, and percussion instruments behind a podium. At the left end of the
greensward was the Commandant's Residence, built in 1806. In the trees behind us katydids
scratched nervously, five part calls in about a second, three to five a minute. There were some
tree-house like structures in the upper branches. Carole and I argued – she thought they were for
surveillance; I thought they were for spotlights.

The program opened with a concert by the Marine Band. Concert dress for the women was the
red jacket and white hat worn by the men with a long white skirt instead of trousers. They walked,
not marched to their chairs and tuned as any professional orchestra would. The conductor did
march in, alone and unhurried, with the same precise knee-lifting, foot-placing gait that would be
used by every Marine on the field that evening – even the band, once the women had replaced
their skirts with uniform pants.

The conductor was introduced and the concert announced by a fine, measured baritone voice
from concealed loudspeakers (which, judging by the sound, must have been six feet high). First,
a march: "Men of Ohio", then "Esprit de Corps" by Jager (interesting piece), then selections from
"Annie" during which Annie Glenn was seated in the VIP section. There was another forgettable
medley, "American Pageant" and finally, "The Stars and Stripes Forever." I asked George if he was ready for one of the Great Moments in Piccolo Literature. Sure enough, in the trio three piccolo player came forward (two skirts, one pants) in front of the podium and screeched out the descant, to great applause.

After the conductor and band had bowed and carried off their instruments and folders, a squadron marched in from behind the flagpole, ending with two Marines pushing handcarts. They positioned themselves on either side of the flagpole, and, in unison, bent from the hips to settle the carts, snapped to attention, turned, stepped, turned, stepped, and stationed themselves beside their carts. The others marched gravely among the stands and chairs, bending from the hips to lift a pair of stands, or two chairs, after carefully folding each. The stands were carried off into the arcade and the chairs were presented one by one to the cart-attendants, who placed them in neat stacks on the carts. When all the stands and chairs had been removed, the two cart-Marines reversed the drill, white hats bobbing exactly together as they lifted the handles of the carts, and marched off in step with each other. Another Marine marched out, describing a perfect square around the space where the band had been. Apparently he was satisfied that there were no more stands or chairs there. He was followed by a pair who approached the podium, stood by it, turned, bent, lifted, shifted hands all exactly together, and carried it away. There was no sound except the scritching of the katydids.

The Drum and Bugle Corps (drum was rather loosely construed, but there were four sizes of bugles, all held rigidly parallel to the ground with bells forward) marched in from the right end of the field. At the same time the U.S. Marine Band marched in from the other end. They played assorted marches, including "Scotland the Brave" (honoring Glenn's Scottish ancestry) while Companies A and B marched in and disposed themselves in perfect ranks along the green. Then Parade itself began, a ceremonial, stately, precise dance, choreographed with solos, pas-des-deux, ensembles, starring the elite corps-de-ballet, the Silent Drill Platoon.

We saw Officers' Call, a display of clones; the presentation of the bulldog mascot, Chesty VIII, who, instead of sitting at attention leaned affectionately against the leg of his escort. A fanfare of trumpets from the ramparts of the barracks preceded the Presentation of the Colors, a flag drill. Companies A & B performed the Manual of Arms with (the announcer assured us) fully functional M-1 rifles with shiny bright bayonets. An infant voice behind us mimicked the shouted orders of the drill sergeants.

The high point of the evening was the Silent Drill Team of Company A. 'Silent' means that they use no spoken or drum cadence to maintain the precise rhythms that keep them in unison, but the performance was not without sound. With continuous clacking of gun mechanisms, slapping and stamping they performed every maneuver possible with two arms, two legs, and a four-foot long staff with fittings -- twirling, tossing, lifting, and pointing. For some parts they removed the knife-like bayonet and placed them in sheaths. There were little dramas in which an 'officer' and a
Marine would play out an inspection of a rifle with feats of agility and speed.

Finally John Glenn stepped out onto the field flanked by two officers (brief sortie by rumpled photographers and a mini-cam crew) to review the troops. Companies A & B were restored to animation by their officers and passed in review while the bands played "Semper Fidelis" and "The Marines' Hymn." The colors were retired, the officers dismissed, the troops marched off, and retreat was sounded. A single bandsman on top of the barracks, foot-lighted so his red jacket looked almost incandescent, played taps.

The evening after the Evening Parade I was at home alone, tired of mind and too lazy of body to get off the couch. I sat there sampling TV channels in search of something I could bear to watch. I kept coming back to an old movie about WW I in which James Cagney played a self-centered cowardly Irish American kid who finally became a hero. It was a set piece, formally executed. The 'military mind' was as much in evidence as it had been at the Marine Barracks. The rhetoric of war, death and sacrifice was seamless, the depiction of blood, mud and destruction realistic and affecting. This is what the elegant young Marines in their white gloves are all about, I kept thinking; this is why we cherish our sons and praise them for being soldiers.

* * *

The Honeywell Office Automation System, our office computer, is a vast cobwebbed labyrinth designed for the mysteries of an imaginary office invented by an arcane cult of men who thought the art of writing was word processing. It is full of dead ends of programs that were never tested (I once crashed the entire system by trying to use the change-to-upper-case function according to the instruction in the manual), 'bad spots' infested with permanent bugs, and strange echoes from un-beings trapped in forgotten subroutines. My terminal stumbled this afternoon, lost in some loop of nothingness, the cursor blinking helplessly at the bottom of the screen. All the usual tricks for escape (Control/Backspace, NEW+PROC) failed, but sometimes I could raise a ***BREAK*** followed by THE PATHNAME VIOLATES NAMING CONVENTIONS, then DO YOU WISH MORE HELP? TYPE YES OR NO. But no help followed either YES or NO, and I couldn't find a way out of the maze. I knew that if I turned off my terminal without clearing back to the banner line I'd crash the whole system. Peggy, the OAS priestess was in the Senate attic. Kathleen came to my terminal and tried some other things, but nothing worked, except that once we roused an ancient oracle that flashed five words across the monitor: THE BOUND CANNOT BE UNBOUND.

* * *

My little radio, tuned to WETA, is offering a New York Philharmonic concert of new composers. What I am hearing is sounds of mining and manufacturing, with somewhat more rhythmic organization. "Ritual and Incantation" by Hale Smith, says the constipated voice of the announcer. Ritual and Incantation? (Please supply inflection of incredulity and outrage.) In mass-media America? Ritual in honor of what gods? Incantation to invoke what spirits? Or is it supposed to reflect some quaint tribal ritual, like a National Geographic article in music? Faugh!

* * *
"...elected representatives do not control access to information retrieval at an IQ level that is necessary to maintain a functional government."

Poor soul, I think she means that Members of Congress don't know what they are doing, a not unreasonable conclusion for someone who lives in a small Ohio town and relies on network news for her knowledge of her nation's government.

Go to the library, I tell her gently in John Glenn's voice, and read the Washington Post and the New York Times; join the League of Women Voters and start talking to others about what you see in Washington. I do not say, but hope that conversations with others will teach her that she can't just string buzz-words together and make sense.

The next letter in the pile is from a 60 year-old woman recently returned from a stint of teaching flying for the Peace Corps. She wants a job in Washington promoting international understanding and world peace. The ex-wife of a Congressman, she has an outstanding record of accomplishments in business, volunteer work, the arts, and aviation. She met Glenn some years ago and hopes he can do something for her now. This one is harder, especially for me, facing the same uncertainties, the same lack of support systems, and the same short future in which scope in the present job is more important than steps up to the next one. I put it aside -- I'll do it tomorrow.

Kevin came by my desk: "Go look at Jack's desk," he said. I knew something was up, because there had been a warm discussion at lunch the day before over the Iran/Contra affair, North, Poindexter, George Schulz, Weinberger and Reagan. Jack, on loan to the Glenn office from the Defense Intelligence Agency, brought a military mindset, but a willingness to talk about it in our midst. He actually believes that the 'communists' are planning, and capable of, military conquest of the United States and the world, and he has charts, graphs and statistics to wave around in support of these beliefs.

Kevin, Ken, John, Ron, Jack and I had gone down to the North Servery for lunch together. Talk had proceeded from general agreement that Reagan knew (about the diversion of funds to the Contras) to mixed reviews for Schulz and Weinberger, unanimous scorn for Poindexter and scrapping over North.

"I agree that Poindexter should go to jail," said Jack. "He deliberately misled the President, and for purely political reasons. Besides, they should make an example of him -- show other people that they can't get away with that kind of stuff, like murderers."
John scoffed, "Oh, that old deterrence idea. That's been shown over and over not to work. But if it did it would be all the more reason to put North in jail. He's the one who did all the stuff."

"Yeah, but North was different," Jack replied, "he wasn't a hero, but he really believed in what he was doing, and I don't think he ought to be punished for that. He doesn't need to be deterred because he'd never do it again, and it certainly wouldn't deter anyone else."

I joined the fray: "The analogy isn't with a murderer, but with a spy. Once a spy is arrested his cover is blown and even if he wanted to, he couldn't do much more spying. But I think we are justified in punishing spies for what they did."

Ken liked that. "Right, the Constitution clearly states..."  (Ken brings everything back to the Constitution.)

Jack wasn't moved, "But North was doing what he thought was right, what was best for his country. Like me – I have to support him for what he believed in. I believe in Contra aid too."

(We knew that.)

"Then why," I asked, "when it became evident that most of the people in this country didn't want to send military supplies to the Contras, couldn't North stand up and say 'I did what I believed to be right and I'm prepared to take the consequences.' Remember Thoreau in jail and Emerson saying ‘Henry, why are you in there?’ and Thoreau saying 'Waldo, why are you not in here?'"

"And that was just over taxes," added Ron, "a poll-tax, I think."

"Yeah, you're right," Jack admitted. "That was pretty wimpy of North."

It was a lively discussion and continued well beyond our hour of lunch break. Kevin said that the people's 'right to be wrong' issue was beside the point, because it assumed that there was a 'wrong' side to complex issues like this one. Ken argued that the contempt shown by the actors for the Boland amendment showed their total misunderstanding of the Constitution. The match was five of us to Jack's one. He took in good grace, but conceded nothing.

Friday, however, he wasn't in the office, and by 3PM, when Kevin told me to go look at Jack's desk, revenge had been taken. The doorway to his cubicle had been covered with a sheet of transparent plastic, with a neat typewritten sign in the upper right hand corner:

**THE JACK OFFICE SPACE, CIRCA MID-1980S. A TYPICAL OFFICE OF A FUTURE PIN-STRIPED COOKIE-PUsher OF THE LATE 20TH CENTURY. AT THIS DESK, JACK WROTE HIS FIRST PULITZER PRIZE WINNING BOOK, WHILE EUROPE LAUGHED, AND WAS INSPIRED TO WRITE HIS SECOND, AMERICA'S NEW UNDERCLASS: CONGRESSIONAL STAFFERS DOWN AND OUT ON CAPITOL HILL.**

Inside the work-space various artifacts were similarly labeled. Word spread rapidly around the
office, and soon there were six people there, chuckling over the display.

MJ came along and approved. With Phil, George, Milt, Pat, Celia, Marty, Diane and Don all on leave, she was the ranking person in the office, cheerfully assuming all their titles: "Let's see... with Phil gone I'm Chief of Staff, AA, Leg Director, Defense and Manpower. I'm Office Manager and Personal Secretary for Celia; I'm Press Secretary for Marty, Aging for Diane, Foreign Policy for Pat, and...oh, CMCO (Classified Materials Control Officer, pronounced kem-co) for Don."

That brought forth comments on a memo from Phil about classified materials, distributed to all 40 of us even though only five people have clearance for such materials. Other recent memos were recalled.

Ron: "I still have the one about not putting your feet on the desk. I was sure it was me, but it was Dale. Phil caught him smoking in the Senator's office, with his feet on the Senator's desk."

Eileen: "And what was even worse, Dale was sitting in the Designated Briefing Chair."

Choral incredulity: WHAT?

"Yes," said Eileen, "Didn't you know? Phil has decreed that the chair to the Senator's right, facing him, is the Designated Briefing Chair. When you are briefing the Senator you're supposed to sit in that chair."

"Did Phil really tell you that?"

"Yes. He told me after I'd been in there that I had done well, because he had designated that chair as the Briefing Chair."

Immediately MJ proposed that next time she was in on a briefing, she (who doesn't do briefings) would sit in the DBC, just to see how Phil would react. Then someone wondered what would happen if Ralph sat there, and, as he sometimes does, fell asleep. General merriment: "But what do you do, if you're with constituents and you realize that Ralph is asleep right across the table from you?"

It is a vexing problem, because Ralph has perfected the art of snoozing in an upright position, with his eyes open. Anyone closer than six feet, however, can see the glazed, zombie-like eyes, rolling slightly upward.

"I usually try to lean over in front of the visitor and make them look into my face, while I try to kick Ralph under the table," Ron offered.

Finally I went back to my desk, to a stack of letters from college students who want to be interns
in Glenn's office. They range from sensible smart kids who can write, to self-appointed hot-shots who want to advise the Senator on foreign affairs and self-centered go-getters who want glamour and success:

"The vast amount of knowledge that I would be assimulating [sic] would be undescrivable [sic]."

Don't even try, kid.

* * *

August 22, 1987

Rainy Saturday. Cars sizzle past on Braddock Road, find the curve unbanked, brake and skid. I hear the tires straining and my stomach tightens, waiting for the crash. This evening there has been none, but last Sunday I heard the skid, then a noise that sounded like a ladder falling. I ran out to street and looked south. A jeep-like vehicle was resting on its hood and roll bar, athwart both southbound lanes. I ran back in the house and called 911, and the EMS got there in less than four minutes. But it was almost 45 minutes before the police arrived. Neighbors along the street brought flares, directed traffic and took care of the driver, who, miraculously, was not much hurt.

Too many people, too many cars, too many desires and the means to act them out. Yesterday morning, driving to the office, I saw a helicopter crash into the channel, saw the pontoons floating and guessed that there were people drowning beneath them. And so there were - a photographer taking pictures for a real-estate firm, and two friends who had gone along for the fun of it. The pilot was seriously injured but survived because he managed to get clear of the cabin and was picked up by a yachtsman who was anchored nearby.

* * *

Two weeks ago I made a flying trip to northern Maine to interview for a job as director of University Relations at the Presque Isle campus of University of Maine, and was quite charmed. I can imagine living and working there, and feeling good about it. It is beautiful country, the people have a sense of proportion, and the pace is human. But I have heard nothing more from them, not even the reimbursement for my plane fare.

A few days later I learned that Oberlin was looking for an assistant editor for its alumni magazine. At first I imagined making a hard choice, but on sober reflection, I think I probably haven't a chance at the Oberlin job. Firstly because two years ago I got fed up with their persistent nagging for money, and wrote them a letter saying so. ("...after watching my own children scramble for college educations they might be able to afford, and having my son enlist in the Army to get $25,000 for college -- not enough to go to Oberlin for two years -- it rankles to be asked to contribute so that the sons and daughters of the prosperous can be assured quality educations at
Oberlin...)

And secondly, because if I were looking for someone to write 'class notes, obituaries, features and short book reports' (of books written by Oberlin graduates) I wouldn't hire me. I'd look for someone young, pliable and imaginative, and committed to producing marketable prose for the purpose of getting a better job; someone ambitious and comfortable with affluence; someone who will not write letters to editors, run for public office, or have strong opinions about social justice.

Maybe I am just getting old and sour. I have told many people that one of the things I actually like about Washington is that it resembles a big Oberlin, full of people who are bright, well-informed, competent, active, articulate, liberal and open. I know I would like living in Oberlin again. I think the job is fairly trivial, and not a very worthwhile use of my resources. I'll apply for it, and be surprised if I get an interview. Except for UMPI, the twelve places I've applied to have turned me down sight unseen.

Thursday evening and still nothing, not even the polite turndown. I don't seem to be able to be philosophically detached from things like this. I make immediate bonds with people like the English prof at Presque Isle, then if nothing comes of it, I feel bewildered and let down. That's a kind of vulnerability, but I don't think I would like myself very much if I changed it.

This has been part of my trouble in Washington. There have been a number of people who might have been friends, but there are too many demands on our time to develop closeness. There is also little trust. When I first met Marty, after I had been there two months, she advised me from her four years of experience on the Hill: Don't trust anybody. She was speaking the truth, for herself at least. She doesn't trust anyone, with the possible exception, ironically, of me. But I can't live that way, and won't.

* * *

An old friend from my Oberlin days has surfaced unexpectedly. John, a piano major, went to England shortly after graduating, founded a successful arts business and ran it for twenty-five years, then "I just ran away. I burned out and went crazy and ran away. You know I had to be crazy because I could have sold the business for thousands of pounds."

We were sitting in the New Eagle Bar, a long narrow room with pools of dim rusty light at intervals above the bar. Before it had been urban-renewed out of its original location it had been one of the more prestigious gay-bars in Washington. "We had to come here," John explained, "so I could get one of their black T-shirts. You know, luv, I've gotten fat, and black makes you look thin." He's not really fat, but certainly fleshier than he was the last time I saw him 32 years ago.

He was wearing tan Banana-Republic shorts and sleeveless shirt with pleated pockets all over; mirrored sunglasses, one gold earring and a gold wedding-band; mustache and about a three-week stubble of hair. "I shaved my head in mourning for that damn dog that went and got itself killed. I didn't know what else to do, so I shaved my head."
John had come down from New York to visit another Oberlin friend, Jim, now retired from the ministry working in a street mission in Baltimore; all three of us were out for a night on the town. After we finished our round of drinks John insisted that we accompany him upstairs to "The Leather Shoppe."

"This is my sister, she's all right," said John to the attendant as we entered. It was very educational. On one side were racks of leather jackets, vests, boots, jockstraps and... er...harnesses, as well as jeans, T-shirts, swimsuits and underwear, both plain and ingenious. On the other side were display cases with magazines showing lean limbs, muscular butts and plump cocks rising from luxurious pubic hair. There were velvet-paper packages of condoms, wristbands, handcuffs, g-strings, jewelry, belt-buckles, aerosol cans of lubricants and snake-bite kits. (Snake-bite kits? I thought of asking, but decided that Jim wouldn't tell me if he knew, and John would make up something whether he knew or not.)

* * *

Next week I am going to Ohio for a short vacation. I had planned to go earlier, but I had no money after fronting nearly $500 for the trip to Maine. There is less pressure at work, but I feel lonely and aimless, with nothing much to look forward to. I am also angry at the suffocating weather and want out of the heat.

* * *

SEPTEMBER 1987

September 14, 1987

It was a good trip home, and I felt better while I was there, but the drive back to Washington was long and tiring. I went south from Cumberland to keep from being stuck in traffic for the 40 miles into Hancock. I followed back roads through rags of mist, down into dark leafy valleys and up into the pearly dusk of mountain meadows, crossing a wide shallow river on a narrow wooden bridge and passing little clutches of unpainted houses with porches not quite plumb. Along one stretch I got behind a truck pile high with crates of apples that tore leaves from the overhanging trees and let them swirl around my car.

I should have been terrified, driving alone with a carsick dog along a secondary highway with few houses and fewer cars, carrying barely $10 in my purse, and darkness thickening around me. But it was just too magical. When I finally pulled up at a crossroad with a gas station, store and lunch-counter (all in the same old farmhouse) I went in to make sure I was still headed for Winchester.

"Yep," said the beefy man in work-pants and flannel shirt, "Jes go on down 29 yere, an' wen it dead-ens inta 522, go rat. Takes ye rat inta Winchester."
It wasn't quite that simple. "29 yere" turned left a few miles on, back to the north. I knew that couldn't be right, so I took the right fork, which did, after another 15 miles or so, get to 522, Winchester, and Washington.

After a week of cool in Ohio, Washington was disappointingly hot.

* * *

September 17, 1987

Birth dearth? In a world with five billion people? Sorry, Ben Wattenberg. I vote for 'brain dearth': yours. Anyone with the arrogance to propose that the world's ills will be addressed by middle-class WASP females having more babies can't be very bright. No accolades, either, for a publishing industry that purveys such drivel, nor for the critics who take it seriously.

It all comes down to my version of "we will never be clever enough to explain our own cleverness" (Karl Scheibe, Mirrors, Masks, Lies and Secrets, 1978), which is that we will never be clever enough to manage our own cleverness. Somehow the reward of power and prestige to men who talk convenient nonsense goes to their heads, and they start thinking that they can plan and execute the universe according to their interests. Oliver North. Ronald Reagan. The Ayatollah Khomeini. Henry Kissinger. Ben Wattenberg. There is no end to the list, and they parade through the Post every day.

But we are in deeper trouble. A certain depth of understanding of the Constitution and the balance and controlled government it provides is required for the ship of state to sail safely and make way in the treacherous waters of public beliefs and values. So we have Oliver North saying smugly "I cheated and lied to all you folks, scoffed at the Congress, defied the law and spat on the Constitution – did I do something wrong?" And thousands of people respond "You're a hero, Ollie!" and rush out to get Ollie haircuts. The water is too shallow for the deep draft of the ship of constitutional democracy.

The Reaganites were right about one thing. When the population was half what it is now, and when a majority of people were bound together by a shared vocabulary of Christian beliefs (Useful Conceptual Fictions, not necessarily solid Christian commitment) there were plain criteria by which to judge right and wrong, and there could be an easy consensus on virtue and vice. In those times there were also practical limitations on communications, travel and firepower, so that a local consensus could not reach very far or do much damage, and dissent could not be put down very comprehensively or quickly.

But in the Never-Never Land of Washington, Tinker Bell Reagan, assisted by Peter Pan North*, leads the company of Lost Boys in a real-time script of unimaginable ignorance and folly. And in
spite of Reagan's remarks about bringing God back into the classroom and the sacredness of the lives of the unborn, one sees nowhere in his actions or utterances the slightest hint of Christian charity, of compassion for the poor, or forgiveness for his enemies. Nor can one see anything of the strength and beauty of what the Quakers call 'The Inner Light.'

If the make-believe worlds of people in high places are a great threat to human life and sanity, however, I would like to propose that fiction and theatre may also be our best hope of salvation. It is here that we see the magnitude of our folly. In "Visit to a Small Planet" (Gore Vidal) an alien invader comes to play war on a willing planet (Earth) and almost succeeds before his keepers come to take him back to the loony-bin he escaped from. In “The China Card” (John Ehrlichman), Nixon, Kissinger, Haig and others are exposed as petty preening tyrants, driven by lust for power and self-importance. A Door into Ocean is a sci-fi study of a watery planet governed by Quakerly consensus processes attacked by a militaristic – but not mindlessly brutal – conventional culture from a nearby planet.

*The resemblance between Peter's appeal to the audience to revive the fading Tinker Bell by clapping their belief in fairies and Oliver North's "I believe in the communist menace!" would be delicious if it were not so frightening.

* * *

I sit beside the open window, hearing the steady chirp of crickets over the constant rush of traffic and wonder why I'm here. I despise Washington for its noise, heat, traffic, crowding, materialism and wealth, and myself for the compromises I make daily with those things. I condemn myself for neither succeeding at the rat-race nor doing anything to change it. I am puzzled and dismayed that people should find their lives successful and satisfying when they can't make anything but money, when they live in houses they don't build, eat food they don't grow, wear clothes, drive cars and use machines they wouldn't know how to make (and I blush at my audacity in using a word-processor) and pay others to play their games and sing their songs for them.

I don't want to live this way, but it might be more tolerable if I had any sense of mission or vocation, or even the sense that I make a unique contribution to some community or common endeavor. It was the latter that I left behind in Kent, and would like to regain, somehow, in my next job. But none of the places I've applied to have had any use for me. Now I read job descriptions with a sinking feeling: "...provide public relations planning and marketing perspective to administrators...", "...ability to articulate the role of a leading university in society...", and "...responsible for staffing the Chancellor...at least five years of experience staffing an executive..." Staffing a chancellor? What the hell does that mean? Do I want to work at a university where they don't speak English? It betrays them – I see an oily young male academic cleaning up after an administrator who makes messes justifying his existence, and whose greatness lies solely in commanding a staff larger than the guy next lower on the totem pole. The ad for that one has been lying beside my C-64 for two weeks and I can't bring myself to apply for it.
There has been one possibility this week – speechwriter for the executives of Apple Computer. It’s a company I think I could work for, not because I believe they are great and good, but because they are young and frivolous and have managed to remain in a learning mode after making a great deal of money, and because, like most living systems, their dynamic derives from their instability.

* * *

September 19, 1987

This week I wrote a letter to Thomas Jefferson. Yes, that Thomas Jefferson. John Glenn was unable to attend the Constitution Brunch of Licking County, at which Tom was expected to be present, in the person of an actor from California. Glenn has had many requests for letters or statements on the Constitution from schools, civic organizations and local Constitution Bicentennial committees, and I have a number of paragraphs on the subject, written earlier this year. But when this one came along, I fretted a little. Jefferson was not one of the principle writers of the Constitution -- the Declaration of Independence was his *chef d'oeuvre*. I decided the best way to duck that would be to write a letter to Jefferson praising him for what he set in motion, but not specifically the Constitution.

After I had written a draft, I telecopied it to Dale in Columbus and asked him what he thought of the idea. He liked it and made a couple of good suggestions, which I incorporated. Then I took it to Celia, to get it onto Glenn's desk for him to read and approve. It was already Wednesday afternoon, and the Constitution Brunch in Newark was on Saturday -- could the Senator look at it by COB? "I'll try," sighed Celia.

But there were late votes Wednesday, and Celia couldn't get it to him until early Thursday afternoon. I was summoned to his office. "Are you going to send a cover letter to explain this?" "Sure, we can do that, but I have to call them in any case. The mail won't get it there overnight, and we'll either have to telecopy it to Columbus or read it to them over the phone."

Glenn turned to Celia. "It'll get there overnight, won't it?"

Celia: "Nope. Two days at the least - even then, maybe not."

Glenn: "I thought we could count on overnight delivery."

Celia: "That's Express Mail. It costs nine dollars and something."

Glenn: "I didn't know that. Anyway, write a cover letter and bring it to me -- I'll sign that, too. Then you two work something out about getting it to them. We can send it Express if necessary, can't
I wrote the cover letter, took it to Celia and turned to the problem of calling the Constitution Brunch bunch in Newark. Their letterhead had no street address or phone number, only a P.O. Box number. I called 614 information. Yes, they had a number for the Constitution Commission, but 45 minutes of trying produced no answer, so I tried the county courthouse. The switchboard operator had never heard of the Constitution Commission – maybe the county commissioners.

No luck there, either, but “try Mary Lou in the auditor’s office – she knows about all those things.”

Thank God for the Mary Lous of the world. "Hmm. What are some of the names on the letterhead? Bill Miller? Okay, he's got a real-estate agency – just a minute, I'll give you his number."

Everything I told Mr. Miller was "just great," but we would "have to" Fed-Ex the letter, because he needed everything by noon on Friday. And by the way, next week they were going to bury a time-capsule and the Senator should write a letter to go in that, too.

I didn't promise the latter, but said I would see if the Senator would have time. Celia made a wry face over the express charges, but agreed, because the Senator wanted them to have their letter. Before I left her desk she handed me a new assignment: The Senator talked to a woman this morning and promised her a letter of recommendation for her stepson to get an ROTC scholarship. He doesn't know anything about the kid.

I did that letter, and some other letters, continuing on Friday. Friday’s mail brought several more requests from organizations for statements to read on Constitution Day next week and I was trying to get the last of them out at 4PM on Friday when Peggy, the Systems Administrator, came around ordering everyone to sign off their computer terminals so she could reboot.

Snarl. The Librarian’s Attitude: the assumption that the job is to protect the hardware, and that service to the users is secondary. In fairness, librarians have largely healed themselves of this aberration.

* * *

“What’s the count on Bork?” Ken asks the receptionists.

“Almost 2 to 1, for, but Cleveland says they’re getting 15 to 1, against.”

“It’s got to be an orchestrated campaign,” says Ken.

“Do you ask for their names?” asks Marty.

The receptionists say no.
"You should -- you can say 'May I have your name?' -- and address, too."

"Yes," says Ken, "You have to ask for the address. Otherwise they just make up a new name each time they call. Besides we should find out if these are really Ohioans. We're getting a lot of letters for [Bork's confirmation] but I haven't had time to do an analysis. I think a lot of them are form letters. I'm going to come in on Sunday and work on that."

"How can you tell?"

"The computer ones you just put on top of each other and hold them up to the light. For the others, a lot of people make mistakes in spelling or grammar that are repeated in every letter. Postmarks, too -- when 20 letters have the same date, time and Zip Code you get pretty suspicious."

By mid-week the Ohio papers were reporting that Glenn would vote against confirming Bork, which was not exactly what he had said, but clearly it was what the journalists had heard. I find the whole proceeding unfortunate. I don't like Bork, don't trust him, and probably, given the opportunity, I would vote against him. I think he has got hold of the wrong end of the stick. But I also don't like the ideologies and tactics that are surfacing in this battle, nor some of the risks that are being assumed.

First off, the Democrats have already let the President choose the theater, the scenery and the costumes, write the first act and cast all the leading roles. This has two serious consequences. It diverts attention from some very grave questions that range from a bungled Presidency to international terrorism (including the terrorism of the U.S. against Nicaragua). And it has somehow convinced a large number of people that the power of our government is solely vested in the Supreme Court, and that one single person, Robert Bork, will either destroy all the safeguards of the Constitution, or restore purity and morality to the people.

Bork is a brilliant, but not very flexible thinker. He has the classic Librarian's Attitude: the job of a justice of the Supreme Court is to protect the Constitution. I can't agree with that. Like the librarian, the Supreme Court justice is to serve the people and give them access to the resources of the Constitution. But I am not sure just how far Bork would go in defense of the Constitution, just as virago librarians stop short of locking the books away from all readers.

I don't find Bork of Luciferian proportions -- and the Bork is only marginally worse than the Biden besetting him. (Sorry, I couldn't resist that.) I don't think all our civil liberties and rights to privacy would be wiped out with his appointment. I also don't think he is worth going to the wall for, both because I think Orrin Hatch would be worse, and because I think women, blacks, minorities and Democrats have more important fish to fry. Compared to landing the Presidency in '88, with a Supreme Court with four old men with prostate cancer, Bork is a red herring.

*   *   *

307
September 27, 1987

The daily tally of letters and phone calls has swung to opposition to Bork. The taking of the tally and the tabulation and formatting of the daily report has occupied more staff time than I care to reveal. For reasons that escape me, the AA has been spending his time tinkering with the exact placement of the numbers under the headings:

"Under the word TOTAL, the number should be exactly centered." The next day it is: "No, the last digit should be under the L." Then: "No, that doesn't look right -- put the first digit under the first T." Each of these decisions required that the memo be redone before placing it before the Senator. Your tax dollars at work in the U.S. Senate.

* * *

Now, a thought-problem, multiple choice:

___________ IS [ARE] NOT ABANDONING BASIC PRINCIPLES OR BELIEFS. WHAT WE ARE SEEING INSTEAD IS A REMARKABLE INCREASE IN SOPHISTICATION AND SHREWDNESS.

from the Washington Post, 9/22/87, op-ed page

CHOICES:
A) Robert Bork
B) Daniel Ortega
C) The Soviets
D) The Iranians
E) Liberals
F) The East Germans
G) The Pope

While you are choosing, let me make a few observations. What's the difference between abandonment of principle and increased shrewdness? Can you tell, from an action or an outcome which was operating? Does it matter? In politics -- the art of the possible -- doesn't any increase in sophistication and shrewdness raise the level of discourse and hence provide more possibilities? And in the world at large aren't actions and outcomes more important than principles, beliefs or intentions of the players? Victims of a plane crash are just as dead whether the crash was caused by a terrorist's bomb or a careless mechanic; the refusnik who finally gets a visa is freed by an action, not by a change in principle or sophistication. And given the way we have written the rules, Daniel Ortega could take the same actions (reopen La Prensa, seek a cease-fire) in either case -- and increase in shrewdness or a change in his principles. How can we tell which?

Finally, what should direct our lives -- principles and beliefs? sophistication and knowledge? shrewdness and success? I always remember the dour counsel (which surprised me at the time) of one of the great women who taught me: Don't be loyal to your principles. Be loyal to your
friends, to other human beings. So: none of the above. It is to each other that we owe allegiance.

We need to ask Robert Bork whether his loyalties are to his principles or to the people of this nation, whether he would defend the Constitution or the rights and liberties of citizens -- the books or the readers. In my view, Bork fails. If he has any loyalty beyond what he knows what the Framers of the Constitution intended, but didn't bother to write down, it seems to be only to the apparatchiks of the Right. Not good enough.

However, I find the process of the Bork confirmation enormously heartening, because some of our new information systems are coming of age. Through TV and mass communications the American people are being empowered to participate in the conversations that drive our public decisions. Another mentor of my youth (we are all careful to attribute our ideas these days) pointed out to me that 'the public' is not stupid or brutish, only badly informed, and that given the opportunity to see for themselves they will make rational choices of alternatives most likely to produce the outcomes they desire. (Note that I am not saying that they will make 'good' choices.)

There is a second stage to this process which we are also seeing: learning. In order to learn, living systems must be able to take actions (the behaviorists say 'move muscles') and experience the consequences of them. In Washington today the received wisdom is that people haven't liked what they have seen of Bork on TV, and that they sense that they have been down that road before and didn't like where it took them.

So, by the time you read this, the nomination may be settled, even history.

The answer to the quiz?

The Post article was about the Soviets and glasnost, but depending on your beliefs, any of the choices might be construed as correct.

* * *

Poster ad on the Metro trains this week: A close-up of a hibiscus-like flower suggesting a directional microphone, with the caption: WE HAVE MORE PLANTS THAN THE CIA.

* * *

OCTOBER 1987

10 October 1987

According to my friend Judy, this is

THE SCORE
   REALITY - 1
   THEORY - 0
Not in Washington it isn't, offered Sonja, in Washington it is
REALITY - 1
FANTASY - 0
Nor in economics, added George, that's
REALITY - 0
THEORY - 1
Worse than that, said Eileen, in Reagonomics it's
REALITY - 0
THEORY - 0
And after the stock market debacle the general reckoning was
FANTASY - 0
REALITY - 0
Nominations will be accepted from the floor.

You have been very patient, going to the office with me and listening to my endless monologues on the hardships of climate and traffic in Washington. So today we will visit historic sites, commune with nature and generally rest our minds, as it were, from the budgeting, bullying, blaming, blathering, blundering and borking of the U.S. Government.

The Senate Historian offered Senate staffers a tour of the Congressional Cemetery on Capitol Hill. Located on the Anacostia River between Pennsylvania Ave. and RFK Stadium, it was established in 1807 and fell into desuetude after the Civil War, when Arlington Cemetery became the 'in' place to be interred. People can still be buried in the older graveyard, and are or are planning to be.

Only two could go from each office, and I signed up with Pamela, Phil's secretary. A Bluebird bus had been reserved to take us to the cemetery. We got on the bus promptly at 10AM and took seats halfway back. There was an unexplained delay, during which we recalled junior high school field trips, with someone proposing that we should sing "George Washington Bridge" to pass the time. But about then one of the Assistant Historians came around to take the roll, so Pamela and I confined our rowdiness to making up headlines for the next day's newspapers: SENATE STAFF BUS HIJACKED BY TERRORISTS was our first effort; next we proposed TERRORISTS HOSPITALIZED AFTER COUP ATTEMPT ON SENATE AIDES. About 10:15 the bus driver climbed aboard and started the bus and another Assistant Historian stood up and started the travelogue.

Restoration of the cemetery started about 15 years ago, he said, after it had been all but forgotten for nearly 50 years. The last time there were numerous burials had been at the time of the flu epidemic after WW I. Many old trees had to be removed, brush cleared, stones reset, paving repaired and a regimen of mowing and maintenance started. Lindy Boggs had been a prime mover of the restoration, after Hale Boggs was lost in Alaska.
We climbed off the bus into the fall sunshine and were led down an alley of old linden trees, under which were ranks of sandstone cenotaphs so ugly (a Senator had remarked) that "they added a new terror to death." The headstones included the usual crosses, urns, angels, weeping willows, lilies, lambs and pious words: INEXORABLE DEATH'S DOINGS; OUR MOTHER; FELL ASLEEP IN JESUS; REUNITED; REST WELL. A new polished granite stone read A GAY VIETNAM VETERAN -- WHEN I WAS IN THE MILITARY THEY GAVE ME A MEDAL FOR KILLING TWO MEN AND A DISCHARGE FOR LOVING ONE, and had a birth date but no name or death date.

The roads and paths were paved with black brick; the grass was mowed but little trimming had been done, and coarse weeds and wild vines grew around the stones -- Virginia creeper, bindweed, poison ivy, blackberry, asters, tear-thumb, foxtail and poor-man's grass. The guide pointed out the tombs of Elbridge Gerry (famous for the redistricting that looked like a salamander), J. Edgar Hoover and John Philip Sousa. Some famous journalists were recognized (I guess because historians' existence depends on them) Joseph Gales, Matthew Brady (whose name is misspelled and death date is wrong on his headstone) and one woman, Anne Royall, whose newsletter "The Publicist" got her convicted, in the last years of the 18th century, of being "a common scold" and sentenced to be ducked in the Potomac.

Columbus Day weekend I drove, alone, to Charlottesville to see Monticello. What I saw first was a large number of people with friends or family, talking about their microwaves and VCRs while waiting in line to see the house of a rich man whose greatness rested on the labor of slaves, servants and women. Monticello is very beautiful; one yearns to have a house with such windows and such prospects, with such grace, proportion and economy of space.

Yet for all its grace and beauty, it is a monster, not only because of the injustice on which it was founded, but also because its parameters remain forever fixed to a dead man's vision.

"We're trying to reconstruct this area according to Jefferson's instructions," said the middle-aged woman in tweeds and sensible shoes who was guiding the garden tour, "but chinaberry trees are not...they don't...well, nowadays people think they're weeds."

It has not been a quiet week on Capitol Hill, but I work in a backwater now, dealing with the little crises of people who want to be touched by Senator Glenn and doing the odd bits of word-smithing no one else wants to tackle. This week I wrote a jingle for the 82nd birthday of the father of a friend of the Glens, and a letter of recommendation for college admission for the daughter of an Ohio millionaire who demanded that we send the letter to him for approval. I sent 'go-to-the-library' letters to a number of shameless high school kids who wrote in asking for information on "all the issues" (their teachers should be having them study one issue, then write for the Senator's position on that issue), and to a Maryland woman that her granddaughter should go to the library to find out when Ohio became a state and what its principal products were. I know the answers to those questions, but I have this old-fashioned idea that this is a legislative office and not public library reference room.
So when Peggy ordered us all off the computer again at 5:30 on Friday, I packed up and left, pausing only a moment to talk to Annie about the speech I had written for her for the Cleveland Salvation Army next month.

I walked out across Constitution Avenue, took a shortcut across the Supreme Court terrace which was peopled with teenagers with hairstyles indistinguishable from hair brushes, down to the Capitol South Metro station, where I took a Blue train the long way around to the Pentagon. I missed the 6:07 bus and had to wait until 6:27, and didn't get home until 6:45.

After supper and chores I decided to go up to the big Salvation Army store on Little River Turnpike to look for some pieces of fabric for a Halloween costume. The clerk, a middle-aged man, was churlish, and treated me as if I were trying to cheat the Army out of its rightful profit. As I left he was turning these charms on a small family trying, in broken English, to buy blankets and shoes for their two little boys.

On Saturday I spent three hours at the C-64, worked outdoors for a couple of hours, then set out with Isabell for a walk in the ravine, taking only my small fresnel magnifier and a little bag of bread crumbs to feed the fish. This is the off year for the black oaks, and there are few acorns underfoot. The leaves are only just beginning to turn golden, but the summer was dry for so long that the foliage is thin, and sunlight streams in, lighting here a miniature forest of beech-drops, there a branch of orange and red dogwood leaves, nearby a minor galaxy of woodland asters, and over there a single curved stalk of wreath goldenrod.

Isabell and I left our usual path by the spring and walked along the ridge that is probably the remains of a 19th century rail roadbed. I hoped to find some of the golf-ball sized iron shot that others have found in the area, or maybe an old spike or other artifact. But except for some aluminum beer cans, a length of eavespout, and a fire basket from a fireplace, there wasn't much to be found.

We went down to the creek, to the place by the submerged stump where the water is nearly three feet deep. I crouched down and sprinkled bread crumbs on the little rapids just upstream, so that they rode down into the pool. The little fish, each one silvery with a dark stripe, flashed out into the sunlit water, twisting and darting at the bread crumbs. I watched the tinier fish in the shallow water around my sneakers, like animated pins attacking a crumb no bigger than a grass seed. I wondered what they ate when no one brought them crumbs. Not much, I guessed, and not often; each other, probably, as well as the smaller animalcules of the water. Some creatures must eat the little fish, too. Were they fished out of the water by the raccoons who left paw prints in the sand beside the pool or were they eaten by the birds that left large three-toed tracks in the mud?

Finally I stood up and moved downstream, to where a large beech tree has fallen across the stony creek. Isabell heard something, and presently a pair of sturdy youngsters of perhaps 13 or 14 came walking up the creek. They wore soaked running shoes, shorts, T-shirts and baseball caps.
and were carrying a plastic bucket between them; one had a long handled net over her shoulder.

I greeted them: "Hi! Whatcha catching?"

"Minnows"

"Goin' fishing?"

"No, we feed them to our fish at home. We have a lot of goldfish."

My pretty little fish, sacrificed to feed the pets of a couple of fat teenagers? I watched anxiously as they waded upstream, but they passed the pool where I had been feeding my friends without stopping. I sat down on a fallen tulip-tree and preached myself a sermon: They aren't my fish. Their destiny is to be eaten, or worse, to die uneaten. Until they die, they live -- in endless hunger, but otherwise not very aware of themselves or the world around them. And feeding them bread crumbs is meddling with the nature of things as surely as catching them for goldfish-fodder.

Isabell and I went on, and I put the last of the bread crumbs into a shady pool beneath a blue-beech tree. We crossed over into Elizabeth's garden and sat beside her lily-pond that has two frogs and a turtle who expect humans to feed them. I turned over a couple of stones but found no worms, so I left the frogs sitting expectantly on lily-pads and went over to see the blue lobelias that grow like weeds in her flower-beds. They were past blooming, only spires of green pods, but they brought back memories of my father and his delight in their blueness.

Finally we headed back upstream, rambling, stopping to investigate some unusual holly bushes that had opposite instead of alternate leaves, and different veining. I found a nicely convoluted grape-tendril, two softballs (for Nelson), an intact, capped gin-bottle with two inches of clear liquid in it, and the skull and mandibles of a possum -- a good haul for one day.

* * *

Sunday brings the Post, with its wealth of ideas and outrage. The first thing my eye caught was the name of Steve Mosher, who was, I believe, the Stanford graduate student who got in trouble with both his advisers and the State Department over his behavior in China when he was studying birth control and abortion. Sure enough, it was an article about the terrible treatment of Chinese couples who wanted more than one child, about forced abortions, about the evils of communism and the repression of individuals who violated the communist social code. It made most Chinese, and all of the government officials into brutal beasts, inflicting cruel laws on an innocent populace for the pleasure of power.

I have a lot of trouble with this, because we Westerners see Chinese culture from some premises that skew our perceptions rather extensively. I am in no way suggesting that the Chinese or anybody else sees the world entirely in plumb, only that we ought to back off from animosity and
scorn for the way other people solve the problems the world sets for them. Let me tell you a story:

Once upon a time, about 1953, a young woman came from India to pursue graduate study at Oberlin College. She was housed in the Graduate House, an old rambling frame structure with a common bathroom on each floor. The bathrooms had four washbasins, two showers, two tubs and three toilets. We soon learned, to our dismay, that toilet customs in India were…er, different. Julia (not her name) came from a good Methodist family, so good, (though not necessarily so Methodist) that they had servants to perform every task that can be performed by another.

Apparently Julia had never encountered a flush toilet before. We could only guess, because she went into the toilet only in the dark, that she put her feet on the toilet seat and crouched down. The result was predictable: shit all over the seat and back of the toilet. Suggestions that she clean up after herself were met with disbelief: sweepers did that kind of thing, not women in her caste. We adapted. One stall became ‘Julia’s John’ but it didn’t help the smell in the toilet room. Julia didn’t last long – before the first semester was half over she returned to India.

This is a pretty simple case of an individual up against unfamiliar social customs, and one where the pollution suffered by the social unit was directly traceable to one person. Of course it seems to us that an individual should be responsible for cleaning up his or her own messes. We are less sure whether the individual is totally responsible for any and all children engendered by his or her own activity. In subsistence cultures too many children will exhaust the food supply, and unless enough die to restore the balance, the tribe will perish. As tribes and clans move toward self-sufficiency they develop beliefs and practices that help manage their numbers – female infanticide, taboos that limit the frequency of intercourse, or number of partners, etc.

The Chinese have reached a consensus, at least among their leadership, that in order to assure a minimum level of ‘goods’ for their people, they must control their population. They have nearly a billion people now, and traditional folkways predicated on a high rate of infant and child mortality. A rule of one child per couple seems draconian, but if the cost of large families is the death of large numbers of children, it may be the only alternative.

*I see I have not quite succeeded at getting out of politics, but at least we have got out of the office for a while. I am feeling better, and volunteered to sing songs with the children at the Hill Staffers for the Homeless and Hungry Halloween party and have been scrambling for a costume and suitable songs (resurrecting my old Pumpkin Carols). Our household is not having a Halloween party this year, so for the first time in many years I am unable to bedevil my friends with an invitation in cipher.

The Fairfax Unitarian Chorale is singing Randall Thompson’s "The Peaceable Kingdom" on November 1. I like the work, but I made the mistake of agreeing to sing 2nd soprano, which is no
fun. Cellists like to be 1st violinists when not behind a cello. I also signed up for the Unitarians
course in feminist theology, more out of a sense of social isolation than from any religious quest. I
am deeply skeptical of feminist anything.

I have become Undertaker to the Household, for the mice and rats caught in the traps set by
Lauren and Suzanne. We all hate killing them, but they elude Nelson and Isabell is afraid of mice.
We are unwilling to live with them, so we share the labor.

I'm reading Veil, Bob Woodward's book on Casey and the CIA. Everyone should. Woodward is a
facile but honest writer; he writes journalism (which is truth about the fictions and inventions of
human minds, and distinct from fiction and poetry, which are inventions about truth). But it is
important to account for certain events, like the Iran/Contra fiasco, and if this accounting is not
adequate, it becomes incumbent upon its critics to write another, better one. When you finish
that, go find The China Card by John Ehrlichman. That's fiction (see definition above).

I am going to be able to go to California at Christmas to visit Alys and Seth. It's been two years
since I have seen them.

* * *

NOVEMBER 1987

14 November, 1987

It IS hard to keep a straight face, sometimes.

On All Hallow's Day the Fairfax Unitarians celebrated (sic) Isaiah's vision of the Peaceable
Kingdom with a multi-media show (also sic, believe me). The centerpiece of the event was the
choir's quite creditable performance of Randall Thompson's 1936 a capella setting of selected
verses – the ones with lots of woes and howling, holy mountains and clapping trees. This was
accompanied by projections of slides of a few of the 'Peaceable Kingdom' paintings of Edward
Hicks showing lions lying down with lambs and little children playing on asp-holes (I am not
making this up). The church has a high clerestory with two great oriel windows that cannot be
covered, so that despite the closed venetian blinds on the lower windows (which blocked the
splendor of sunlight on oak trees) the images were too washed out to be effective.

The service opens with announcements, and on this day a visitor stood up to offer a message
from her home church: "Good Morning. My name is Jane Smith and I'm a Unitarian." Choking on
rather badly repressed laughter, I whispered to Jean A. beside me "Aren't we supposed to say
"Hi, Jane Smith" like at AA meetings?"
But the real test of my self-control came with the last reading of the day. I hadn't figured out what Yeat's "The Lake Isle of Innisfree" had to do with Isaiah, but I was cool – synectics is one of my better subjects. It was read by a woman with a distinct lisp, which normally wouldn't bother me. But I nearly lost it at "And I thall have thome peath there, for peath comth dropping thlow."

* * *

One of the endless sources of wonder for me is the faith of so many people that Senator Glenn can answer any question, provide any object, or move any mountain. This week I answered a letter from a city official and Rotary Club member in a town not in Ohio: "Please forward an Ohio State flag for our Festival of Flags before Nov. 15." I sat on my hands for a few minutes until I was sure I could trust them not to type 'Ohio flags cost $24 each. Are you willing to have your taxes raised so that Senators can keep state flags in stock for distribution to anyone who asks?' Then I retrieved my letter 'sorry-no-Ohio-flag-but-you-can-purchase-one-from...' from my file named NO, which contains letters for turning down all kind of requests.

Next up was a 12-year-old wanting to know the meaning of 'black-bag job'. I had heard the phrase, and thought it referred to concealing something or doing something undercover, but wasn't sure if it applied to some particular event or situation or was more general. I decided to consult my colleagues -- very savvy and word-wise people in the office.

Marty: It's like a black briefing of classified material.

Lewis: I never heard it, but it's not a black briefing.

Ken and John didn't know.

Pamela: Watergate. That's what the plumbers carried their burglary tools in. (Which explains why Lewis, Ken and John wouldn't have known -- they were in grade school during Watergate.)

George: That sounds right -- it's some kind of clandestine operation.

Peggy: Yes, that's what they called undercover -- counterintelligence -- operations. But that was supposed to be secret. You can't tell that to anyone. (Peggy worked too long for the FBI.)

These researches notwithstanding, I thought I'd better check with CRS. I needed to call the CRS Hotline anyway, for another constituent who wanted to know why there was no published list of Congressional Medal of Honor recipients.

"This is Caroline Arnold in Senator Glenn's office. I have a couple of short questions from constituents..." I posed my queries. The Hotline librarian took the Congressional Medal question first, and while she was waiting for the bibliographic material to come up on her computer screen (the list is published) we chatted. "I'm embarrassed to ask such off-the-wall questions," I said.
"Oh, these aren't off-the-wall," she said, "You should see some of the requests we get. The first request I took when I came to work here over 20 years ago was for the recipe for fig newtons. But my all-time favorite was the constituent who wanted to know the pros and cons of child abuse."

The ‘black-bag job’ phrase proved to be more elusive. All the specialists she consulted agreed that it was used in reference to Watergate, but she was unable to find it in any of their lexicons of political terms or dictionaries of Watergate.* She would research it further and call me back, she promised.

But when she called back at 4:50 Friday afternoon she still didn't have an authoritative source for reading 'black-bag job' as 'clandestine, undercover, willfully deceitful' though we agreed that for a youngster it was probably close enough.

I get all the kid-letters to John Glenn. They range from the pitiful unreadable scrawl of a 5th grader in a "crishn scoll" to the arrogant demand of a college sophomore that the Senator "complete the attached 7-page questionnaire before scheduling an appointment with me to discuss it. My paper is due November 15." My desk also got a series of letters with identical wording written in different hands that all asked "When were you born? What is your position? What are your career goals?" and all ended with a request for "complete information on all the issues." (I estimate that there are about 400 identifiably discrete issues that Senator Glenn is prepared to respond to.) Some of the student letters are disingenuous: "How long did it take you to get where you are today?"

At the same time that the American public decided, or was driven, to write to its Senators about Robert Bork, some portion of res publica was moved (apparently by the tobacco industry) to mail to its Members convenient tear-off postcards denouncing controls on smoking in airplanes as a fascist plot to deprive them of their God-given right to poison the air they shared with their fellow travelers. Actually, the post-cards were a little more temperate than that, but that is another part of the forest. That's forests themselves, sacrificed to produce the paper that came through the Glenn office during those three weeks. I consulted the dictionary for a measure-of-volume word suitable for the quantities of mail received in Senate offices. ‘Hogsheads’ came to mind, where 'gallons' seemed inadequate; 'achtels' are too small, as are 'choppins'. The korntuna (146 pottar, or 36.75 gallons) is not bad. I need not confine myself to liquid measure, however. In dry measure there is the 'chetvert', which is 8 chetveriks (the dictionary helpfully defines chetveriks as '1/8 chetvert') or the 'tundagalatta' (= 900 ferfathmur or .78 acre)?

In any case, mail arrives in bundles, boxes, yard-long trays and canvas duffle-bags. The official estimate for the Glenn office is about 3,500 pieces of mail per week, or nearly 200,000 per year. Two people do nothing but open and sort mail. Their number is often augmented by interns or conscripts from the junior staff during times like the Bork hearings. A while back a lobbying group had thousands of people tape pennies to preprinted postcards that instructed legislators to apply
the pennies to the national debt. Peeling pennies off postcards became the vocation of a whole summer-full of interns.

According to Ron, the steep increase in Congressional mail began about 1960, driven by the increasing TV coverage of events in Washington. About 80 percent of the mail is about legislation or issues, but a substantial portion of those are form-letters generated more or less artfully by single-interest groups. They range from computer-generated fill-in-the-blanks forms, to careful hand-copies on scented note-paper of the same sentences, phrases and misspellings. Because of this a raw count of the number of letters pro-and-con doesn't mean very much: it's not a valid sample. A very small number of letters are unintelligible or abusive.

In Glenn's office every letter is answered unless the writer requests no response. The time limit is two weeks, but most are answered within a few days. The content of the response letters is carefully crafted to represent the Senator's views. Some of the hottest arguments in the office are over the precise wording of standard responses. We don't use the "Thank you for your views on this important issue" type of letter, unless no-one can figure out what the constituent's views are. Postcards don't usually get answers. The ones on smoking in airplanes never got unbundled -- the number of postcards in a bundle was estimated and the bundles in each box counted, and the boxes were carted away.

Outgoing letters are signed with the autopen, with very few exceptions. There is no other way to sign so many letters. John Glenn came to grips with the autopen in 1962, with a blitz of mail after his orbital flight. He detested the autopen, believing that each person who wrote to him deserved at least a real signature. But the necessary 5000 signatures a week, at two per minute, would have been a 40 hour week task.

"Does it not amaze that there are dictionaries of Watergate? One wonders what other dictionaries may have sprouted in the pastures of lexicography, like wild garlic, possibly tainting the milk of our sacred dairy cows. Perhaps we need a Congressional investigation."

John Glenn came back to the press area to report an encounter he had just had with a couple of journalists at a stake-out for another Senator. In Marty's absence Lewis had sequestered himself in her office to write three news-releases that had just come up. Glenn opened the door (one of only two doors in the office, except to his own suite) and said, pleased with himself, "I was waiting for the elevator and they asked me about Ginsburg. I just smiled and said 'Just say no', and then the elevator was there, and I said it again as I got on 'Just say no' and the elevator doors closed."

"That's pretty good," said Lewis, "I think Ginsburg should have used the Deaver Defense -- 'I was drunk when I smoked pot.'"

"I like that," Glenn replied, "that's good, too."
But in this case marijuana was a lifesaver – not for Ginsburg, who had no political life to save anyway, but for President Reagan who nominated him and the Republicans who would have had to support the President. Ginsburg was undistinguished and inexperienced, a well-heeled yuppie with no noticeable convictions or ideas. But he was moral, reasonable and temperate, and able to see women as equals. I think he would have grown up to be a fairly decent Justice. But the Reagan Rightists don't want moral, reasonable and temperate -- they want True Believing. So the pot-smoking was practically a *deus ex machina* to pluck this threat off the stage, while the Administration sent in the clowns to distract the audience by saying that youthful indiscretions didn't matter.

* * *

On Veterans Day I thought I could spare a few hours from cleaning my room or writing this letter to go see the new underground galleries of the Asian and African art on the Mall. After my 10 o'clock appointment to remove the stitches from my last round of periodontal surgery I drove down to the East Falls Church Metro station, parked my car and took a train to the Smithsonian Station. It was snowing, quite hard, but I wasn't concerned: So it snows, so what? You wear boots and gloves, you know what your car can do and how to get it to do it, and you go.

I was less than captivated with the Asian museum. The reflecting pool on the lowest level, intended to bring down the sky, had no water in it; there is a limit to the number of plain jade disks of uncertain function or purpose that I can admire; the collection of landscapes was rather sparse, and I was confused by the mix of 20th century and earlier centuries in the same display; even the gift-shop had nothing irresistible. The final turn-off was the lack of a cafeteria. It was 12:30 and I was hungry. But it was still snowing, and I decided that if I were going to walk anywhere it had better be back to the Metro station.

By the time I got back to Falls Church, about 1:30, it had registered with me that there was a lot of snow out there, and that I might have trouble getting home over clogged streets. At 2:30 I realized that I had spent 35 minutes going four blocks along Columbia Pike. I consulted my book of maps of the Virginia suburbs and figured out an alternative route. It took ten more minutes of creeping to get to a crossover, but I got off and headed back to Seminary Road, to Beauregard, and finally to Little River Turnpike and Braddock Road.

At one point I offered a ride to a young woman who was slogging through ankle-deep slush of the street in thin little flat shoes. She was most grateful -- her bus had got stuck, and they were told there would not be another. I drove her into her apartment complex, which had a Giant food store nearby. I took advantage of that to pick up some groceries, then rejoined the traffic creeping along past many abandoned cars.

It was 4 o'clock by then, and the snow had finally stopped. I wolfed down a pair of peanut-butter cups, two slices of bread and a banana and settled back to meditate on my situation. I was warm, dry and reasonably comfortable; I wasn't hungry, thirsty or suffering from an overloaded bladder.
I was not anxious about my driving skills or my car; no one was waiting for me; nothing needed my attention; I wasn't even bored -- I had the company of Dan Devanni on WETA, who is rather witty and doesn't commit musical atrocities (balalaika orchestras, koto ensembles, or pan-pipes) I just wanted to get home and do some things.

...like my situation in Washington: I'm not cold, hungry, or loaded with wastewater. I'm not insecure or anxious about what I am doing, I'm not letting anyone down -- and may even be helping a few people. Very little that I do requires MY attention (and no other's); I am not bored. I live, furthermore, among friendly, bright, competent people. But I want to go home and do things that are important to me.

Home could be Kent, where I have a house, friends and a good name. But for the second time I have been invisible to a search committee for a job near Kent I would have been good at, probably because I am 56 and female, and have less than three years of recent experience. Home could be other places, I suppose, but my experience has been that it takes about 5 years to become fully human in a new community. And it is necessary to have a job, or some reason to be somewhere.

This week I was disappointed by a large organization in Chicago who had advertised for a Communications Specialist. It turned out they wanted a technician to install and fine-tune a program that could then be run by their permanent staff, and the job would only be for 18 months. I wrote them a letter explaining why I thought that was a bad idea and withdrew my name. I would have had to start looking for the next job right away, and a Senator's office is a better place to be job-hunting from.

I did get home safely on Veterans Day, about 4:30. The car got stuck in the driveway (but off the street) because the snow was so deep under the car it lifted the front wheels off the pavement. Lauren helped me shovel it out, and the next morning we shoveled away the barrier left by the snowplow. By Friday all the snow except the snowplow piles were gone. On Saturday I discovered that many of my marigolds had escaped freezing, even though they had been buried under six inches of snow.

*   *   *

DECEMBER 1987

Sundog: a brightness beside the sun, made of the refraction of sunlight passing through ice
crystals in the atmosphere. Sundogs are seen to one side, or both sides, or rarely, above and below the sun, as a fist of rainbow. They are focal points (or perhaps standing waves) generated in the halo of the sun, often seen in changing weather.

The most brilliant display I ever saw was in southeastern Ohio, five days after my father died. Alys and I were driving to Barnesville across a shortcut through a partially restored strip mine site, on our way to collect his belongings from the Walton Home where he spent his last days. It was a bright June day, the sky brushed with high thin chalky clouds. As the road twisted I failed to keep the sun-visor between me and the sun, and suddenly I realized that I was seeing a full halo of rainbow around the disk of the sun, and a second ring of harmonics outside of it, containing one very bright sundog at the nadir, and three others -- east, west and zenith -- fainter, but quite distinct, forming a dazzling cross in the midday sky.

I am not one to confuse physical phenomena with metaphysical, or natural with supernatural, but on that day it was an easy step to accept the sight as a tribute to a life spent gathering the common light of day into glowing segments of rainbow. Now, some 40 months later, the supernatural explanation I would invent would probably have my father's ghost playing with the wind and sun and clouds, tinkering and transplanting, digging and ditching, clearing channels and building dams as he used to do with creeks, to see how the heavens work.

* * *

One of the innocent recreations of Congressional staffers is the office pool. These are usually about the outcome of national sports events, such as the World Series, but at the end of each session of Congress there is a contest to guess the date and time of the sine die adjournment. (Proper Latin notwithstanding, it's pronounced sy-nuh-dye; it means "without the day" and refers to the end of the session.)

The oversight of the Glenn office pools has fallen latterly to Lewis, Deputy Press Secretary, who has earned a reputation for running these contests with a certain whimsy. This accounts for the general staff wariness when Lewis announced that the tie-breaker for this year's sine die pool would be "Who was the first President of the United States?"

On hearing this, Marty waited until Lewis had gone on an errand and called CRS, who told her that the first President was George Washington. Ken and John went confrontational, demanding that Lewis say whether it was a trick question with some answer other than "George Washington." Lewis equivocated, then waffled, and the fat was in the fire.

Ron, the ranking history-buff in the office, was summoned to render an opinion. He installed himself on the bottom step of the stairs up to the mailroom with a pile of histories, handbooks and almanacs. He shortly came up with a footnote that said that one John Hanson had served briefly, under the Articles of Confederation, as "President of the United States of the Congress
"Assembled". Lewis confessed that he believed that made Hanson the first President.

"Foul!" cried Ken, John, and Marty, "You didn't say United States of the Congress Assembled."

"It's the same thing," said Lewis.

Ron cleared his throat and read solemnly from one of his books: "John Hanson of Maryland is sometimes credited with being the first President by certain [tiny, significant pause] misguided scholars..."

"What's this 'misguided'?” demanded Lewis. "Anyway, George Washington always said that Hanson was the first President."

"So it's you and George Washington, and he's dead," taunted Ken, "You lose."

What difference does it make? We were able to agree for purposes of this pool that it didn't make any difference, because the answers would be given in date, hour and minute. Lewis said that in the unlikely event of a tie probably both winners would name George Washington, and they would end up splitting the pot, which in any case would not be large. (It cost $1 to enter, and fewer than 40 staff participated.)

But there remained behind a bitter little swirl of contention. Lewis said blithely that he only meant to shake people up a little and it worked, but since Hanson had been titled "President of the United States" he was the first President regardless of what words or events followed. Ken and John maintained that what existed under the Articles of Confederation wasn't the 'real' United States. Marty, Ron and I retreated to the position of "The first President is whoever we agree he was."

I do not find it surprising that the youngsters of the office subscribe to the realist's epistemology: we spend years teaching kids that knowledge is what is printed, that there is a one-to-one correspondence between reality and the facts in the textbook, that scholarship is the nailing-up of the hides of the hunt, and that lawfulness is the same as Goodness.¹

The seasoning that comes with years of working in the real world makes relativists of most of us. We adopt the comfortable conceptual fictions that work to keep our systems moving smoothly and more or less in the direction we want to go. In the relativist world, scholarship is the construction of mutually agreeable accounts of "what really happens." Truth is read not off reality but out of the Style Section, and Goodness is determined by compromise.²

¹ At the height of the Bork controversy, Leonard Garment said "The law... is the
centerpiece of all civilized human activity and particularly of a democratic society.” Surely not. Surely the law is not the fountain but the plumbing through which the waters of democracy and civilization are distributed to all members of the human family.

2 There is a third epistemology -- causal reliability -- fortunately (or unfortunately, if you are a realist) not workable for Congressional staffers, Presidents, judges, poets or mothers. It demands a repeatable and statistically reliable relationship between cause and effect, or intent and outcome. It is science, not art.

* * *

In November a Congressional Chorus was organized, to rehearse every Friday at noon. I might have missed it, but George found out about it and took me along. Our first project, of course, was a small concert of holiday music for Christmas on the Hill. Congressional staffers, as I have observed before, are a bright and competent lot, and the chorus sounds surprisingly good. Despite a rather lopsided distribution of voices (twice as many altos as sopranos, and more altos than tenors and basses combined) and a very busy legislative session that makes it difficult to get everyone at rehearsals, we have achieved a good sound with excellent pitch and precision. Michael Patterson, a professional musician, conducts.

I even got off my musical tush and reworked an arrangement I had done some years ago of Thomas Arne's setting of Shakespeare's Carol for the group. (I did it at my brother's house over Thanksgiving – I don't have a piano here.) It was, as I predicted, quite well liked by the chorus members because it is fun to sing. They may or may not have noticed that to accommodate the glut of altos and paucity of men's voices I made a divisi alto part, making half of them, unstressed and unsuspecting, into tenors.

In our enthusiasm, however, we forgot that this was the United States Senate, governed by the Rules Committee. Music in the Senate is regulated, first by a rule that says it can only happen before 9AM, between 12 and 1PM, and after 6PM. Okay for the rehearsal time, but not for the staff Christmas parties we were invited to sing for. The Senate Computer Center knuckled under and moved their party to after hours. The Senate Service Department said "Who cares?" It required a Senate Resolution for us to give our concert in the Hart Building Atrium. But that's nothing to a staffer -- an aide from Matsunaga's office drafted the resolution and got him to introduce it, and S. Res. 344 was duly passed.

* * *

During the past week we have watched Mikhail (Gorbachev) and all his angels do battle with the Dreagan and his heavenly hosts. The outcome of this War in Heaven was only marginally less imaginatively reported by the Prophets of the Press and the Cassandras of Congress than was the earlier report by the author of the Book of Revelation. Nevertheless, there is occasion for some subdued rejoicing. We are talking to the Russians and they to us, and there is now hope that we can get on with constructing some mutually agreeable accounts of what is really
happening in the world we share. Gorbachev has shown himself to be a relativist of great skill --
he even made it into the Style Section of the Post.

It is true that we cannot trust the Russians, but neither can they trust us. Reagan had got that
right: trust, but verify. That’s a true formula for any human interaction -- for conversation, for
learning, for science, for government and politics.

For all my busyness not much has changed in the past year. I am a little thicker and a little
stiffer, a little more apathetic and uncommitted, a little less observant and less passionate. I am
still in Washington, in John Glenn’s office, with a new job title: “Special Projects” -- doing pretty
much the same things I had been doing but more independently. I am beginning to have friends
here in Washington and finding that I can reclaim some parts of myself I thought had atrophied
from disuse.

Carole moved out into her own condo, and Suzanne, a high-school English teacher,
equestrienne and gourmet cook has joined Lauren and me in the house on Braddock Road. It
is a quite successful and comfortable arrangement, and the amiable stability of our household
has probably contributed a lot to saving my sanity here. The other thing that keeps me alive is
the wonderful ravine just a quarter mile down the nearest side street. Isabell and I go there on
Saturdays and Sundays to play with the stones of the creek, discover plants and trees, balance
on fallen tree trunks and look up through the high branches to the sky.

It is not that I dislike my job, although it is withering to my soul to spend all the daylight hours
shut indoors without even a window within sight. I’m also sick of breathing cigarette smoke for
eight hours a day. But the most crushing part of being in Washington remains the commuting. I
can choose between two 55 minute trips of very demanding and stressful driving in heavy, fast
traffic, or an hour each way scrambling up and down escalators and along platforms to ride one
bus and two trains, at a cost of $4 a day. If I could solve those problems and keep a
comfortable home and access to some small wilderness, I think I could survive in Washington –
not live, really, but survive.

Although I’ve been playing a little chamber music, I haven’t done any serious practicing since
I’ve been in Washington. I have begun to wish for a piano, to play on, and perhaps do a little
composing. The one thing I have done faithfully since I have been here is to write -- these
letters about my adventures in the capital of our nation. I suppose I have nearly a book by now.

Alys and Seth are still in Santa Barbara, reasonably happy and comfortable. Seth has moved
up in his job and now takes home more pay than I do. I am going to visit the first two weeks of
January.

* * *

Sundogs are not much seen in Washington, because of the lower latitude, or the automobile
exhaust haze, or most likely, because people do not look up. The sundog was once a metaphor for a false ruler, a pretender to divine power, or a misleading prophecy. It is tempting to resurrect it in describing the summit, but it goes astray. A powerful light source drives the sundog, and it is the interference of uncountable millions of tiny but ordered beings that transfigures the light, not into a falseness but into a glory, not into a harsh omen, but into a bright hope.

The brightness is there for the people who reached out to shake Gorbachev’s hand, for the Soviet woman who named her twin sons Ronald and Mikhail, and indeed for any of us who can lift our eyes from watching our feet and look outward, beyond.

The weather is changing: Look up.

* * *

JANUARY 1988

January 22, 1988

"We've been over consuming; we haven't been saving, we're not investing in R&D. It's our biggest problem now and will be until the year 2000 -- and beyond. We're not willing to wait for the bigger benefit later. We want three cars in every garage. We keep taking a constant improvement in our standard of living. There's a lot of internal stress because we're struggling over who gets the shares of a pie that's not growing."

The Domestic Policy staff listened closely, gravely -- as gravely as possible while chewing mouthfuls of bagel-and-cream-cheese. The guest speaker was a woman expert in productivity from the Bureau of Labor Statistics; the occasion was the Domestic Policy breakfast at which George offers his staff, once a week, food for mind and body.

"We're not ideological -- we don't attack one another on ideological grounds. You've all heard the phrase 'living for today' and that's what it is. No one says 'What am I creating for a generation hence, or even a decade, or even next year.' And it isn't going to be great. We won't have much growth. The only growth in the GNP will be population growth. Not much gain in productivity, either. If this kind of downbeat message doesn't sell -- businesses think I'm a great annoyance, and unions don't like to hear it either. We've got to save more and invest more."

"But someone also needs to describe what's wrong so we can fix it. We created these problems, and only we can fix them. But everyone just says 'But I have to get elected.'"

She wore a maroon-colored knit dress, matching scarf. The staffers were in jeans, sweaters and running shoes as is customary during recess. George, gesturing with a plastic knife, asked "How did we get to the high place we got to? What's different about the 70s and 80s, different
from the 40s and 50s? Businesses have always looked at the bottom line; investment's not political -- it's a business decision. What's changed?"

She admitted she couldn't give a global answer. "Union strength in the 40s and 50s, maybe. When companies had market control, price control, they could afford to share with the workers, and they did. Bargaining became like a stage performance, and it got to where companies would raise prices before the wage negotiations started. Then deregulation took away market power."

"Overcapacity? Yes. A lot of it was mills that should have been shut down decades ago. In Youngstown they closed a mill built in 1882 -- it should have been taken out of production 50 years ago. That's not effective planning. Schumpeter talks about creative destruction -- everyone should read Schumpeter."

"But," she continued, "there is going to be growth in the employment sector. Growth in security and 'peacekeeping' jobs, which include environmental security -- anti-pollution jobs. And growth in caretaking jobs: medical, daycare, schools, and maintaining buildings and public facilities. And the labor intensive part of manufacturing is moving away from the production end toward the consumption end."

"Example? The production of cotton bandages is now largely mechanized, but the application of surgical dressings is highly labor intensive and specialized."

I had finished my bagel and coffee. I'm not on the Domestic Policy staff and hesitated to ask my question: who's going to pay for all this peacekeeping and caretaking, and how? But the others were not so shy.

George: When a steel company comes to us and wants $100 million to finance change, what do we tell them?

Kathy: How do we deal with the cost of the pain? How do we say to an individual 'It's your cost' because we didn't invest in education and research and modernization 25 years ago?

Kevin: What do we say to people when Ford is raising prices right now, even though they're cash rich, in order to buy a computer company?

Eileen: The Japanese go after market-share instead of profit, they sell under the price of production. It's not fair. Why shouldn't we ask for protection?

George: What will Middletown (Ohio) do if their only industry goes down the drain?

Finally I asked how Congressional staffers could keep from being part of the problem and become part of the solution.

"Well, we shouldn't insulate ourselves from having to hustle," said our expert. "You have to tell the people that if you protect them now or bail them out now, it will be far worse later. Have Middletown think about the year 2000, and invest and deploy their resources for that time. We have to begin talking to Americans about what we all have to do: tighten our belts, more
long-term thinking, less self-centeredness, less consumption, more savings and investment in education and R&D. No more three cars in every garage."

"I went with 40 CEOs to a retreat, and without even knowing their names or companies I could tell which were the utilities and communications and who had to compete. The ones in deregulated industries were sharper, brighter, had more acumen."

And there we left it – George still asking what had changed to make the enormous problems, and what to do about companies that insist that the cost of closing down is greater than that of running inefficiently; Kathy still wondering what to say to the desperate families in Youngstown and in Licking County; Eileen still fretting over where to position Glenn on trade protection; and Kevin still trying to make economic sense of what she said. I carried the tray of leftover bagels and pots of cream-cheese back to the coffee closet where they were soon discovered by the Foreign Policy & Defense staff and disappeared.

George was philosophical. "I give her a B-minus. Trouble is, she's operated so long on the abstract level, way up here. She can't see how it applies down here, where we have to operate."

I agreed. "You asked a good question, when you asked 'What's changed?' I don't know, but one of the changes I observed was that in the 70s and 80s when kids were asked what they wanted to be when they grew up, the answer was 'Employed'. But when I was a kid we dreamed of being pilots, doctors, policemen, teachers, mechanics."

George went back to his desk and I to mine, where I slogged on through a day of catch-up after my two weeks in California: "I'm writing to you [Senator Glenn] because we have to write a friendly letter in english" "Where do you stand in the site of God?" "What was it like being in two of the highest places, a Senator and outer space, and what sort of grades did you get?"

Then there was a young woman who wrote: "I am completing a Master's degree in English at Georgetown University. Eager to be an active professional in Washington, D.C., I recently decided to pursue a legal career. Pursuant to this new direction, I'm applying to four area law schools. ...If your schedule permits, I would be most appreciative if you would comply with my application for a letter of support. Consideration of applications begins concomitantly with receipt of all supporting materials. A prompt reply would be most advantageous..." Celia said yes, the Senator wanted her to have the letters, and I did them, gritting my teeth and fighting down the temptation to write 'I would waste no time considering this application.' Under no circumstances should Georgetown give this person a Master's degree – in English, for god's sake.

Then there was a letter, all business and dignity, but with a thin bouquet of fear, from the CEO of a company, victim of a takeover. Could the Senator help him get an ambassadorship, or maybe an Under-Secretaryship in the Department of Agriculture, and please be "discrete." And could he make an appointment to talk with the Senator?

For that one I first checked with MJ and determined that he had never made any campaign contributions. Then I read his resume: around 60 years of age; wide experience in trade and
marketing agricultural products; Rotarian, and probably Republican; successful if not smart. (I wondered how our breakfast speaker would have sized him up.) I cast around for ways to help him, given that the Senator couldn't nominate him for a cabinet level or ambassadorial position (and probably wouldn't if he could) and that there was no way he was going to get an appointment with Glenn himself. (It's not that Glenn would refuse if we asked for the appointment, but that staff wouldn't ask unless there were some chips riding on the request.) I talked to Ron and to George. After discarding as cruel and unusual treatment the otherwise attractive idea of siccing the CEO on one of the GAC staffers whose officious meddling in trade matters often irked George, we decided to send him to Verity at Commerce. I wrote the letter, tactfully, I hope, praising him for wanting to serve his country with his broad experience, and placing Senator Glenn's 'senior staff' at his service without actually saying that he wouldn't get an appointment with Glenn.

During recess we have 5 o'clock days (by the grace of the Senator, who reversed the AA's policy forbidding them) so I left about 5:20, picked my way over the snow packed sidewalks to the 'peon parking lot' and spent an hour creeping home at about 12 mph. I zapped a potato in the microwave, dumped some leftovers and a dollop of Cheez-Whiz on it and settled on the couch to watch the news. What I got were endless commercials, for cars, credit cards, jeans, shampoo, VCRs, painkillers, cars, beer, movies, long-distance phone service, cars, candy bars, plane tickets, razor blades, cars, salad dressing, hemorrhoid remedies, and cars, interspersed with a few sentences about the situation on the Left Bank, sports and the weather.

I guess I'm slow. It took me nearly ten minutes to realize that I was watching right there the difference between the 40s and the 80s: Television. Why do we spend instead of investing? Why do we want it all now and can't think of waiting for better, later? Why do we dream of three cars in every driveway, and buy Japanese cars, VCRs and microwaves? Why do our kids only care about being employed and not about doing brave, compassionate or inventive things with their lives? Television.

We've spent 40 years bringing the hard-sell to a state-of-the-art technology. We've measured success by purchasing power, and raised our children to desire no more than a paycheck. We've parlayed our admiration for those who sell refrigerators to Eskimos into a way of life and a standard of living that is morally unsupportable, environmentally unsustainable, and economically disastrous.

* * *

The Glenn Senate office is equipped with a dinosaur computer system – a mini-mainframe called the Honeywell Office Automation System. It is one of computer evolution's less funny aberrations. The word-processor is a misbegotten Son-of-WordStar and the keyboard is a typist's nightmare, with the cursor keys out of reach to the right and far too close to the Delete key, making it essential to look before touching them. The WP has no windowing, and you cannot call a document from files by asking for it, even if you know its name -- you have to go through two menus and the index, then move it to Work-In-Progress. Nevertheless, up until this month I have been able to outsmart it and get it to do what I wanted.

On January 15th, however, in the course of rebooting by our office Systems Administrator, the OAS suffered a "head crash", which, in her words, "ate up the hard disk." This is a pretty imprecise description, but it seems to be all I am going to get.
Not to worry, I told myself. Of all the people in the office I am the only one I know who, every Friday, dumps all my Work-In-Progress back into Files. From Files, I had been led to believe, my documents would be transferred to backup tapes every weekend.

Wrong. No backup tapes were made over the holidays; we would get back what we had left on the system on December 15. My careful weekly filing made my files worse, because my W-I-P had been empty for each taping for about three months. All I had on the backup tape was W-I-P from the first week in October, and Files from December 15, but a lot of documents were in both, having been used more than once during that time. This month, in order to retrieve a document from Files I had to delete, move, or rename the one in W-I-P, a cumbersome and time-consuming task.

I was still better off than most of the people in the office, because I had kept hardcopies of most of the things I had written. But what concerns me is that those of us who actually use the system were (and still are) kept from any participation in its design, maintenance or upgrading. We are responsible for working with the system but we have no authority over it. We don't know how it works, or why it's the way it is, and worst of all, we have no way to prevent or minimize the damage of a crash like this one. The Senate Computer Center people claim they only know about the hardware, and in any case they only want to talk to the Systems Administrator. Whenever I try to talk to them, I get someone who is detached and defensive, not seeming to realize that she is part of the system I need to understand better.

It has been a pretty demoralizing event. Cleanup will take me weeks of redoing the file housekeeping I had completed just before Christmas. Each time I need a document I have not used since the crash I have to spend up to an hour reconstructing it and retyping letters that have been messed up. I get anxious over the kids and old folks whose touching appeals I answer for John Glenn. I also get anxious over spending my days dealing with trivia, typing, stuffing envelopes, filing, making coffee, and feeling guilty when I take time out to listen to the floor debate on Grove City, or to read a book on technology transfer.

* * *

I came back from California refreshed and a little more optimistic. Seth and Alys are doing well; I had a chance to read and to tinker around with my arrangement for chorus of two 19th century pentatonic hymns. I don't know if I can get it performed, but just doing it restored my confidence in my ability to handle musical materials, and lifted my nose out of my soup, briefly.

In early December I got a call from the executive recruiter at a big corporation in Cupertino, California about a speech-writing job. I had sent them my resume, and they were interested. I had quite a lively and promising conversation with the woman, who told me something about the job and what they were looking for. I thought it sounded like things I would do well, and a place I would fit in -- where I would be allowed to know and speak about anything. It seemed more and more promising, until she asked me what my present salary was. I knew it was over, right then. I couldn't not tell her, but I also knew that they would judge that someone presently earning $20,000 would not be worth $40,000. She thanked me and said she would call back if they wanted me to come for a visit while I was in California. She was nice enough to call back before I left Washington to say that they would not be interviewing me at this time.

* * *

Three years ago I arrived in Washington, having leapt out of an identity carefully if not consciously crafted during nearly 20 years in Kent, Ohio, my home town. I carried a normal complement of
old scars, fresh wounds and chronic infirmities (none physical) for a person of 54 years. I lacked then, and still do, the ambition to change the world, which rightly drives most people who come to Washington.

It was bitterly cold during my first weeks here -- the outdoor inauguration was canceled, the homeless shivered and the homeowners fumed. Right-to-Lifers roamed Capitol Hill, littering the sidewalks with broken signs and loose fliers; the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1985, to undo the mischief of the Grove City decision, was up for consideration by the Senate; the fitness of Edwin Meese to be Attorney General was being discussed.

Not much has changed. It has been very cold. There is still more heat than warmth directed toward the homeless; Right-to-Lifers have once again left a mess on Capitol Hill for someone else to clean up; "Grove City" has finally passed the Senate, under threat of veto; the fitness of Edwin Meese is still being discussed, now from the perspective of three years of doing nothing to justify his existence.

* * *

In the summer of 1970 I drove from Kent to San Francisco, with Alys, then six, and Seth, not quite five. We stayed each night in a motel, and after the first few nights I stopped writing 'Kent, Ohio' as my home city when I registered, because it brought an immediate interrogation by the clerk: "Tell me what really happened at Kent State."

It was not a question I was unprepared to answer, though I believed then, and still do, that we will never know entirely "what really happened" on that shameful day. But my efforts to answer fairly, honestly and tactfully were generally pushed aside brusquely, and my inquisitor would explain to me "what really happened" and expect me to corroborate his version.

When I came to Washington three years ago, my friends expressed great curiosity about what John Glenn "is really like" and about "what really happens" in Washington.

I try, but there are many dimensions to any effort to account for "what really happens." I also try to be honest about the ad hoc nature of our perceptions and realities. Let me tell you a story:

Once upon a time, not so many years ago, I watched a demonstration by Jon Secaur, physics teacher at Kent Roosevelt High School, of the resources and limitations of computers. It was a game of "Twenty Questions", for which he had instructed the computer with a program in the computer language BASIC. I watched him set up the computer and scroll through the program, and was a little baffled to note that the program was less than 80 lines in length. When I asked him how it could be so short, he answered with an enigmatic smile.

When the adult professionals were all gathered and seated in the conference room, the teacher explained what they were going to do.

"I've programmed this computer to play "Twenty Questions", but I don't want you to think that the machine is smart – it isn't. It only knows how to play "Twenty Questions", nothing else."

"Now, I'm sure you all know the rules – we can ask it twenty questions to try to find out what object the computer has in mind. Remember that the questions have to have yes-or-no answers, because the program can only answer Yes or No. In order to talk to it, I have to type each
question into the computer – can you all see the screen? I don't want anyone to think this is a trick, or that I know what object the computer is going to choose. I don't know that, and I'll tell you that I didn't even give the computer a list of objects to choose from."

"It's a really dumb machine, and I have to make sure I put a question mark at the end of each question, or it can't answer. Ready? Okay, who has the first question?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is it alive?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it bigger than a breadbox?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you have one in your house?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it green?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does it make a loud noise?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it heavy?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it a car?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you eat it?</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finally someone, reaching into his past, asked

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is it a trolley?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cheers, cries of 'Amazing!' and 'Unbelievable!' and 'How does it do that?' I was dumbfounded. It worked, and we had guessed the object. Another game was played and the computer won -- we went through twenty questions and failed to name the object.

"Ask it what it was," demanded one observer.

"I can't do that," admitted the teacher, "it can only answer Yes or No."

"Well, couldn't you program it so it would tell?"

"Not really," was the reply, "Let's try it one more time."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is it smaller than a breadbox?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it a baby?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Game and Match. I considered myself reasonably sophisticated about computers, and I couldn't figure out 'what really happened' in those games of "Twenty Questions". And you, Dear Reader, should pause and try to see if you can, before we continue. I have given you all the information you need to solve the mystery.

Give up?

The program was short and simple: instructions to print YES on the screen in response to all questions in which the question mark was preceded by the letter x, y, j, c, or q; print NO whenever the question mark is preceded by any of the other letters of the alphabet. No object or noun was ever 'chosen' by the program -- there was indeed no way to ask what the object was that we had failed to guess in the second game we played. The computer program contained nothing but these few IF-THEN statements. The "game" existed entirely in the heads of the human players.
So, how come it worked? What really happened to make the game so real?

Once we determined that the thing we were seeking was not alive, we never asked another question about a living thing. After being told that the object was bigger than a breadbox, we only asked about things bigger than breadboxes. Each question we asked narrowed our conceptual field, and led us to believe that we were closing in on our prey, when in fact, there was no prey. We were merely shutting down large sections of our repertoire of things to name. We even felt proud when someone made the 'inductive leap' (which we all believe to be the soul of human genius) to the 'right' answer.*

A keen observer might note that the breadbox question is answered Yes for both "larger than" and "smaller than". But a human player would assume that a different object is chosen for each game, not exactly a wrong assumption. Although no object is chosen at the beginning of the game, one is selected in the course of playing it.

One way of accounting for 'what really happened' is that the computer and the players were not playing the same game. That's true, but not remarkable. Participants in most games have differences in perceptions of what they are doing, what the rules are, and what really happens in the game.

The computer version of "Twenty Questions" is a dumb game. We can quite easily describe to everyone's satisfaction what happens on the computer side. The human side is more complex, but as a response to the very simple intelligence of the computer program, it is not an intractable puzzle. Figuring out 'what really happens' between or among human beings of disparate cultures, beliefs, values, vocabularies, interests, desires, knowledge and epistemologies may very well be unmanageable, however.

Consider, if you will, the deadly games in Central America, the Persian Gulf, and the occupied Left Bank; consider stock-market games; consider the FBI playing Cops and Robbers with dissidents and the INS playing spy/counterspy with religious groups; consider Deaver, Nofziger and Meese playing power and money games with the public trust. Game? And Match?

* I think there is a replacement for the Turing Test lurking around here someplace, but I don't have time to hunt for it.

* * *

**FEBRUARY 1988**

February 18, 1988

Saturday mornings I sleep in, until 6:30, allow myself a piece of toast in addition to my usual breakfast of cottage cheese and fruit, and linger over the Post and Times until about 7:30, when I toss my laundry into the washer and drive up to the Annandale Giant food store for groceries before the crowds arrive. By 9 o'clock I am home again, and within a half hour have put away the groceries, transferred the wet clothes to the dryer, made a new cup of coffee and booted up the C-64 for several hours of processing words into letters.
At 1 o'clock I file the morning's work onto a disk, power down, and make myself a frugal lunch of soup, cheese and fruit, then get kitted out into jeans, old sneakers and garden gloves. I stuff a bag of bread heels or stale crackers and a few dog biscuits into my pockets, pick up a walking stick from my collection beside the porch and take Isabell (and sometimes Nelson) for a hike down to the creek.

An hour or two later we return, and it is reading-and-nap time. Kitchen chores are done between 5 and 6, including making a supper tray of vegetables (say a half squash, a bowl of green beans, some leftover cabbage, with a cup of strawberry herb tea and a pot of fruited yogurt) to be eaten on the couch while watching Star Trek. At 7:30 I am back at the word-processor, and if I have been productive I knock off at 9 to watch Golden Girls, after which I retire to fall asleep over the Times Literary Supplement or the New York Times Book Review.

What discipline and balance! How wholesome and well-rounded! Pretty impressive, huh? What? You doubt me? Just ask Isabell -- she participates in all this.

she doesn't know I sneak downstairs most nights so I can sleep on the warm couch because I always go back upstairs before it gets light. but there are days when I don't have to worry because she stays on the bed with her eyes closed for a long time after the daylight comes. then she puts her feet into the old raggedy slippers and takes me and that scatterbrained jerk out to the grass, picks up the newspapers and talks anxiously about it being after ate.

on these days – she calls them weak-ends – she sits for a long time staring at the newspapers spread all over the kitchen table. she stops often to put pieces of bread in the toaster and then put butter on them and eat them without giving me any bites. she drinks a lot of chocolate flavored coffee – I always notice chocolate smells. finally she groans and mumbles that it is nine-thirty and the giant will be packed. I know that when she says the car is packed it means we are going for a ride, but I'm not sure how you pack a giant, or what you do with it when it is packed. she goes out with her keys and purse and comes back after a while with a lot of bags. she talks to me then, and tells me she has brought me chicken flavored food, but she doesn't give me any.

the jerk usually comes into the kitchen then, and together we can con her out of a few dog biscuits. she eats crackers and cheese, has more coffee, then exclaims that it is nearly eleven and turns on the machines with the little red glowing lights and the big-gray and black picture with the little blinking square. then she goes upstairs, carries a basketful of dirty clothes down to the basement, goes up and down the stairs a couple more times, and sits down in front of the grey picture and makes snapping sounds with her fingers on the bumpy board for a few minutes. then she gets up, makes another cup of coffee and eats more toast. this sitting down and making snapping noises and getting up and eating goes on for a long time but she finally stops and turns off the red lights and grey picture. then she gets her blue jacket and my necklace – a charm against speeding cars – and we go for an outing. I plead with her not to take along that jerk of a dog who lives here. its embarrassing when he whines and barks at a rock, then attacks and kills it and carries it around as a trophy. if he's not doing that he charms her into
tossing sticks for him to retrieve. That's very dangerous – I once got hit on the head by a stick she threw for him and it hurt a lot. She made a big fuss and promised never to do it again but how do I know she won't forget.

I like the place we walk beside the creek. There are interesting smells and I can usually find some nice fibrous grass to eat and throw up. When there is no snow I walk on rustly leaves or soft glittering sand or round cool stones, and I can wade in the sweet brown water. After we get home I get a cookie and we all take a nap. She makes my dinner with chicken, if I'm lucky. She has dinner too, on the couch watching the big picture that has colors that change and voices that talk. The other ladies come there too and they all eat, talk, watch the picture and tell the jerk not to scratch himself. That makes him go and sit on top of whoever is lying on the couch for a while, until he gets back on the floor and starts scratching again. Nobody notices when I get off the green dog bed I am supposed to lie on and get on the chair that came from home.

Okay, Isabell, that's enough.

Saturday the 20th it was different. Suzanne needed a lift out to Great Falls where she keeps her horse and where her car was being repaired. We put an old blanket in the back of my Escort, lifted Isabell up and gave Nelson a boost up and set out, down to the Beltway, then over to Rte. 7. There were broad sheets of grey cloud tearing and shifting into white rags revealing blue sky. Once we got beyond the asphalt and concrete and brick and glass cliffs, past the triple lanes of cars and pickup trucks, there were meadows of pallid grass and dark mud enclosed by stake-and-rider fencing, thickets of briar shining with crystal beads of rainwater, woodlots with the false green of lichens scribbled on black-oak trunks and bleached un-fallen leaves swinging on beech saplings, and sycamore branches chalked over stony creeks.

This is horse country, the houses large and prosperous. Phyllis, Suzanne's horse, is boarded with friends who have a horse and a pony. Suzanne gives riding lessons and helps with the stable for part of the board. This winter Phyllis has been lame in her left hind knee and cannot be turned out into the field. Suzanne has been going out after school every day to walk her and clean her stall.

Nelson cantered around in the back of the Escort for the 45 minutes it took to get to Great Falls, then leaped out eagerly, looking for a playmate. The resident dog, a Doberman named Belle, was ready, but the game wouldn't go until Suzanne found a tennis ball to throw for Nelson. Then Nelson chased the ball and Belle chased Nelson. Isabell wandered cautiously around the paddock, staying out of the way of the bigger dogs and discreetly peeing here and there. Phyllis eyed the dogs suspiciously. Nelson looked at the horse and deemed it "not a ball and unlikely to run if chased" and looked around for a rock to chase. I don't think Isabell was able to get all of Phyllis into her visual range at one time and probably experienced her as a small building or large piece of furniture. (We will not ask Isabell.)

After a walk through the woodlot, during which Nelson captured a wild rock and Isabell slopped in a grassy puddle we hosed them down and I drove back to town. The dogs, never much good at conversation, promptly fell asleep leaving me at the mercy of NPR Weekend Edition.
The story was on the drought, famine and resettlement efforts in Ethiopia, and the question was about the truth of the report earlier this month that twenty refugees had been killed for resisting resettlement by soldiers with machine guns. The Ethiopian government denied that it had happened at all; there were no reliable, disinterested witnesses, and no journalists had been present. An official of Save the Children suggested that the damage done by the report of the incident was probably, in the long term, worse than the deaths of twenty people -- not because starving people are expendable, but because the Ethiopian government, however weak, corrupt and mendacious, is all they've got. If the government loses credibility in the eyes of the foreign relief community, millions will die.

They played interviews taped in a settlement established two years ago for people brought there somewhat less than willingly from another drought stricken area. The questions were translated into Amharic and the answers into English by interpreters provided by the Ethiopian government. Were the translations accurate? They noted a story that a Canadian minister had made a tape of a similar interview, and when it was aired in Canada, a speaker of Amharic objected that the translations were not correct, and that the settlers felt they were prisoners.

Stories are the stuff of our beliefs. At this time the body medic (to say nothing of the body journalistic) is convulsed over a medical journal article purporting to tell of a mercy-killing of a cancer patient by a young doctor. If the 'article' had been a 'story' no flap would have ensued, only some in-house grousing about a medical journal publishing fiction. One syndicated columnist managed to recognize the writing as a journalistic short-story or vignette, but then he galloped off to slay the evil dragon Euthanasia, still mounted on the assumption that, fictionalization notwithstanding, there was a one-to-one correspondence between the event evoked in the mind of the reader and a 'real' event that occurred at a specifiable place and time.

As a sometime fictionalist and amateur reporter of events I view all this with amazed irritation and exasperated amusement. We are so glib, so crafty, so arrogant, so rational (wait, I'll explain) and so lame-brained. We found our lives on, and live them through, fictions – conceptual fictions, useful conceptual fictions, but fictions nevertheless.

Rational. Rational is fundamentally an IF-THEN script, based on interests (I use 'interests' and 'interested' here in the technical senses of 'vested interest' or an interest in some benefit) in achieving certain outcomes. As others have remarked, the Nazi's 'Final Solution' was altogether rational, a practical response to the highly interested and useful (to the Nazis) conceptual fiction that all Jews were wicked, powerful, scheming, and sub-human. The Iran-Contra scheme was a perfectly rational way to achieve a whole constellation of outcomes in which the players were deeply interested. These rational acts were wrong, brutal and crack-brained. The fictions that drove them were permitted to override all decency, and the players never considered that there might be unforeseen, undesirable outcomes to their rationality.

We cannot reject rationality out of hand, however, because it works. What we have to do is to recognize that it is based on interests, and try to be honest with ourselves about our interests and respectful of the interests of our neighbors. This is why I am risking my reputation as a teller of amusing stories to lead you on this expedition to the wilder shores of philosophy and epistemology. The coastline is mostly axiomatic cliffs:

Axiom 1  All knowledge is informed by interests.
Axiom 1.5 Interests distinguish knowledge from information, almost. We hardly ever gather information about things we don't have an interest in, except incidentally. When we do, we usually forget it.

Axiom 2 Perception and memory (personal knowledge systems) are socially constructed and mutable over time.

Axiom 2.5 Fiction and fact are not distinguishable by any reliable criteria

Axiom 3 All human processes for reporting or recording events introduce random signals, errors, bugs, viruses, and noise into our accounts of what happens.

Axiom 3.5 Art, music, drama, literature and science are based on these deformed accounts of events.

Axioms 1 and 1.5 we shall surmount by faith, or helicopter -- they are not 'interesting' just now.

Axiom 2 is, with the papers full of conflicting stories of events and disquisitions on what is remembered, what should have been remembered, and what it is possible to remember. The truth of Ollie North's account of 'what really happened' under his leadership is under scrutiny. The questions "What did he know and when did he know it" have been hounding Reagan, Bush and Meese and have not been satisfactorily answered.

Consider the case of the McMartin Pre-School: five years ago parents of toddlers enrolled in the school brought charges against Mrs. McMartin and her son for child-molestation. But the testimony of the children against them is simply not conclusive. The children, by turns, obligingly confirmed bizarre and improbable suggestions, fabricated fantastic stories, denied everything and contradicted themselves. In fact, they generally exhibited a normal child-like use of language and storytelling, much mediated by adult expectations and totally unmediated by social processes of corroboration and credibility used by adults. Adults invest a lot of time negotiating with one another just what constitutes agreeable and mutually acceptable versions of our accounts of reality. Once again (I have told this story before) I refer to Seth's claim, at age 4, that I had buttered his toast on the wrong side.

We allow children a good bit of latitude in blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction. We encourage them, for sound reasons, to tell stories that have beginnings, middles and conclusions and stories that have significance for us. We feel proud and justified when their stories promote our hopes and are congruent with our values; we praise and reward them for such behavior. But we also have a big stake in making sure they learn to reason and negotiate as we do, and it is to these ends that most of our schooling is dedicated. We do not teach children to read, write and calculate in the abstract. We teach them to read-what we write and write-what we read, and to calculate-as-we-all-calculate. And if you think there's only one way to calculate, I commend to your attention "Styles of Accounting" in Mary Douglas' Essays in the Sociology of Perception.

It is not only children, however, whose perception and reporting are subject to skew from the social milieu, as we see in the Mormon clan who believed their dead leader would be revived in a shoot-out with the law, or in Pat Robertson, who claims to have diverted a tornado through prayer. In the McMartin case, as in Iran-Contra and most other controversial cases, we will simply never know "what really happened." And this is why we must insist, with Anglo-Saxon doggedness, on
processes like *habeeb corpus* and the exclusion of hearsay, and demand verifiable evidence of damage in our judicial systems.

I am not arguing that the rules of evidence or even the scientific method excludes fictions, or guarantees that the truth will come out. They only offer reasonable assurance that we are using mutually agreeable and socially useful fictions.

One of the attractive licenses granted to the epistolist is the privilege of starting and ending *in medias res*. I'm about to strand you on an island in Ephestemia. Sorry.

* * *

It has been fairly quiet in my backwater in Senator Glenn's office. I have finally finished mopping up after the Great Computer Crash of 1988 and I am caught up enough to lift my head and squint at the Presidential hopefuls for the fall election. They are not pretty. It would not be fair for me to comment on the Republicans, and I won't, but I wouldn't cast any of them in a B-movie. The Democrats aren't much better – all plastic and polyester, durable, stain-resistant, and permanent press. Except Jesse Jackson – I could vote for a man who, when presented with a child named Reagan, promptly laid on his hands and intoned "Heal!"

An anxious high school senior wrote to Senator Glenn: "Will I know by the time I am 18 whether I am a Republican or a Democrat?"

* * *

February 28, 1988

One Sunday, with an hour to kill between church and a women's brunch, I decided to stop at a shopping mall to look for a plain, lightweight, long-sleeved white blouse. I do not like shopping, but driven by necessity, I tried. My surviving white blouse was too tight – gapping unbecomingly in front and binding across the shoulders.

I am still a stranger in Washington and don't know the location of landmarks, but I figured that I could find a shopping center just by driving out Route 50. Sure enough, within a mile I saw an off-ramp marked SHOPPING MALL, and took it. I followed the signs, parked and walked into the mall entrance. There was a directory kiosk displaying the logo of the mall and maps of the two level maze of about 200 shops. Sears had racks and racks of blouses, but nothing that met my criteria, so I went in search of women's clothing shops. These had long aisles of closely packed sweaters, pants, mini-skirts, shirts and jackets, none of which I would have bought even if I'd had more than $25 in my pocket, which I didn't. I looked at some other shops offering fast-food, ice cream, candy, flowers, jewelry, shoes, books, videotapes, sports equipment, silver, brass and leather goods, pet supplies, kitchen tools, perfume, office supplies, computers, furniture, toys, cameras, neckties, posters, towels, live plants – anything I could imagine and more.

I started to feel uneasy. Someone was going to buy all these things; people had already bought hundreds or thousands of them, or the shops wouldn't be here. What was wrong with me that I didn't want any of them? I tried imagining that I was rich enough to buy anything I fancied, for myself or for my daughter or son. It didn't work. Boxed microwave ovens, crock-pots and toasters in ceiling-high stacks are not the stuff of my dreams. Neither are spotless and perfectly formed ceramic or glass 'decorative' pieces, or framed color-coordinated art prints.
My unease grew. The lives of thousands of clerks and store owners, to say nothing of workers in Third World sweatshops, depended on desires for these things -- desires I do not have. I didn't belong there. I was near panic, but I hung on. I found a blouse that suited me at Penney’s, for $19.99, and fled.

But my effort to find the shortest route to the parking lot brought me right up to a window display so breathtakingly beautiful I tarried for almost ten minutes. It was a huge marine aquarium with bizarre fish swimming languidly among natural rocks. There was a big friendly fellow spangled with gold reticulation who followed my progress back and forth in front of the tank. There was a brownish fish with pretty blue eyes that stuck out like ears, several royal-blue fishes with orange tails, and other smaller fish – striped, spotted and dappled. An aquarium like that was something I could desire, did desire. But I thought, glumly, even if I could afford it I wouldn't have the time to care for it, let alone sit in front of it and watch the fish swim.

So I hurried out, uncomfortable. In addition to feeling out of place, I realized I didn't even know the name of the mall I was in. I studied the directories and a large information desk to try to find out, but all I was able to find was a logo -- a square with four stylized leaves in it. I couldn't make myself ask where I was, because all I wanted was to be somewhere else. I had no money to spend and there was no reason for me to be there. I didn't belong. I felt like an alien in an incomprehensible world.

* * *

The women's group did little to soothe me. We ate carryout fried chicken, rich sweet cakes and pastries, fine cheeses, vegetables and fruits imported from warmer lands; we were offered brewed coffee, herbal teas, soda pop in aluminum cans and expensive wines. Most of the women clustered around two big glossy books of Georgia O'Keefe paintings while I sat on a large plush pillow on the carpeted floor, watching. It was a new condo, right out of the can. Everything was plumb, fitted, clean, uniform, matching, well-proportioned, safe, bright, tasteful and comfortable. Stereo in the living room, microwave, disposal and TV in the kitchen, larger TV & VCR and an exercise bicycle in the family room. The study was equipped with a PC deployed on a blond wood hutch; there were good prints framed under non-glare glass, matching bedspreads linens and drapes. I thought of Alys' tiny apartment in Santa Barbara which is without a plumb wall or a properly fitted window, which has a stained porcelain sink set into a hole hacked out of a painted and peeling 1” x 18” board, a small unvented gas stove with a knob missing, and hydra-like extension cords snaking every direction from the few outlets.

I like the women in the group -- they are bright and concerned, have a sense of justice and injustice and humor, and are friendly and good-tempered. They are curious, and want to learn, but I don't think it's unfair to say that most of them are concerned first with their own personal salvation.

At the one of the feminist-theology discussions that brought this group together, Meg said she just had to share a wonderful insight she'd gotten from her therapist that week. "She told me I should tell myself every day 'I deserve the very best.' Isn't that wonderful! I never thought of that before, but now I can see I really do deserve the very best, and I should see to it that I get it. It's changed my life. I think each of you should try it -- you really do deserve the very best."

I was dumbfounded, as much by the marshmallow responses ("How true!" "Very good!" "I like it") of the other women as by the unthinking egotism of the idea. How is it possible for everyone to have 'the very best' of everything? Even given that there should be an equality of desert, and
that each of us might indeed deserve the very best, clearly there is not enough 'very best' to go around, and some of us aren't going to get what we deserve. And when the conviction of deserving the best intersects with the reality in which what one gets is mediocre and shoddy, frustration, envy and resentment arise, undermining self-respect and loosening the bonds of trust and respect between persons.

So I was struck dumb, I didn't know what to say. I'm not very eloquent in the oral mode, especially extempore, and I wasn't sure I could say anything that would change the way people see things, let alone change their behavior. Besides, I'm not altogether convinced that I should. People do the best they can; it isn't very good. But, halting and fumbling, they get better at it.

* * *

MARCH 1988

March 7, 1988

Hell, someone once said, is having no choices.

Good line, I thought wistfully, wishing I could use it in the remake of Annie Glenn's "Choices" speech for the Youngstown Hearing and Speech Center. But I didn't think Annie would be comfortable with the four letter word. I reworked the phrase into a gentler form about hopelessness and loss of self-respect. It was after 2 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, and although the speech needed to be done by close-of-business I didn't feel pressed for time. The computer file of Annie's speeches had been untouched by the January computer crash.

This speech would be cobbled together from speeches I wrote earlier -- NEWCHOI, WITHRW, and WILKN, plus introductory and closing paragraphs specifically for this occasion. But the Honeywell OAS has only a primitive copying utility and no windowing. I went to paper files to find the parts I wanted to use. Earlier in the day I had called Youngstown for the information about the event -- who would introduce Annie, who would be there that she ought to recognize, what was on the program before her speech, pronunciation of names, and anything else she might need to know. Bill McDonnell, the out-of-town scheduler, made the travel and logistical arrangements; Celia would accompany Annie. (The simple life eludes the celebrity.)

I finished the speech about 2:45, ran it off the printer on two and a quarter single-spaced pages and took it to Celia, who said Annie would be there about 3:30. I went back to my desk to deal with the afternoon mail. There was a packet from a 5th grade teacher who had said he had promised his students that Senator Glenn would write back to them, so please answer their questions (23 students, with about two questions per letter); next a SASE and blank sheet of notebook paper with the request that Senator Glenn write on it "a Christmas memory" for a book to be written by the sender. Then there was a plea that "My son admires President Reagan so much I would like you to send a picture of the President," a request for something for a "celebrity auction," a letter from a befuddled soul who politely warned Senator Glenn that there was a communist plot to poison everyone with osmium, several letters from kids who wanted to know if John Glenn wanted to be an astronaut when he was a boy, the usual complement of students asking some variant of "Dear Senator Glenn, What is your job?" and one that requested "Please send me everything on the budget and foreign issues and anything else you think will be
important in the next ten years." My mind briefly entertained visions of convoys of trucks loaded with photocopied documents...

It was almost 5 o'clock when Annie appeared at my desk. "I like this, but do you think it's a little too long?"

"Mmm," I said, "I don't think so. You're the only speaker, almost the only thing on the program. We want to give them their money's worth. Look at this news release they put out on you -- they think you're pretty important."

Annie read the news release and smiled.

I offered "If you like I can try to pare it down a little, but..."

"No, if you think it's okay, let's leave it. But I'm sixty-EIGHT, not sixty-seven. Of course, I can change it when I read it."

"Oh, I forgot, you just had a birthday. I'll fix that, and do it up in speech format and have it ready in about 20 minutes."

"Don't make it go below the middle of the page. I don't like to move my head down the page."

"Got it," I replied, "No problem."

I put one paragraph on a page, which made 17 pages. I don't use the pagination command on the OAS because it won't put the page number at the top of the page. (Speakers like to be assured, right up top, that the pages are in sequence.) I then enlarged paragraphs on the copier, put the pages in a folder with a single-spaced copy and gave it to Celia, then put things away for the day.

It wasn't until the day after the speech that Celia came around to tell me how it had gone. "They loved it," she reported, "and when Annie said 'I'm 68 years old' everyone around me swiveled around toward me, sort of asking 'Is that true?' Then at the end, when Sister Jane or Something gave the blessing, she (Sister Jane) put in a line like 'And we thank you, Lord, for choices' and everyone liked that. It was a good show, and Annie was pleased. She went on to Summit Chase (their Columbus residence, where Annie's mother lives) but she said to tell you it went well."

* * *

Some weeks before the Gallaudet College situation hit the national media, Senator Glenn received a letter asking him to write a letter to the Gallaudet Board urging them to appoint a deaf person as president of the college. Since I am Lord-High-Everything-Else it landed on my desk. After reading it I concluded that we (i.e. Senator Glenn, Inc.) should not send the letter -- not because the request lacked merit, but because Glenn lacked 'standing' to intervene in this matter. He is not on any Congressional committee that deals with issues of education or the deaf, nor, despite Annie's involvement with hearing and speech organizations, does he have any expertise in such matters. Celia and MJ concurred with my opinion, and the letter was not written.

But I was interested. At that time the board of Gallaudet College had three finalists for the presidency, two of them deaf, and it seemed to me that the board should be able to make a good decision. I was drawing on my own experience as a member of a board hiring a chief
administrator. But I was wrong, because I was forgetting two things. The first was simply that the Kent Board of Education was not typical or representative in any way of most governing boards of educational institutions.

The second reason is more interesting. Just before I resigned from the Kent board the decision was taken to phase out the dual programs we had been running for hearing-impaired programs. There was (and still is) a school of thought that asserts that if a deaf child is permitted to use signing, he or she will never learn to read lips and speak or function ‘normally’ in the hearing world. This cult, led by people who have no doubts that they know what is best for deaf children, was very strong until it was challenged by early efforts at mainstreaming handicapped youngsters with the general school population.

I suspect the children themselves contributed much to this. I know my own children (who hear normally) quickly learned basic signing and finger-spelling to facilitate playground games with the deaf youngsters at their school. In any case, many school districts, including Kent, soon found themselves with two rather costly programs to serve the hearing impaired.

I confess that I have never had much patience with the true-believers who insisted that deaf children could learn normal speech if only they could be prevented from the corruption of signing. Watching the hearing-impaired children from the signing-classes playing and laughing among their friends at school, I couldn't believe that signing was limiting their options.

But the no-signing zealots were quite insistent that the public schools should be providing their program. Finally, about 1984, Kent Schools decided we would have only one program, the one that included signing, and gave their hearing-impaired teachers in the non-signing classes one year to get recertified. There were threats of lawsuits, but they were never carried out.

It may be that the Gallaudet board members thought that in choosing the non-deaf candidate they were giving the deaf students a leader who would represent them to the real world better than a deaf president would be able to do. And I would have given the board the benefit of the doubt if their non-deaf president elect had shown the slightest sensitivity to the situation. If she had said, from the first protest, "Wait, I'm not taking this job until we can talk about why you don't want me and you can find out why I do want you" the whole mess might have been avoided.

The public zeal for mainstreaming may in this case have trampled on a rather frail sense of community among the hearing-impaired, and Gallaudet College may represent a necessary retreat for them. I don't suppose we should expect, or even want, all people who share a common experience, be it of deafness or blackness, or an ethnic heritage, religious conviction, or sexual orientation to be assimilated into and indistinguishable from everyone else. I also don't think that balkanization is necessarily a bad thing, in a world with five billion souls jostling for a place to be.

* * *

Ron, the legislative coordinator, has a TV monitor on which to watch the floor of the Senate, and a hotline to the Democratic cloakroom. The hotline has a different ring, twice as frequent and more shrill than the regular phone. I was sitting in his cubicle to discuss some problem letters, waiting for him to complete a phone call. The Senate was considering the High-Risk Occupational Disease Notification Bill, but at the moment they were debating a non-germane amendment. The bells for a roll-call vote went off. Ron punched the buttons for the speaker phone to get the
recorded message about the vote, but didn't listen. He stood up and called, in the general
direction of the Senator's office "Fifteen minute roll call vote."

George, who was passing by said "How did they get from acid rain to this?"

"It's not," said Ron, "it's the same bill. This is another amendment."

Ron's regular phone rang; he picked it up and listened politely. "No, I'm sorry, applications for
internships closed on March 15th, our selection process is already under way." Susan came by
and Ron covered the receiver and said to her "This is your issue -- get Linda, and you both go in
[to the Senator's office]", then turning back to the telephone said, "Well, try first in office of the
Congressman in your home district...Bowling Green? That's Del Latta." Pat looked in and asked
"Are they going to take up Panama?" Ron turned the phone up and mouthed "I'll find out." He
spoke once more into the phone and concluded, "Keep trying, and good luck."
Then he pressed four buttons on his phone and asked about Panama, buzzed Pat and relayed
the message: "Panama. Helms-Dodd's due to come up, one hour, today or tomorrow." We
turned back to the letters.

A space-camp wanted Senator Glenn to 1) serve on their board; 2) visit the camp; and 3) let his
name be used for a building or program. Number one is easy "...regret that Senator Glenn's
Senate schedule does not leave time..." and 2) will be routinely disposed of with the suggestion
that they invite him for a particular date. Chances of his accepting are vanishingly small, but we
don't say that. It is 3) that is sticky. John Glenn will not endorse or promote any product or
program, but does not object, per se, to the use of his name, as long as it not used to suggest that
he favors or supports whatever his name is attached to. We want to be cordial, but we need to
make sure there are no misunderstandings, so this one needs careful crafting. This request will
be answered over my signature, not the Senator's. Ron and I worked out what we should say,
and I returned to my desk.

A few minutes later the Senator returned from voting, down the stairs across the aisle from my
desk. It's his way of slipping into the office without attracting attention. The bells went off again,
this time for a Quorum Call. I asked George, who was making himself a cup of cocoa in the
coffee closet, why, when the High-Risk-Notification bill was such a hot item and target of
amendments from the Left and Right, they needed a Quorum Call.

"Oh," said George, "Helms has got an AIDS amendment, and Metz, who's floor-managing, is
trying to get someone who favors the amendment but not on this bill to come over and sit on it."

"So this Quorum Call is a stall for time?"

"Right."

* * *
Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me." Lamentations, I, 12

It is a much-set text, best known, probably, in Handel’s Messiah, in which the listener supposes the referent is Jesus, Man of Sorrows. So one supposes, too, when hearing Pablo Casals setting of the text. I first sang it a couple of years ago at a combined-choirs festival. Musically it is a rich and luminous piece, c-minor, blooming outward from a simple melody, and ending with the basses falling down to the low C – a real spine chiller. Yet when it came around for the Fairfax Unitarian choir to sing for Palm Sunday I found my response to it stopped dead at the copyright date: 1942.

In 1942 Pablo Casals was in Franco’s Spain, safe alike from the convulsions of war in Europe and the lawyers of a couple of his American ex-wives who felt entitled to monetary compensation for the loss of his consort. In 1942 millions of human beings – Jews, gypsies, Poles, gays – were being slaughtered by the Nazis. How could he? How could Casals ask us ‘all ye that pass by’ to reflect on one man’s sorrow (the Latin word is dolor, perhaps better translated as ‘pain’) when children, women, men were being tortured and killed for nothing they could have changed? Jesus himself would not claim that his suffering was greater than theirs. I am reasonably tolerant of the peccadillos of musicians, but this puts Casals beyond the pale for me. I can’t hear his recordings without also hearing a smug, irresponsible piety.

I have been reading Primo Levi’s last book, The Drowned and the Saved, an exploration of the attitudes of the victims and perpetrators of the Holocaust. Levi survived Auschwitz; he describes the useless violence of the death-camps, (arguing that death in itself is not useless) in which every sense of identity, worth, dignity or hope was butchered, all families, friendships, religious and ethnic groups dismembered, and every bond of loyalty, trust or love severed. He also lays open with exquisite clarity our rotten and jerry-built habits of perception and memory and our debauched and barbarous moral and political values. Yet he writes with great mercy and sweetness, never accepting the inevitability or corruption or inhumanity: “Satan is not necessary: there is no need for wars or violence, under any circumstances…Nor is the theory of preventive violence acceptable: from violence only violence is born.”

* * *

A still evening at the Spring Equinox. At 6PM the Capitol dome is white against a lucent sky; in a black budding tree a mockingbird chuckles and lisps; above the words EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW the facade of the Supreme Court glows golden in the last sunlight. On the terrace below, shadow gathers under the stone benches, behind the pillars, in the dry pools. The tourists are gone, only a Capitol policeman stands watch. A small rat slips out from under a coping and disappears into a trash-can, unnoticed.

* * *

(no letters from April 1988)
MAY 1988

May 2, 1988

I have spent the last weeks watching my heart's desire melt like mist in the morning sun. But after four weeks of waiting, for a job that is to start on July 1, it is evident that job I had hoped for will not be offered to me. I haven't called them, partly from my rather stiff feeling that it is their responsibility to be civil, and partly because I don't want expose my hopes and disappointment.

A sober assessment of my future doesn't promise much. I'm 57, female. I no longer belong to a community where I am known and trusted; I'm a bright, articulate polymath with no specialized degrees. What job possibilities are out there for me? Certainly nothing better than the job I have now.

It takes a certain amount of effort and mental remodeling to keep 'sober assessment' from trailing off into self-pity. More than anything, I want out of Washington. I like my job, though it uses me up with trivia. The noise, heat, traffic, transportation and logistical problems of the metropolis oppress me and make it very difficult to have any social life -- supportive friends and communities. I can only exist here, not live, in the scraps of time, security and serenity that are left to me after 11-plus hours of coping every day.

At this time about the only thing I am letting myself hope for is to have my job with Glenn transferred to the Columbus office. Logistically, there is no reason why not -- with telephone, telex copier, and orange-bag service between the offices. There could also be computer connections, though they don't exist yet. I would be happier in Columbus. I have friends there, and there would be much less noise and traffic, and it should be a manageable commute, with the possibility of getting to Kent (140 miles away) for weekends. I would be better able to do my work. It would be a decent way to live. It's probably the best I can hope for.

* * *

I am falling behind on letter writing. First it was preparing for the job-interviews, then the follow-up and waiting for the phone call that never came. Finally there was a bout of not-quite-depression -- perhaps accidie is the best word. Under all this I have been coping with a persistent ache in my stomach. It now seems to be under control, but only after some bureaucratic bungling from my HMO. Now, facing another Washington summer and its attendant miseries, I just can't get organized. On Saturdays I putter in my garden, read, walk in the ravine, watch TV, and start letters only to decide that they either too grandiose or too trivial, and abandon them.

I love writing these letters. I enjoy the watching brief they afford me, and cherish the contact they provide with my friends outside Washington. Yet they consume too much of my disposable time and energy, and keep me too focused on wrestling the present into a usable past. I'm afraid that if I don't break away from looking backward and get involved in something that reaches out to the future I am going to slide into old age seeking comfort, a pleasant retirement and an easy death. But that's unacceptable, a life not worth living.

I was terribly excited about the prospect of the school job. It gave me a sense of mission, a sense that this was something I was uniquely qualified for and in which my resources might be useful to others. That loss contributed largely to this sense of accidie. It is not just the feeling that I was mistaken about my mission. What I can't deal with is the notion that there are no missions. That one only needs to put in one's time pottering about, not making messes for others to clean up,
and then die.

So I am left grasping for an illusion, a pretense on which to base the rest of my life. It seems the safest thing would be to pretend that I have a mission to...write music — the opera that has been nagging at me for 15 years, write essays, fiction, poetry? None of these things require that a Search Committee find me acceptable. I am not disqualified from doing them by reason of gender, age or religious persuasion. They require no degree or union-card. I wouldn't even have to get things published or performed, though it would certainly help sustain the fiction that writing them is my mission.

* * *

Wisdom, so hardly won, at last calcifies and corrupts. Or wisdom teeth do, at any rate. So a week ago, when a nagging soreness deep up under my right cheekbone developed into a full-time ache and a stiffness obliging me to force my jaw open with the bottom of my sandwich I knew that the time I had dreaded for years was approaching -- I'd have to get the wisdom tooth out.

My Internal Script-writer, already with worst-case scenarios, immediately abstracted from its files the extraction, 26 years ago, of the two erupted but not troublesome (the dentist said they might cause problems later) wisdom teeth on my port side. The Internal Script-writer is not to be trusted, of course. It tends to embroider and...er...manage the memory. But I remember quite clearly that back then the dentist assaulted and hacked at my jaw for 20 minutes or so, then sent me home for two weeks of pure hell, with my jaw so swollen I could only get a straw between my teeth for nourishment, along with a bad reaction to the sulfa drug that was supposed to fight infection but left me dehydrated, debilitated and nearly prostrate.

However, I realized that this problem was not going to go away and determined to get it over with. My HMO has a small half-witted dental program that offers about a 30% reduction in costs to members using their participating dentists. Regrettably, my dentist, from whom I needed a referral to a dental surgeon, had dropped off the HMO list. I called the HMO, that helpfully said they would send me new list of dentists, I could choose one, have him look at the tooth and then refer me to a dental surgeon. That looked like a good two weeks, at best.

I was rescued by a sharp young doctor at the HMO. The next Monday I had a 3:30 appointment, follow-up on my stomach problems (which have cleared up nicely) and I told him the problem. He said "go up to the 12th floor administrative offices and don't leave until they give you the name and phone number of a dental surgeon."

I took his advice, and though I had to argue with the receptionist, she finally gave me the name and phone number of a tooth-puller in Landmark Towers. I hurried home, driving the extra mile around Springfield Mall to get to the intersection with the traffic signal that has only a two minute cycle that one can usually get through in two or three cycles, avoiding the one with a three minute cycle and a three to four cycle wait, and so traveled the five miles in only 20 minutes. It was just before 5 o'clock and I called the office of Dr. Richard Ferris and got an appointment for Wednesday at 11AM.
I knew nothing about Ferris or his office, and for the next 42 hours the Internal Script-Writer churned out crescendos of chilling scripts. My tooth and everything surrounding it were getting more painful. My cheek was tender all the way to my nose, the cheekbone ached all around my eye, my jaw was stiffer, my tongue and throat were sore on that side. I got some relief from a hot water bottle, but by Wednesday morning I was just short of panic, and rather shaky. My housemates were advising me to be put under, but I knew I would have to drive afterward to get the inevitable penicillin prescription filled, and then get home. I called the HMO to find out if the dental prescription would be covered, and they assured me it would be. I figured I would probably save $5 by toughing it out through the waits in traffic and at the HMO pharmacy.

Lauren gave me her work number and said to call if I didn't feel up to driving home. I set out at 10:30, allowing plenty of time to get lost. I didn't, and got there in 10 minutes, which I spent listening to the Mozart G-minor piano quartet on WETA.

There were three names on the door, two of them Ferris. It was a small waiting room with a window-wall at the far end and chairs along another wall, and a hatch into the receptionist's desk and a door into the inner office. I signed in and sat down next to a scrawny middle-aged man in work pants and plaid shirt, and across from two women. The door to the office opened and a very large woman came out rasping "I need a cigarette" and holding out her hand to the man in the plaid shirt. She wore turquoise blue stretch (and quite stretched) pants and an ivory jersey that draped each fold of fat sagging beneath the big breast blobs; her hair was molded into tan rolls and pompadours.

"They haven't done a damn thing, I need a cigarette." The man seemed non-pulsed, "I need a cigarette," she repeated, "Gimme the keys to the van." He found the keys and gave them to her and she lumbered out. The man looked around and apologized, "She's had a bad time, she only had five left and one had an abscess. They took them out last week but the abscess won't drain and they have to open it up again. She's not always like this -- she's had it rough. She got cancer and she has to go back on chemo next week."

Ashamed, I was glad to go in for my interrogation with the receptionist: address, employer, medical history. The doctor may want you to take penicillin and wait for half an hour before the surgery, she said, and it was so. I didn't welcome the delay, but thought it prudent because there seemed to be some infection already. I was sat upon an old leather daybed and given eight pills to swallow with a glass of water. Then they took a quick x-ray and sent me back to the waiting room. There, mercifully, were recent copies of *US News & World Report* and *Newsweek*.

Just about noon I was summoned inside and greeted by a somewhat long-in-the-tooth giant elf in green surgical scrubs. He had faded red hair curling out from under his cotton cap, light eyes and a mischievous grin. Over the cap he wore a band fitted with a tubular lamp about three inches high, adding a touch of unicorn to the costume.

"Oh, we're going to have such fun!" said the elf.

"You, maybe," I replied, "This isn't my idea of fun."

"Two?" he said hopefully. "I get to take out two?"
"No, just one. And which Ferris are you?" I asked.

"Ah, I beg your pardon. Richard...I am Riccardo. And this charming young woman is my daughter Erin. She's my assistant, but she says she is not going to follow in her father's profession. I can't imagine why."

He told Erin he needed an "upper tray" and arranged me in the hydraulic chair which had no superstructure or knobs, lights, hoses or drills. Beyond my feet was a table on which there were a few containers and objects, and a small electric motor with that rubber tube coiled beside it. Beyond the Venetian blinds over a glass wall there were ornamental plantings of trees and shrubs.

"Oh, this will be such fun," he reiterated, brandishing a syringe of Novocain. "What do you do for Senator Glenn?"

"Write, mostly; I'm a writer." I offered.

"No kidding! You know, I go to a poetry writers workshop every Saturday morning. I'm the only man in the group." The bitter Novocain was dripping on my tongue, and he motioned to Erin to catch it with the suction tube. "I'm giving you a lot because I like you. I don't want you to feel anything. Do you write fiction?"

"Not for John Glenn, I don't," I replied when I could.

"Oh, I asked for that, didn't I? Of course you don't make things up for the Senator."

"Well, I didn't exactly say that either. We do make up quotes for him, all the time. But we always tell him what he said before he reads it in the newspaper. Believe me, he'd notice."

"Didn't I see his name mentioned for Vice President? In the Post this morning? Can you feel this?"

"I can feel the pressure" I said and got more Novocain.

"Well, is he running for it?"
"He hasn't been asked. And we've been told not to talk about it."

While we waited for the Novocain he remarked that although there were only two men among all the poets of his acquaintance, 90 percent of the poems published were by men.

That was more than Erin could take: "That's because men control the publishing companies. Women don't get equal treatment."

We were soon in a minor row over women's rights, and I found myself trying to mediate between father and daughter.
Presently Dr. Ferris took a small tool and poked at my tooth while Erin held the suction tube in my mouth. Then he took another tool, pounded it on the tooth three times, removed it and put it down. "Get me a bone file," he said to Erin, and she went out.

"Now what?" I asked.

"Oh, it's out. I'll just clear it out a little, and you're on your way."

"Already? I thought it would take longer."

"See, I told you it would be fun," he said as he stuffed a wad of gauze into my jaw. "Bite down on that."

Erin showed me to an old leather chair in a closet opposite the receptionist, and sat down beside me, waiting for her next assignment. I asked her what career she was interested in, if not oral surgery. She said she wasn't sure and I advised her not to decide too hastily. We chatted until the receptionist beckoned me to her desk. She gave me two prescriptions, one for penicillin and one for Tylenol with codeine, and six gauze squares wrapped in a tissue, and I gave her a check for $80. I walked out at 12:20.

I decided to stop at home before going out to the HMO pharmacy at Springfield Mall. I let the dogs out and changed clothes. (I had dressed to go to the office in case the extraction was postponed.) By the time I spent 9 minutes stuck in the long-cycle traffic light, the Novocain was wearing out and my face was hurting fiercely.

I handed in the prescription for the penicillin (I won't take codeine -- it messes up my head) and the pharmacist said "We can fill this for you, but it isn't covered under your plan." I told her I had called and asked, and been told that it would be. "You should have called the pharmacy," she said snottily, "not the main number."

It took 25 minutes to get the prescription. I waited, my teeth clenched on the bloody wad of gauze, wishing I had taken more Tylenol. Going home I got through the bad intersection in only six minutes, stopped in at Crown Books and found an Emma Lathen whodunit and a Larry Niven sci-fi and was out again in three minutes flat. I raced up Braddock Road to an ice pack, a bowl of chocolate ice cream and an afternoon on the couch. The pain was pretty bad until about 4 o'clock, after that I fell asleep and slept until 6.

* * *

You must see, by now, how distraught I am, to belabor you, gentle reader, with my story of having a wisdom tooth removed. Yet in a way it describes the worst and the best of life in Washington – the traffic, the impersonal transactions of a large health care bureaucracy, and the great humaneness of an oral surgeon who can transmute a dreaded procedure into an entertaining quarter-hour.

* * *

It has been an exceptionally cool and rainy spring in Washington, in fact the first real spring since I came here in 1985. Yesterday summer slammed in with temperatures in the 80s and I expect it to be miserably hot until October. If I had any place to swim regularly I would feel better – it's the only exercise I can tolerate in hot weather. But swimming pools seem to be out of my reach
financially, geographically and logistically. I should, I suppose, look for another place to live, because the attic where I sleep is poorly insulated and badly served by the AC. I hadn't considered moving before because I always thought that by next summer I would be leaving Washington.

* * *

But there are advantages to this house. On this stretch of Braddock Road, around 1:30 in the morning on summer nights, the tedium of sleeplessness is relieved by the neighborhood mockingbird. He sings first from the quince tree in the back yard, then from the red maple tree by the house next door, then from a tulip tree to the north. His repertoire is entirely plagiarized and rude. He burlesques the cardinal, song-sparrow, chickadee, mourning dove and goldfinch, and for an encore he croaks out a mangled wood-thrush song, then trails off into chortling and cursing.

* * *

JUNE 1988

to Jan and Fritz Lehmann, Oberlin classmates

June 16, 1988

Other things being equal (which they seldom are, but perhaps they will be equal enough) I plan to be in Ohio the July 1-4 weekend. However, inequality sets in again about July 5th. I shall be sorry to miss seeing Fritz, but I need to see greenness, breathe Ohio air and sleep for a few nights where the internal combustion engine does not roam, roar, grind, whine, or shift gears, and the skies are not shining all night. Or, after reading your letter, perhaps I should hunt up a Relaxitique (Our Medium is the Massage) Clinic and get all the stress kneaded out of me.

There is no cause for alarm. The letter you got was only my first last letter. I shall follow the example of Sarah Berndhardt, who made something like 24 Farewell Tours of the United States, sleeping in her coffin every night (Her own Relaxitique? A species of Orgone Box?). I am dependent on writing – the withdrawal symptoms are already driving me to a maintenance program. In any case, one of the things I will surely do is to dash off the occasional quick and dirty letter to people I have something to say to.

There is a lot of chicken-counting going on in the office, based on what appear to me to be a clutch of glass eggs. One of my colleagues took it on herself to consult the Oracle (Jeane Dixon). This particular oracle is a sexagenarian schoolgirl who affects jaunty hats and an ingenuous lisp, and before her eclipse by an upstart astrologer from California, had access at the White House and had her predictions widely quoted by the mooers and stakers of Washington.

The Oracle was posed two questions: who will be the Democratic nominee for Vice President? And, what will be the role of Jesse Jackson?

After the obligatory "I'll get back to you" and about 24 hours, the Oracle replied:

Neither Presidential candidate has made up his mind.
Many people think Jackson would make trouble for the Democrats, the nation and the world.

Big deal, or Very Savvy Oracle, or GIGO, or all of the above. Nevertheless, we were enjoined not to tell anyone, because this was not an Official Prediction.

It does suggest that I should perhaps consider a career change. But I can't stand hats.

Two weeks ago the Congressional Chorus gave its spring concert, including my setting of two pentatonic hymns – the piece I wrote for them last winter. I rather think it was a success -- the members of the chorus liked it, and although I may shorten it before I turn it loose on the world, I was well satisfied that it produced the sound and the music I intended. Michael Patterson (the conductor of the Congressional Chorus) is considering staging at his church my Noah's Ark music-theater piece that I wrote 20 years ago for the Columbus Unitarians. It encourages me to write more music; maybe I'll get an electronic piano one of these days.

To Alys, written on a typewriter.

June 26, 2988

We are in trouble already. There is no 1. There is no Return key. We don't remember how to work the margins. The only hope of repairing a mistake is vintage bottle of "Liquid Paper Just for Copies." But look on the bright side -- we found the carbon paper and a cache of decent bond paper, our keyboarding has improved since the last time we wrestled with this machine, and the ribbon is not dead.

But the C-64 is, apparently. I started this letter to you last night, and before I had the format lines completed the screen went all dingbats, then blank, with threads of voices from TV Channel 3 coming over the speaker. Probably the chip has gone bad, not surprising after five years.

It is not, of course, 2988, nor even the 26th of June, though it may be by the time you get this. (Sorry about the extra thousand years.) I thought for a long time about sending you a gift and finally decided to send you money, duck the choosing and shopping, and give you all the responsibility.

I always gave you a lot of responsibility, but not, I guess, too much. You often pitched in, too, when I took too much on myself. I still remember the time you came to my rescue after we had picked buckets full of elderberries for jelly-making, and it was taking hours to get them cleaned and plucked off the heads. You pulled a kitchen chair up to the sink to stand on and stayed by me, working and chatting like an old friend. You were six.

If I neglected your upbringing in any way I think it was in matters of sex and femininity. They are issues I never resolved myself, though I'm not sure it would have made any difference in the way I conducted my life if I had.
Last fall, thinking myself too disconnected from other women, I signed up for and attended a class at the Fairfax Unitarian Church entitled “Cakes for the Queen of Heaven.” The church has a lot of very bright and successful people in it (at least, based on their incomes and lifestyles one would assume they are) and I hoped I would find some, or even one, kindred spirit. Or at least I might learn something about feminist theology.

_Helas!,_ as they say in French novels. The curriculum, which had come down from Beacon Street, was shallow and rambling. So what if primitive nomadic herders made fat female fertility charms? Did it make them healthy, wealthy and wise? Should we emulate them by admiring fat females?

Among the participants there seemed to be two basic theses: that men are all bad guys and took over all the good things in life, including God; and that women are all innocent victims who must now become aggressors and put men in their places. The second is to be accomplished through witchcraft and occult ceremonies celebrating menstruation and childbirth.

The course referred to none of the classic studies of goddess-cults, not even Robert Graves’ _The White Goddess_ (not exactly a study, but a brilliant synthesis of images and visions of a female godhead).

There were 15 women in the group, mostly in their 40s and mostly married at least once. A couple of them claimed to be gay, though I'm not sure what that means for women. Men who go beyond the stage of experimentation with sex with other men are quickly taken up by the gay male subculture, which is a kind of clan or ethnicity or religion. Women who have sex with other women seem to remain just that: women who have sex with other women.

As a group they seemed largely interested in revenge for the injustices they had suffered, or at least the opportunity to get one-up on the men who had done them wrong, and most were seeking power over their own lives. Many were also looking for a Grand Unifying Theory for their lives, certain that it was to be found in witchcraft, tarot cards or some other occult practice.

I behaved myself. I didn't puncture any balloons, I did most of their silly rituals without snickering (lighting candles and passing them around) but did finally draw the line. We were asked to draw a self-portrait with our eyes closed. That, I told them, was too goddam silly for any grown person to consider. Explanations about the Right Brain did not reassure me: I draw what I see with two eyes with my right hand, not my brain.

At the end of the course I drew up an annotated bibliography for the class and suggested that feminist theology (as they spell it) might be a little broader and deeper than they thought.

The only thing I learned from the course was that I had a more atypical childhood than I thought. In one of the touchy-feely exercises we were asked to hold a candle and say the names of our foremothers back as far as we knew them, and tell what we remembered of our mothers and grandmothers. The first part was easy: "I am Caroline, daughter of Naomi, daughter of Mattie, daughter of Lydia." But where the other women had rich memories of the feminine tradition in their families, I had almost none. My grandmother died when my mother was 13, and I do not remember my mother ever speaking of her. My mother was raised (my aunt and uncles said "snatched") by her mother’s maiden sister, Aunt Sallie, who, the story goes, had been jilted by her
true love and never forgave mankind thereafter. But whatever womanly lore Mattie Wierman may have had from Lydia Baldwin was never passed down to Naomi, nor to me. In a certain sense I had only a female parent, not a mother. But if I missed the solidarity and lore of women, I also was spared the superstitions and oppressions that went with them.

* * *

JULY 1988

July 12, 1988

First my C-64 took sick -- not in its chip but in its capacitors -- and despite the ministrations of my neighbor Gil, it was too weak to function in hot weather. Since the weather in Washington is inescapably hot, and the best efforts of our house air-conditioner only get the house down to about 80, it was hopeless.

Not that it would have made much difference. One week later I got a sore throat that developed into the worst cold I have had for 30 years. I missed a week of work, then coughed and snuffled unbecomingly for two more weeks. I did get out my antique portable typewriter to write Alys a birthday letter, and was first encouraged because the ribbon was still good and I found carbon paper and correction fluid. I was soon abashed, however, after I put the carbon paper in upside down, failed to note that the keyboard had no number 1 and dated the letter 2988, and rediscovered the machine’s tendency to skip spaces in the middle of words, giving a rather macaronic quality to the text. I faltered, and Alys got a truncated, mangled letter.

On July 7, I decided that the quickest and surest way out of the stagnant pond was to buy a new C-64, which I can just barely afford now. I called several places, found the best price and set out in the yellow smog of evening to get it. But the shop that said they had it discovered after I got there that they didn't, so I spent another week unarmed.

The heat continues. It is over 90° every day, and mornings are likely to be 75° at 5:30AM. I can't face driving to work in an un-air-conditioned car with the windows open to hot suffocating air that burns the throat and makes the eyes smart, aware that there is a high probability that some incident or accident will lock me and a thousand other commuters into a jam moving five miles per hour, if at all. So I take the bus to the Pentagon (20 minutes) then a Blue train all the way around to the Capitol South Metro station (25 minutes) then surface just long enough to cross the street and duck into the Cannon office building and down to the underground passages under the Capitol to get to the Hart Building (15 minutes).

In our house the AC labors unceasingly from about noon until midnight, then intermittently until the next noon, keeping the downstairs about 80°. My upstairs room remains about 85° until the sun goes down, then cools by five degrees or so. I sleep badly in the AC -- my nose and throat get very dry -- but I hardly sleep at all without it.

I get up at 5:30AM and go outdoors to my garden patches, moving the old brass sprinkler I brought from Kent to the driest spot to make a small shower for the birds, keep the pretty verbena blooming, or fatten my tomatoes and squash. Sometimes the finches are already breakfasting on the broccoli, making faint chiming sounds as they nibble the tender buds I had hoped to consume.
myself. (Well, what would you do when robbed by such charming bandits?) Indecision and aimlessness vex my thinking: what am I doing here? If I'm not writing, recording events and experiences, what's the point of existing? Why don't I just get away? But would I do things better if I were back in Kent, or lived in some cool place with creeks and trees, in quiet and solitude? Can I ever get back into music, writing and drawing? Does it matter? Should I attempt to make a life for myself in this hostile place? Or direct all my energies toward getting out? The last is the hardest: as long as I am trying to get out, my quality of life suffers, and the longer I am unsuccessful, the less life I have left, of any quality.

I have just enough resources to do my job and one other thing. During these years in Washington, that one other thing has been these letters -- interspersed with 16 unsuccessful job applications in the last 14 months. I seldom play chamber music. I have made few friends because I don't have time to invest in making them (and neither do most of the people I would like to be friends with). I don't sew (no time), write music or practice the piano (no piano), write poetry (no time with silence and solitude), participate in community projects (no time, no friends, no stake in the community). And even though I work every day just two blocks from the greatest library in the world (from which, with my Senate ID, I can even take out books) I read only a few magazines and an occasional whodunit or sci-fi.

Another thing that grinds me down about my present situation is that staying in Washington means opting for security instead of change and challenge. That it isn't even comfortable security only makes it worse. In three and a half years the only new skill I have learned is how to endure -- not like, not tolerate, just endure -- hot weather. I haven't gotten better at much of anything except maybe being a consumer, and I have made very few friends beyond my wonderful housemates and some colleagues in the office.

All of this says, of course, that the things that I value, that keep me alive, are not security, wealth, power or pleasure, but things like the sense that I can enjoy or at least cope with the uncertainties of life, the satisfaction of making and growing things, the excitement of learning new ways of seeing and negotiating with others about the way the world is, and the self that comes with having friends that give me definition and a community in which I am known and trusted.

Uncertainty: what we make life and consciousness out of. If we knew what would happen each succeeding minute of our lives, we would fall asleep from sheer boredom and never wake up, and our minds would never develop beyond the level of the controls of an elevator. But total uncertainty is chaos, entropy, disorder, and would be unbearable without the patterning of trust, hope and love -- which is why we need other people. I don't have time to develop this, only to jump to the conclusion that security, wealth, power and pleasure are most treacherous values. Not because they are bad, but because when one seeks them at the expense of other people it destroys trust, hope and love -- the only things that make life worth living.

Compare...

The Jesse Jackson Medicine Show, despite having been driven out of town by Sheriff Dukakis, grabbing headlines, co-opting famous politicians and media stars and rhyming, dancing and singing its way to Atlanta in the confidence and freedom of people who know where they are going and have lots of resources for getting there.
The Daniel Ortega Grand Opera Company, back to the wall, with a failed economy, beset by terrorists with guns and bombs (provided by Americans who take no risk themselves but are happy to kill poor people to save them from Communism) and apparently seriously divided internally, lashing out in desperation with actions that will probably destroy them.

* * *

Why Bentsen? He seems like a wheeler-dealer with little modesty, who is not noticeably repentant for past crudeness (let's drop an atom bomb on Korea). Nor am I impressed with his socialite, ex-model wife, who likes quail-hunting and whose idea of volunteer service is the Congressional wives' campaign against pornographic rock music.

But mostly I'm chary of Dukakis' cockiness and ambition. I sense that he thinks he will win regardless of his running mate, and worse, that he intends to be a Great President, like JFK. It's the wrong thing to aim for. I want my candidate to be a Good President.

* * *

July 17, 1988

It is a scorching Sunday morning with a searing sun and a hot wind that stirs trees and sucks moisture from the dirt. Yesterday it was 104° and the same is predicted for today. I stay inside where the AC keeps the temperature about 80°, tolerable with a little help from fans. Every hour or so I put on sandals and go out – the ground, the pavement, and even the grass are too hot to walk on barefoot – into the suffocating heat to move the sprinkler to another patch of parched garden. It is an odd-numbered day, our neighborhood's turn for watering under the voluntary water-conservation program. No rain is in sight, nor any relief from the heat.

But this is nevertheless the end of a drought for me – I have a new C-64. Not only can I resume letter-writing, I am also free of the keyboard quirks ('a' and the spacebar) that plagued me with the old one.

The John-Glenn-for-Vice-President balloon got loose and disappeared into the stratosphere, to the surprise of very few people – most of those in his Senate office. I never gave him better than a 25% chance at it – not because he was unqualified or unlikely to help the ticket, but because he's not really part of the Democratic Party mainstream. He didn't work his way up from the bottom; he's not beholden to those who went before him; doesn't have special allies in the party; and isn't mentor to those who might follow after him; his constituency is among individuals who admire him for his heroic deeds and good character. He is admired, trusted and liked, but doesn't command loyalty from the Democratic Party or from those with national agendas to grind.

But the thing that made me most doubtful about his being chosen was watching the Dukakis campaign plump up and ripen under the hot lights of the media. The way I figure it, the very qualities that would have made Glenn a good VP (or President) are the very ones that make him a poor candidate in a media-mediated election. I guessed the Dukakis campaign would choose one of their own for VP.

A number of people in the office expected Glenn to be chosen. There was only one bet that I knew of – most of us kept our own counsel, talking about favorable and unfavorable omens, but not making predictions. As the weeks wore on I saw little evidence that the Dukakis tribe was showing
much interest in Glenn. Ten days before the start of the convention there had been no infiltration of the office by Dukakis people, and no unaccounted for times on the Senator's schedule when he might have been conferring with them. Five days before the convention reporters were calling up to find out if Glenn had gone to Boston. (If they had turned on C-Span they would have seen him on the floor of the Senate.)

I am relieved. I felt that if he were to become VP I would be obliged to stay on in whatever capacity I could be useful. But the unrelenting heat and the misery of this summer, and my inability to cope with it and maintain any quality of life, have made me realize that I have to get out of here.

*   *   *

July 28, 1988

Everyone cheered for Glenn's speech in Atlanta, and groaned over the 'refried quiche' line -- meaning that it did its work: it got people's attention and set them talking.

And he never missed a beat. He was back in the saddle Monday morning, went to the 35th anniversary of the Korean War cease-fire on Tuesday, and on Wednesday told the Ohio radio stations how much work the Senate had done: "We've already passed nine out of fourteen bills -- and we haven't done that for several years, only continuing resolutions."

Then later, he lashed out at Jesse Helms for ranting on that AIDS education promoted sodomy. As usual, he departed from the text Diane had prepared for him, and ended up saying the same thing three times, but Cranston was overjoyed at the support for his amendment from 'the distinguished gentleman, Chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee...' etc.

* * *  

"Bathtubs," said Pamela, "Senatorial Bathtubs. Let's have a tour."

And so it was that on July 7, at 3 PM, 15 Glenn staffers were waiting at the top of the escalator up from the subway cars under the Capitol, waiting for Mr. Buzz Hummer of the Architect's office to lead us to these artifacts of a bygone era. Pamela was being Mother Hen, anxiously counting noses, admonishing interns ducking into the restrooms to hurry and enquiring if Kevin was really coming (no, he got a phone call) while junior staffers tried to be the first to name the Senators coming up the escalator on their way to vote.

Mr. Hummer arrived, brisk and cheerful, and led us past the elevators into one of the lesser labyrinths that honeycomb the lower regions of the Capitol. A sign with a finely drawn hand pointed to the West Elevators, large and small pipes, tagged or color-coded, ran along the low ceilings, archways opened into blind alcoves, or had doors to offices, tool-rooms or workshops; canteens with coffee urns and glass cases displaying donuts.

More corridors; sinister looking machines with coils on top, a cramped staircase spiraling upward. We stepped up, then down, around a corner and into a windowless room about 12' by 20' with a decorated tile floor, two large blowers, a washbasin and toilet, and, at the far end, up on a marble platform, two grimy marble bathtubs, head to head and separated by a marble slab.
Each tub was carved from a single block of marble; the sides and front of the inside were perpendicular, the back sloped at about a 45 degree angle. They were fairly narrow – John wondered if Senator Heflin would fit. The faucets and fittings were brass, magisterial (or should I say senatorial) in size, and there were disk-shaped taps marked Shower Hot and Shower Cold, but no shower heads were to be seen. One tub was almost inaccessible behind the housing of one of the big machines, but the other looked like it could be used (if you didn't care about privacy). We observed that the toilet had water in it and the hot-water tap on the washbasin was leaking, but Mr. Hummer didn't know if the plumbing to the bathtubs was still connected.

The tubs had marble surrounds, and there was an ornamented cornice around each niche. On a bead chain fastened to the divider between the tubs was a plastic-covered page of historical information that was read to us by Mr. Hummer:

Six marble bathing tubs, ordered in 1858, delivered in 1859, at a cost of $90 each, installed in the Capitol for use by Senators when their duties kept them there for long hours...
Commotion over ordering them from Italy instead of from Massachusetts...probably used until the 1920s...the whereabouts of the other four are now unknown.

We trooped back through catacombs, sobered, perhaps, by the thought "Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose." Or maybe Heraclitus: You can't step twice in the same bathtub.

Whatever.

*   *   *

AUGUST 1988

August 6, 1988

Except for the few days, usually about three weeks after their arrival, when new junior staff members figure out how to send messages, the office E-mail is used infrequently, mainly to summon everyone to staff meetings. It makes a pretty good index of who's working, or more precisely, who's not working, or has turned on his or her terminal. A few luckless souls will always say "What meeting?" and betray themselves.

After lunch the last Friday of July our screens bleeped with the message STAFF MTG 4 PM SENATOR'S OFFICE. Half an hour later they bleeped again: STAFF MTG CHANGED TO 3:45.

When the time came I flipped my phone and headed down the lane between the copier and the washroom, passing Senator Glenn going the other way. Phil was standing in the door of the Senator's office, directing traffic, urging people to go in, gallantly instructing the men, but not the women, to bring chairs. Five of us un-chaired women lined up on the capacious couch (if I sit all the way back my feet stick straight out). Phil, easygoing, comfortably in charge, said "The Senator will conduct the meeting. It will be very short, because he's chairing the floor at 4 o'clock, and it's already [looking at his watch] 3:47."

Polite silence reigned for another few minutes, with a few people nibbling on cookies from a large tray on the coffee table. Then Phil, again, into the breach: "We're sorry about this. Usually he can get out of presiding on the floor, but this time..."
...and Senator Glenn strode in. "This will be a short meeting," he said, "I just wanted to tell all of you that I appreciate the work you have been doing. We'll be doing our regular performance reviews in October as usual, but Celia and I have been over the budget, and I'm pleased to be able to tell you that each of you will have a $1000 bonus next month. I'll let Moneybags Celia tell you the details."

Moneybags, at that moment, had her mouth full of peanut-butter cookie, and made incoherent noises. John Glenn grinned and mimicked: "Cam't talg wif 'ad Skibby beanud-buddr...."

Celia recovered, laughing, and told us that it would be $500 in each of two pay periods, to help with our vacations, but warned "Don't forget, Uncle Sam gets his bite."

Glenn thanked us again, then went on, "I wanted to say a few things about the convention. Annie and I had a wonderful time, and I feel very positive about the Democratic ticket. I really enjoyed giving my speech, and thought it was well received. You know, once you get a crowd going with you, it feels good -- especially if you know you have some good lines coming up later in the speech. It's really a lot of fun."

"I felt good, too, because, you know, people often come to a convention mad, and leave it madder. But that didn't happen. They may have come mad, but they went away this time feeling positive. I think we're in good shape."

"I'll be split up during the fall. I'll be active in the national, state, and State House campaigns. We're scheduled to go out [of session] October ninth, and I think that will hold. No point in the Senate holding on after the House goes out, and they're all up for re-election -- they'll go out, all right. Anyway, thanks again. I'm really glad I can show my appreciation with this. Any questions?"

Chris (a sprightly black woman in her sixties) "I liked your speech."

Glenn: "Well, the way it all wound up, I liked it too. You know they put the whole thing on the teleprompter, and they placed them farther apart than I was used to. I went down to practice – they had a place to show you the ropes – and it felt kind of odd. You know, you stand here [demonstrating] and look over here [turning head] and then over here and the guy there said 'No, your body's not facing them; it's more sincere if you turn your shoulders too.' You can keep your feet in the same place and just turn this way [demonstrating again]. They tape you and show you the tape, and they're right. I guess it worked."

As we were leaving, Glenn noticed that MJ wasn't there, and called to us: "Oh, by the way, I want to say special thanks to MJ and all of you who were called on to get all that stuff together for the campaign people. That was a big job, and MJ and a lot of you worked extra hours to get it together. There was a whole truck load – and I mean that literally – eight and a half boxes of materials – ethics reports, financial reports, even old stuff from the Marine Corps. That was a lot of work and I appreciate it."

One week later we were again summoned by E-mail to a staff meeting. There was little time for speculation – farewell to the interns, maybe. "Another bonus?" suggested a junior staffer. "No," said the office cynic, "they're taking it back." I knew that some high-level talks were taking place, because I had been summoned earlier in the day to a very amiable and gratifying discussion about my job and its performance. But no one, I think, expected the announcement that was made.
Phil sat in his usual place, on the right hand of the Senator, but the Senator took charge of the meeting as soon as the doors closed on the assembled staff.

"I've asked you here to tell you that we are making a major change in the office. Phil, as you know, is going to law school, and feels he would like to devote more time to national security issues, where he has special expertise. And so he has asked to step down as AA, to concentrate on military manpower and national security issues -- which I believe are going to be increasingly important in the next Congress. MJ is going to move up to be AA, a position she is highly qualified for. I fully intend to run again and win again in '92, and I believe that MJ is the person who can bring together the legislative and political parts of our operation. I'm very pleased that beginning Monday she is going to be the new AA."

He spoke a little further, praising Phil, and asked both Phil and MJ for statements. They each made very brief and politic speeches; Phil thanked the Senator and staff, and MJ praised Phil and promised to work hard. We were again invited to ask questions, but nobody did, so after thanking everyone again, the Senator declared a 5 o'clock day.

Consulting his watch, Phil said "As my last official act, make that a 4:45 day."

Only one of the double doors was opened, so there was a knot of people carrying chairs and waiting to get out of the Senator's office, but only a little careful conversation about where we were going after work or what we were planning to do for the weekend. We were all thinking about what the change would mean.

I don't, as some do, predict disaster. Phil, despite sitting in the "Designated AA Chair" at the Senator's right hand for many months, was never the Senator's Right-Hand Man. That's been MJ as long as I can remember. Phil tried very hard to impose some order on the processes of the office, but was effective only in rationalizing and codifying a lot of relatively low-level things that didn't matter much anyway (the difference between a MEMO and an ACTION MEMO, for example). He was fair in his dealings with the staff, always prompt in responding, and his door was always open. He was a benevolent, prudent and well-organized commanding officer, but he never seemed to be part of the critical political conversations of the office.

MJ's style is very different, but not necessarily less effective. It is true that in the office her shop has been known informally as a "Black Hole" because requests left there tend never to be seen again. She knows everyone in Ohio, a very large number of people in Washington, and has a broad if somewhat shallow grasp of legislative issues. She knows John Glenn's mind inside and out, and has herself a very nimble mind and the articulateness to use it effectively. I am reserving judgment, only observing that her management style is more openly "expressive" than Phil's. We'll see.  

* * *

August 13, 1988

...and suddenly it all resolves.

In May, I spoke to Phil about the possibility of my working out of the Columbus office, which would
at least have got me back to Ohio. He was lukewarm, but agreed to consider it: "Write me a memo," he said, and I did that. We agreed then not to take any action until the outcome of the Veepstakes had been determined.

It hadn't occurred to me to ask for the Cleveland office -- I assumed they were committed to a two person office there, but I knew Dale was interested in expanding the Columbus office. So I was further surprised when, after being invited into his office on Friday July 29, John Glenn said "I don't see any reason why you couldn't work out of a state office, but wouldn't you rather be in the Cleveland office -- that's commuting distance to Kent isn't it?"

John Glenn said some other very kind things, which I almost forgot in my excitement: that he appreciated my work very much and felt bad that he hadn't told me more often; that he didn't want to lose me; and that he was glad I wanted to stay on. Then we talked about the progress of the computer connections between the state and Washington offices. It is in progress and expected to be complete by the beginning of the 101st Congress -- January 1989. (I would read that as June.) The Senate will pay my moving expenses, and Celia and I will make a trip out to the Cleveland office to see how my operation will fit in there.

All the details aren't settled, but it seems that sometime in the next six months I will be back in Ohio, back in my own house in Kent, and still working for Senator John Glenn. I couldn't ask for more.

My job is officially "Special Projects Coordinator," meaning that I do everything that doesn't fall solidly into categories legislative, press, or case-work. I do some of those things, too, on occasion. I am called on to advise the Senator on certain matters legislative and musical, like telling him he should vote for the resolution honoring Irving Berlin, and I write floor statements in praise of Ohioans who have done good, or, more often, well. Many of the letters I write to kids, students, old-folks, and unemployed constituents border on casework, because no matter how hopeless or outrageous the request is, I try to give them at least one concrete thing to do: read this NASA fact sheet; go to the library; check in with OBES; take your sick cat to the vet; Senator Glenn won't be able to read your history of Preble County, but he is sure the county historical society will want it. And the ceremonial letters I write to be read at events the Senator can't attend are an important part of PR, if not exactly press.

But there is nothing I do that requires my physical presence in Washington. I write on a word-processor, which could be anywhere, and I consult with other people, all of whom have telephones on their desks. The Glenn offices all have telexcopier (also called FAX machines) by which documents can be transmitted in about 30 seconds per page. In addition, Congressional offices have 'orange-bag' service – overnight mail – between Washington and the state offices. The biggest drawback is that the modems that will connect the Senate computer systems with state offices are not yet completely installed. Once they are in place I will be able to write a letter in Cleveland and print it out in Washington for the Senator's personal signature, or call up a speech for Annie out of the Washington file, edit it in Cleveland and print it in Columbus for her to pick up there.

I have already checked with Peggy, and I will be able to take my files out to Cleveland on a disk to use on the computer out there if I move before the modems are installed. I have already started printing out paper copies of every document in my computer files here. With 25 'folders', each with an average of ten 'documents' containing up to 20 letters, this is a big job. I found a huge cache of old News Release-headed paper with Glenn's old office in the Russell Building for the address,
and I am printing them on the backs of those sheets, and stashing them in two and three inch three-ring binders. There will be about ten of them, I estimate.

It turns out that MJ had been considering expanding the Cleveland office even before she knew I wanted to go back to Ohio, so she has been very supportive. She thinks December might be a good time to move – after the election but before the next Congress convenes. That sounds great to me.

For the first few days I couldn’t really believe I would be going back to Kent. Then I spent several sleepless nights daydreaming about things I would do and how I would live, and what pleasures and problems there would be. I have finally settled down to taking some practical steps, like loading up stuff to take back when I go on vacation at the end of this month.

The best thing is that I feel better than I have since I came to Washington. I have finally lost the sore throats that came on me every afternoon when I got tired. I don’t get home exhausted at 7PM and have to crawl into bed shortly after dinner -- sometimes I find myself still doing things at 10 o’clock. My feet and legs don’t ache as much. I’m eating sensibly, maybe because eating is no longer the only reliable pleasure in my life.

It’s been a great adventure as well as a great burden. And it’s finally turned out well.

*   *   *

20 August 1988

We will never be clever enough to explain our own cleverness.

I call it Scheib’s Law, because Karl Scheib postulates it as the rationale for his book *Mirrors, Masks, Lies, and Secrets: The Limits of Human Predictability* (1979). He goes on to assert that science, which he defines as the application of the human imagination to the natural world, can never sufficiently account for both the natural world and the imagination.

I will take Scheib’s Law one step further, and postulate that we will never be clever enough to manage our own cleverness.

Take the Vincennes incident. In our cleverness we devised the AEGIS system which apparently did every clever thing it was supposed to do, yet it did not prevent, and probably contributed to, a terrible disaster, not only for the Iranian civilians who lost their lives, but for the United States government, Navy and people, who all want desperately to be the cleverest as well as the kindest people on earth. ‘Human error’ is being blamed for the tragedy, and it probably was: some minor misreading on the order, or reading the wrong line on a schedule – an error anyone could make, and many do, every day, everywhere.

The Sunday *Post* of August 7 carried an article about the "flaming sea battle" in the Gulf of Tonkin on August 4, 1964 that got us into the Vietnam War, written by a pilot who was in it. The pilot says it never happened: there was no battle; the only shells fired were American, and their targets were SONAR reflections from the wakes of their own ships making sharp turns. He made the point that it was one of the darkest nights he could remember, un-illuminated by anything, let alone flaming ships and aircraft.
The same issue of the Post had a full page article on Personalized Decision Analysis – a means of figuring the statistical probabilities of the outcomes of different actions and making decisions based on their utility. This process was being touted as the next ‘R’ – Reasoning – that should be added to school curricula.

So now we are to Reason about our cleverness and teach our children to be rational and utilitarian? Oh, goody! Mind if I ask a few questions? First, whose utility are we going to teach?

Apparently the early rumors of a flaming sea battle in the Gulf of Tonkin were just what certain highly interested people in Washington needed to persuade themselves and their buddies that the U.S. must intervene in a dirty and unwinnable terrorist conflict in Southeast Asia. The American people and the Congress were never wholeheartedly behind getting into that war. It was an ‘optional’ war, as Dan Quayle made quite plain this month. (He served his country by writing news releases for the National Guard.) Of course, for the poor or less educated it wasn't optional. And George Bush has done himself and the nation no favor by reopening this wound just when it was beginning to heal.

At this point we might pause to reflect on some differences between World War II and Vietnam. In the late 1930s our information processes were crude and our interests parochial. We didn't hear much about Nazi atrocities; even less about Japanese brutality – and we didn't believe much of what we did hear. I can remember my grade-school classmates reasoning that if people were being sent to concentration camps it must be because they deserved it.

Yet when Pearl Harbor came, thousands of young men, including John Glenn, enlisted eagerly and requested active duty. Even my father, already over 40 and a lifelong pacifist, was prepared to serve if needed. In spite of relatively poor communications and a lack of common interests, utility and ideology converged in 1941 to produce a wide consensus that only military intervention could resolve the problems posed by the German/Japanese Axis.

I don't doubt that Dan Quayle would have enlisted for active duty in WW II just as George Bush did. That he didn't volunteer to go to Vietnam tells more about the character of the war and the tenor of the times than it does about the character of Dan Quayle. (But I find it a political and social stupidity for him to think that his behavior then wouldn't be germane to a later political campaign.) In the 1960s few people subscribed to the ideology of killing people to fight communism, and even fewer saw any national or personal utility to the Vietnam War. So a few powerful men in Washington manipulated the budget and the powerless poor to pursue a war based on their own interests and ideology.

That raises another question: how shall we separate utility from ideology? We do this badly – in fact, we tend to conflate one with the other. Anti-communism (ideology) is good because it is useful (utility) in making people free (except that it overlooks the numbers of people made dead in the process).

Third, even if we manage to sort out the utilities from the ideologies of various groups and reach some kind of consensus on what's good for everyone, how, when we set out to do something, shall we know if we've got all the necessary, relevant considerations? If we weren't able to get all the necessary considerations into the equation to prevent the Vincennes/Iranian airliner tragedy, how are we going to manage on a global scale? For all our number-crunching precocity, nobody doubted that the computers on the Vincennes had all the necessary information. But computers can't invent what we forget, and won't be able to say things like "Aren't we right under a civilian air
lane and isn't there a 10 o'clock flight?" unless they have been instructed to ask such questions by
the humans who manage them.

And, finally, how can we be sure that the foundations – the premises we stand on and the odds we
calculate – are sound? My answer is that we can't. Even in natural systems we can only make
successive approximations of the way they work – as the current flap over the greenhouse effect
demonstrates. Is it deforestation, chlorofluorocarbons, fossil fuels, or a normal meteorological
cycle? Does it have just one cause, or more, and how much does each cause contribute? I
seriously doubt that any among us, or any selected group of great minds, even backed by
super-computers can be clever enough to manage one global system, let alone the entire earth:
we don't know enough. And we aren't clever enough - not yet, and maybe never - to know whether
it is possible to know enough to manage the entire planet.

* * *

August 21, 1988

Despite it being the hottest summer in history, there have been pleasures. I have a thriving
garden, with surprisingly lovely lavender-laced-with-purple petunias backed by a row of pink and
blue larkspurs. There are purple beans (they turn green when you cook them, alas) zucchini,
yellow and butternut squash, large shrubs of basil, sprawling tomato-plants, blue and white
morning-glories swarming up the fence into the quince-tree, flames of marigolds, and an
assortment of gourds, including some that look like miniature pumpkins. The latter have reached
the status of Official Weed, and require restraint.

The heat and drought have greatly reduced the insect pests this summer -- no bean-beetles at all,
no fleas until this week, almost no mosquitos. Ticks have been rather bad on the dogs -- they
show up well on Nelson with his sparse fur, but are hard to find on Isabelle. We have also been
spared a good bit of mowing, and weeds have had little chance to get established. Until Sue
brought home a load of wood-chips from the farm to use for mulch, I had to water constantly to
keep the soil from drying out in the relentless sun.

This week, when the heat finally broke, the first thing that happened was that I slept through the
night. Most of the summer, even with the air-conditioning, I would wake every few hours,
sweating, dry-mouthed from the fan blowing over me or stiff from lying spread-eagled or with a full
bladder from drinking iced tea or soda-water all evening. This brick house is shaded only on the
north side, and is nothing but a heat sink, with heat radiating into the house all night from the hot
bricks or the poorly insulated roof. In the morning the back porch (facing east) is tolerable, but by
evening the 200 or so square feet of asphalt of the driveway around the porch make it too warm for
comfort.

After supper I wander around the garden patches barefoot, in shorts and a loose sleeveless shirt,
watering, picking off dead leaves and blossoms, pulling weeds, trimming overgrowth, propping up
leaning sunflowers and tying up lolling tomato branches, sometimes talking with our neighbor Barry
over the fence. Some evenings I put on thong sandals and go out to the unconstructed part of the
back yard to pick a bowl of the large and rather tasteless blackberries that grow there, getting
pricked and scratched all over my arms, legs, and feet. When it starts to get dark and I am sweaty,
itchy and tired, I go in, gulp down a glass of iced soda-water mixed with orange juice, take a cool
shower and go upstairs to try to arrange the fans and bedclothes, and myself, to sleep.
Memorial Day weekend, when I was in Hartford at my brother's house, Sue came home one evening to find a small bedraggled and emaciated grey cat on the back porch. She offered it some dog food, which it ate, she reported, as if it were starving. The cat has stayed, of course, plumped up, brushed and grown playful. We tried to find an owner in the neighborhood, because it seemed to be quite comfortable with humans. It was also unimpressed with Nelson, and declined to run at his approach, so he lost interest in the cat – not a ball, and hence useless. Isabell, of course, was too frightened of the cat to approach it.

We agreed that it was a female cat but haven't been able to agree on a name. Sue favors Desdemona, but I want something with more sibilant sounds to it – Sapphire, perhaps. It wasn't long until she came into the house for short visits, then for overnight stays. Sue bought her a catnip mouse and let her sleep on her bed. I found her a pretty blue collar, and when the temperature was over 100° day after day, I got her a litter box and undertook to keep it upstairs where Nelson couldn't get at it, so she could stay indoors during the heat of the day. I also made her a perch to sit on at the top of the stairs, so she can lie there and watch people and dogs passing by in the hall below.

She is a very nice cat -- affectionate and self-sufficient, curious and playful, clean and well-mannered. She follows me around the garden and sometimes part way down Ridgewood Street when Isabell and I go for a walk. I tied her catnip mouse to a length of cotton twine and she likes the string as much as the mouse, and gets her paws tangled in it. She will play with any small round light object, as I learned when she captured my beautiful crow skull – twice – before I put it away in a box.

During the very hot weather I couldn't even think of getting into my un-air-conditioned car and driving over hot pavements to go to a concert. The one time I thought I would brave it, for the US/Soviet Youth Orchestra, I just couldn't. It was too hot and I was too miserable.

But last Saturday a friend from the Fairfax Unitarian Church called and invited me to Wolf Trap to see Prokofieff's "Love of Three Oranges". It was a delightfully cool, misty evening. We arrived just in time to pick up our tickets and find our seats. The Filene Center is somewhat smaller than Blossom, with a balcony, but less lawn space. We sat on the right side, about halfway down. Unfortunately they had run out of programs and we were badly positioned to read the English translations of the libretto projected above the center of the proscenium. Without understanding what was being sung, we should have got more of the flavor of the commedia del' arte, but we didn't. We had no way to know that the story is a play-within-a-play and that the chorus was commenting on the actions of the players (and the management) and not part of the comedy itself. We also didn't know who the characters were, so we were somewhat at sea during the prologue and first scenes. After the show got under way, my rudimentary French proved somewhat helpful.

It was altogether delightful, though I am still not sure what I saw. Not an opera, certainly; not a musical or a play-with-music; not a TV extravaganza; nor a reconstruction of an 18th century entertainment; not classic commedia – it wasn't coarse enough for that. I guess I'd call it a neighborhood show in a global village, put on by a lot of very bright, very witty, very skilled adult kids with plenty of money, free imaginations and excellent taste. It draws on a thousand years of theatre, with masks, headdresses, and outlandish costumes; fireworks, smoke, scrims, painted drops, rope-ladders, trapdoors and flying set-pieces, giant puppets, jugglers, acrobats, clowns, strong men, doctors, princesses, sorcerers, pantaloons, and monsters. Scenery by Maurice Sendak, with Wild Things and a Night Kitchen, and a dog painted on every piece.
And the music? Very apt and witty. But attending "Love of Three Oranges" isn't primarily a musical experience. It's an anomaly; hard to say what it is; genre-less, a set of one. Prokofieff's music was integral to the production, but it would be hard to say that this and no other music would have worked with this libretto. What might Britten have made of it, for example, or Haydn?

The production by the young Wolf Trap Opera Company was a great success, but it was interesting (when I picked up a discarded program afterward) to read the production is owned by the New York City Opera. I'm not sure what that means, but it made me wonder if starting from scratch to produce it would create a quite different...creature. It was great fun, and I enjoyed it thoroughly.

* * *

SEPTEMBER 1988

to John Perry

18 September 1988

As the powerless hours stretched into yesterday...

That brought me up short, it did. It made sense in the context in which it appeared in the Washington Post on Wednesday, in a story about a storm on Monday evening that had knocked out power to a lot of homes in Northeast DC. But the words seemed gnomic and oracular, and I copied them off onto a card to prop up on my C-64.

And found them there this afternoon when I sat down to write to you. This is your very own letter. I like to do that now and again, and now that I have the sense that my Washington adventure is coming to an end, I should do more of it.

One of the things I have hated about Washington is the feeling that my personal powerlessness here reaches in both temporal directions, both infecting my past and blighting my future. I came here almost four years ago with the confidence that I was a competent person able to cope with whatever came my way, and that the world was, if not orderly, at least manageable. I no longer have that confidence, and I am ashamed to find myself calculating (for example) the odds of being incinerated in a Beltway tank-truck crash (something that is fairly regularly reported in the local news) before I can return home to Ohio, where I imagine life is safer.

But it's not exactly home I am returning to. My parents are dead, my children in California, and my only sibling in Connecticut; I have a 97-year old aunt, a handful of cousins, and a sometimes capricious ex-husband -- all nice people and none of them in Kent. I think what I am hoping for, and know in my heart I won't find, is my mind's own place, where I could make a life out of a garden, a library, a bicycle, a woodstove and a few old friends, and maybe a good word-processor. There was a time when I looked enviously at people who were happily coupled, but I see now that my mind and habits have no place for someone else.

I am sympathetic to your difficulties caring for your mother. I was very lucky that my father's last illness was very short -- just over 48 hours. I had given very little thought to what I would do afterward, confident that I would cope, and suddenly found myself destitute. It was my friends in
Kent who bailed me out, with cash, food, transportation and good counsel, and it is to them I am returning. I imagine things are very different for you in Lubbock, but I’m sure you will survive; probably do better than that.

* * *

When George accepted a junket offered to Senator Glenn to visit the Chevron Oil installation in Santa Barbara, I told him he should look up my family out there. I gave him Alys’ phone number at the shoe store and alerted her that he might call, but I didn’t really think he would do it. George is in his mid-fifties, divorced and not remarried, lean and fit, has two kids in college, sings bass in the Choral Arts Society and the Congressional Chorus, and has been the closest thing to a kindred spirit for me in the Glenn office. Many Congressional staffers are very, very tightly focused workaholics with little depth. They are very bright and kind and open, but I am unable to comprehend most of them – I can’t figure out what they do for fun or wonder. Not so George. He enjoys what he does, including singing, measuring, sawing and hammering at his home remodeling projects, sailing on the Potomac in a borrowed sailboat, bicycling and skiing. He has often given me concert tickets, and we occasionally go out for dinner on a strictly non-romantic basis. He often goes out with very handsome, beautifully dressed women, and I rather assume that he doesn’t always sleep alone.

But he did call Alys, who in turn called her father and got him to invite George for drinks the next evening. George reported that he had a wonderful time and that he had let Alys drive him back to the Red Lion Inn in her infamous car. Alys paid $25 for it and it runs, held together with duct-tape, coat-hangers, and that unrecognized cosmic force that holds up strapless bras and other unsupportable concepts. George said tactfully that the snapshot I had of Alys’s car didn’t do it justice.

The next day Alys called me up with her version. Everyone had a wonderful time, she said. Papa told him to come to Santa Barbara and he would fix him up with M. E. (a wealthy supporter of the museum, who lives part of the year in Washington, and was connected with Abe Fortas). Alys noted that George had commented on the large tape deck under the dash of her car. She explained that it was not a tape player, but a tape disposal unit. George then asked if the radio worked. "Yes, if you put a coat-hanger in the antenna socket and wrap it around one windshield wiper, you can get one station. If you can get it to stay across both windshield wipers you can usually get a couple more stations..." George rose to the challenge of her car, and as they approached the Red Lion Inn on the return run, he proposed that she drive up to the valet-parking desk just to watch the attendants scatter in terror. It worked, and they were both delighted.

What I didn't know then, but George did, was that the Glenn office had decided to dispense with George’s services as Domestic Policy Adviser. It was, George admitted a little wistfully, his own recommendation - that the office didn't need both a DPA and an LD (Legislative Director). What happened was that when MJ became AA she saw the opportunity to bring in a new LD who would be beholden to her. SOP, but hard on George, who is only a couple of years from his 20 years-of-service retirement. He is looking for another job on the Hill, and will probably get one; in any case, the Glenn office will not put him completely off the payroll, nor deprive him of a desk and telephone until he has another place. Glenn is a very decent guy.

* * *

Things are busy at the office. There are votes every day, and Glenn is making appearances and TV tapes for assorted Democratic candidates. This week I got handed the job of putting together a speech for Glenn to give for Dukakis in Springfield, Illinois. Some of it has to be party line, but I’ll get some licks. Annie is giving a speech I wrote for her in Columbus on the same evening, but that
one is already in the can.

It has been generally agreed that I should move to the Cleveland office during December, after the election but before the 101st Congress convenes.

* * *

I'm running out of time, and I must get started on a letter to Seth for his 23rd birthday. I feel it is my maternal prerogative to write my children hortatory letters on their birthdays.

* * *

to Dale

September 20, 1988

On Friday Bill came to me, worried. "Senator says he thinks there is a letter somewhere he sent to Bob Farmer for a roast he couldn't attend. Now he's going to another roast and wants to use it. It was way before my time, and I don't know anything about it. Do you have any idea?"

It sounded familiar, but I couldn't remember anything concrete. "Let's look in the computer file," I suggested.

It wasn't in the VIPLET file where it should have been, but I was pretty sure I hadn't typed it; hence it wouldn't have been filed according to my system. The next guess hit pay-dirt. FARMROAST, author DB/eaw, was right there in SPEECHES, where Beth, the intern that year had put it. I punched in the commands and in 20 seconds the letter was coming out of Printer 3. Bill grabbed it gratefully and went galloping into the Senator's office.

Ron came by my desk, brandishing a floor statement I had written earlier honoring John W. Galbreath. "He's signed off on this; let's go see when he wants to drop it in." So I tagged along to the Senator's office. Annie was there, Bill, Monica and MJ; John Glenn was reading from the Bob Farmer letter and everyone was laughing.

"This is great," the Senator crowed, obviously delighted all over again at the lines. ['I can't tell you how much I appreciated.../but nobody else can either; 'remembering Jack Anderson - Ted Kennedy.../it's not success that has spoiled Bob Farmer.]

Glenn read on: "I'm told that the proceeds of tonight's roast are going to Governor Dukakis. And if you're as successful in raising money for him as you were for me, then Mike will certainly owe you a debt of gratitude." He paused, with that wicked twinkle in his eye, then with carefully measured inflection read the last line. "He'll probably owe money to everyone else."

General merriment. "That's perfect," said MJ, "You can use it just as it is."

Happy Birthday, Dale. I've enjoyed working with you and knowing you as a friend. I wish you the very best in the future, and though I claim no particular expertise, one does start getting the hang of it sometime around 40. Then it just keeps getting better.

* * *
You have always shared my curiosity about times that never were and worlds that are not, and so your birthday present this year is – books. They are books I think will appeal to you, but one of them may be hard to read because of the non-standard English in which it is written. On the other hand, you may have less trouble with it than I did – there are disadvantages to being a demon speller.

* * *

I made a trip to another world recently -- not into the future but down one of the forking paths of the present. I went home to Kent for a weekend. It was a good trip; if you don't count the 45 minutes at 6AM I spent beside the highway in outer Maryland trying to detach the dragging muffler from the Escort. I was finally rescued by a Good Samaritan who winkled it off in about 5 seconds because he knew how to do it. It made me feel like an Un-Liberated Woman, and left me with a sore arm and shoulder.
I became aware, all over again, that although people inside the Beltway are very bright, competent, rich, well-informed, even-tempered, polite, and well-dressed, and manage their lives rationally, respectably and gracefully, they don't really know much about being human, and don't have any idea what life is like for ordinary people outside Washington. To wit:

– Dr. A. is still practicing dentistry, Christian Cheerfulness and Christian Charity (fixing the teeth of winos at the Salvation Army shelter). He said: "I was really disappointed that Glenn wasn't chosen for VP, but I can't understand why they picked Quayle instead."

– Old Mrs. M's cleaning woman knew what party the candidates belonged to, and described in gory detail the way her husband used to beat her, while Mrs. M kept falling asleep and her new dog nipped at goodies on the tea-tray, finally making off with half of a pound cake.

– K.B. talked about her daughter getting a 'dissillusionment' of her marriage and about her husband burying a couple of their younger son's derelict car-carcasses with his backhoe. People in Washington think they know the way the world is and what to do about it, but they don't. Ohioans don't either -- they try to make sense of their own lives and do not try to save the world. And they don't believe people in Washington know the way the world is -- they are in a state of 'dissillusionment' with their government and the wider world.

Making sense of our own lives is probably the best we can hope for; saving the world is probably a vain effort, and futile. One thing that Washington has cured me of is the desire to run for public office. I don't know nearly enough -- and I know a great deal more than anybody I know. I know that there are too many people, that people are destroying habitats and species faster than Earth can regenerate them, that we have messed up the atmosphere and stratosphere that protect us, that we are greedy, short-sighted, mean-spirited, arrogant and unreasonable, and that we do indeed confuse knowledge with myth, technology with magic, science with religion, and power with violence, just as our fiction-writers observe.

Inside the Beltway, people wax indignant over suggestions that they should drive 55 mph. They deplore one presidential candidate for vetoing the compulsory recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in schools and the other for putting Pearl Harbor Day in September. They fret over how much health insurance might cost the rich; they debate the efficacy of SDI (the most expensive fiction of all time); they sympathize with Michael Deaver for his 'alcohol problem'.

The Fairfax Unitarian Chorale is doing the Bach Cantata 106, "Gottes Zeit ist der Allerbeste Zeit", the first weekend in November. It is a long-time favorite of mine, and I am looking forward to playing it. One of the arias has a very nice cello obbligato (actually for viola da gamba) in one of my favorite keys (bβ minor).

This is supposed to be your birthday letter, and I seem to be rambling. Happy Birthday! You seem to be getting the hang of it, and making sense of your life. That's what really counts.

* * *

368
October 1, 1988

Back when I eked out a meager livelihood as a free-lance musician, I played a Pops concert with the Youngstown Symphony for which Doc Severinsen was the guest conductor. Normally, for string players, pops concerts are pretty dreary events. The arrangements are slick and slushy, calling for every musical cliché in the lexicon, and the selections are drawn from the old war-horses of the repertoire – Strauss waltzes, Victor Herbert operettas, and medleys from *My Fair Lady*, *Sound of Music*, *West Side Story* or *Oklahoma*. There is usually only one rehearsal, mainly to agree on logistics and to give the musicians some idea of the dimensions of the guest-conductor’s mannerisms and deficiencies.

But Severinsen was different. He was competent, he was sharp, and he respected the musicians and involved them as participants in the music making. He won my heart early in the rehearsal when, in a pastiche that included *Honeysuckle Rose* he responded to a question from a violinist who asked if what was printed was right, because it wasn’t the way she knew it:

"Yes, that’s right. There you should play the ink. At Letter C you can play the rock."

In that one statement he delineated the difference between the printed score and the music, between the text and the idea, between the song and the singing, between the letter and the spirit.

I was also delighted, later in the rehearsal, when he gathered his own combo (piano, rhythm, bass) to practice the new piece he had "written" for this concert, in honor of ‘Boom-boom’ Mancini, a Youngstown native who had just won a boxing title. There was in fact nothing ‘written’ at all, not even a few notes on staff paper. Doc just picked up his trumpet and said:

"Okay, Key of G. Here’s the first eight bars" and started to play.

No ink, only the rock. After the first four measures the drummer put a rhythm underneath the trumpet, and in bar 7 the bass stepped in, walking down to the first cadence where the piano blossomed up and there was the music – complete, alive, and singing.

I can’t help observing that neither of the presidential candidates is playing the rock, despite the familiar tunes on the program. Dukakis keeps playing the ink; he knows his instrument and is an expert sight-reader, but his band doesn’t rock.

George Bush is trying to use Harold Hill’s “Think System” to play the *Minuet in G* and is having the same success that the aspiring band members in River City had – accolades from fond relatives and despair from music-lovers. Bush doesn’t know how to play the trumpet and can’t read music. He only knows the Songs his Mother Taught Him, which he assumes are the same songs everyone’s mothers taught them.

The only real musician is Jesse Jackson. He rocks, like Doc Severinson, to his own original tunes, knows his horn, and other musicians can work in his idiom. But we don't get to vote for Jesse this time, and I guess I’d rather play in the band of a cold technician who is in command of his instrument and can read a score than to endure the fumbling of an earnest amateur with a tin ear.
and sentiment where his convictions ought to be...and who picked a turkey for a running mate. I
can't resist observing that quails and turkeys are about equally birdbrained, but quails are capable
of living in the wild without keepers, and shy and modest*.

The VP debates have been chewed and re-chewed – a Presidential election is a sort of ruminant
beast -- and no-how does Dan Quayle look Vice-President. Most telling to me were his
responses to three questions. Asked about his contacts with poor people, he was glib and
patronizing; asked about books, movies or art that had influenced his thinking he recited a book
report that sounded plagiarized from the Reader's Digest; asked to tell of an event that changed
his life, he served up a casserole of grandmother and Horatio Alger in a sauce of vanity.

But those are good questions, that each of us should ask ourselves. Anyone who has ever been
poor – and by that I mean having less than $100 in hand and no anticipation of any further income
– may be excused. But even those of us who have been poor must remind ourselves what it was
like. We should remember, too, that we don't like to admit our poverty to ourselves, but tend to find
reasons why we are "not really" poor. Looking back from my new-found affluence (for the first time
in 24 years I can spend more than $5 without budgeting for it) I can see my unwillingness to admit
how poor I was. I also can see why I have an abiding disgust for men who have never been poor,
but who devote their lives to making sure that poor people never get enough to take control of their
lives.

Books. One book profoundly influenced my thinking: The Mountain People by Colin Turnbull. It is
the story of an African people, the Ik, whose livelihood was changed from hunting to agriculture by
government fiat, in a mountainous terrain with insufficient rainfall. Their starvation, disintegration
and death was chronicled by Turnbull, and the story forced me to rethink all my assumptions and
beliefs about individual and social knowledge, power, freedom, morality and responsibility.

I read The Mountain People shortly after an event that changed my life. I was teaching at a private
girl's school in Cleveland, and living in Kent, which shares a newspaper with Ravenna, the only
other town of size in Portage County. In the fall of 1968 the Record Courier reported an effort by
neighbors in Ravenna to raise money to pay the medical bills of a black woman who was dying of
liver cancer.

The circumstances shocked me. The woman had worked full time at the local hospital, and had
had health insurance there. But when she got sick and could not work, her insurance was
terminated. She was referred to the Cleveland Clinic, where she was kept long enough to accrue
some $7000 in medical bills, then sent home to die.

Her husband owned a small junk business, but even though their 17-year-old son quit school to
work in the family business, they were unable to pay Cleveland Clinic fast enough, and the clinic
moved to seize their small home to pay the bills.

The daughter of one of the head doctors at the Cleveland Clinic was one of my students. She was
totally unaware of the plight of the poor black family in Ravenna, but I wasn't. I knew that a black
youngster was losing his schooling and his home so that she could attend a fine private school. I
couldn't blame the girl, or even her father. But I also couldn't figure out what I could do to change
the world so that such terrible tragedies didn't have to happen.

I decided then I couldn't go on teaching at the private school, though that decision was taken away
from me by the new – male – head of the school who ‘restructured’ me out of a job. I didn't know what else to do about it, and only gradually formed the conviction that about all I could do was to try to get people to see more and see better – through writing, speaking and working with people. I ran for school board then. I honed my skills of observation and recording. I read and took notes, and entered into public discourse where I could, learning early on that, in general, women have no right to display knowledge in our society.

The money and stink raised by the good people, black and white, of Ravenna saved the home of the black family and got the kid back in school, but not before the woman had died, believing that her illness had cost her family their house.

*One of my favorite Oberlin stories is about Herbert Elwell, then music critic of the Plain Dealer and notorious lush. He introduced Wallingford Riegger to a Contemporary Festival as “a modest man, and indeed, he has much to be modest about.”

* * *

On a Wednesday afternoon last month I was suddenly handed the task of assembling/writing a speech for John Glenn to give to the Illinois Democratic Party's William Jennings Bryan Dinner in Springfield.

"The Senator wants some stuff from his convention speech and some of the Victory Fund speech, and also his campaign speech and whatever needs to be added for the Illinois Dems," said MJ. "This is a stump speech for the Dukakis campaign, so call them – they'll put you in touch with whoever's in charge."

I called the Dukakis campaign headquarters. Nobody there knew anything about Springfield Illinois, but they promised someone would call me back. I turned to searching the computer files for the speeches I would need to cannibalize, and discovered that Lewis had put them into his private file. He was celebrating Rosh Hashanah and wasn't there, so I had to get Peggy to retrieve them for me. (The Senator's speeches shouldn't be in anyone's private files, but that's not in this story.) I was interested to discover that the Victory Fund speech in the file was a transcript of Glenn’s actual remarks as he spoke from a few notes. The other two had been written by Dale, or more properly, redecorated by him – the floor plan and woodwork of most of these speeches hasn't been altered in years.

Since the convention speech was just a miniature of the campaign speech with some extra rhinestones, I used little of it, taking the basic outline from the campaign speech. I hunted up a quote from William Jennings Bryan about destiny not being "a matter of chance, but something to be achieved" and used it to tie the ideas of the speech together. There wasn't much usable in the Victory Fund speech – the sentences were long and convoluted, the ideas supported by granite slabs rather than structural steel, the diction was thick and stern.

Susan from the Dukakis staff didn't call back until Thursday. No, she didn't know anything about Illinois -- talk to Joe, but he's not here now. But it's definitely a speech for Dukakis, not just for the party.

Joe, when I finally caught up with him, said unequivocally that it was not a Dukakis speech, but a Democratic Party speech for the biggest fund-raiser of the year in Illinois.
I fished up the paragraphs I wanted, using the clumsy SUPERCOPY routine of the Honeywell system, wrote the introduction, then went through it with one hand on the DELETE command button. I used one good paragraph from the Victory Fund speech about the Pledge of Allegiance, but pared off some for the superfluities. I got Ron to help me do a paragraph on Rostenkowski and the trade bill, then appealed to him for further deletions — we were trying for 10 to 15 minutes, from a speech that started at 25 minutes and had things added. With Ron's help it got down to four and a half single spaced pages, which we figured was about 12-15 minutes. I gave it to MJ about 3PM on Thursday.

By 5 o'clock she had read it and told me she liked it. Five minutes later, she and Celia passed by and MJ said "I think you did a great job with that speech...wait a minute, I already told you that, didn't I?"

"Yes," said Celia, "I'm the one to say how good it is -- you did it before."

"Oh, right," said MJ, "I forgot."

Next morning I waited to hear what the Senator wanted changed after he had taken it home to study overnight. After I had asked MJ twice, she finally said "No changes. He likes it. Go ahead and print it out."

Now we will have a little exercise in reality. First the portion of the speech about the Pledge of Allegiance as it was in the speech. It was mostly Glenn's own words, lightly edited by me

"I believe people want a President who does more than push for compulsory recitations of the Pledge of Allegiance. I believe they BELIEVES that Pledge, especially those magic six last words: 'with Liberty and Justice FOR ALL.'

The liberty of equality and the justice of opportunity – FOR ALL. Not just for those who grow up on the right side of the tracks, not just for white middle-class college graduates, not just for self-appointed moral "majorities" – FOR ALL."

And a segment about Glenn's remarks on the Pledge from the AP wire story.

27 AP 09-26-88 05:39AET 30 lines
PM-Democratic Unity, 240<

Sen. Glenn Attacks Bush at Unity Dinner
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SPRINGFIELD, ILL. (AP) U.S. Sen. John Glenn says the values embodied in the Pledge of Allegiance are too important to be used in either a political or divisive manner.

The Ohio Democrat harshly criticized Vice President George Bush for turning the Pledge into a campaign issue.

"I'm not going to see that pledge of allegiance captured by the Republican Party or anyone else in this election," Glenn said Saturday at the William Jennings Bryan state Democratic
Party dinner in Springfield.

"A credo like that doesn't belong to George Bush or the Republican Party," Glenn said. "It belongs to you and to me and Michael Dukakis and to all of us."

Glenn was the featured speaker at the $100-a-plate dinner sponsored by Vince Demuzio, chairman of the state Democratic Party and the state central committee.

It is quite likely Glenn did say what he is quoted as saying, though it's not altogether clear whether he said it at the dinner. It is not uncommon for journalists, including AP correspondents, to get statements before or after events they don't actually attend.

* * *

Normally, I am tolerant and temperate when it comes to novel instrumentation or arrangements of classical music, but panpipes are beyond the pale. WETA has already enraged me this morning by broadcasting a Brandenburg Concerto with George Zamphir playing the flute solo on panpipes. Or maybe I am just getting old and cranky.

* * *

On Sunday of Columbus Day weekend, having left myself alone in the house with no travel plans, I decided to spend the afternoon on the Mall, see a show at the Natural History Museum and the AIDS quilt on the lawn at the Ellipse. It was not a successful day. I overestimated my interest and stamina, and underestimated the difficulties of such a trip.

After a meager -- only four people, all of whom seemed distracted -- Friends Meeting at William Penn House I drove over to Union Station and walked down through the train terminal concourse. It was there I found the only real delight of the afternoon, a Great Train Store with an HO model train set with two sets of tracks, a village and a rather pleasing terrain of mountains and rivers with tunnels and trestles.

The Metro platforms were full of tourists in packs. (A typical pack had one or two camera-laden grandparents, one to four children, with one in a stroller, and a pair of parents trying to keep up a running educational travelogue while restraining kids who wanted to run up the down escalator or lean far over the edge of the platform to see if the trains were coming.) Despite the crowds there were few trains, making for long waits and jammed cars with standing room only. I finally made my way to Federal Triangle and came up into the sunlight under groined arches at the foot of the Interstate Commerce Building.

At once I heard a cadence of drums, and hoped for a parade. (I like parades, they give me goose-bumps.) But I was disappointed. It was a stationary band of young men playing plastic buckets. Some of them pounded the bottoms of upturned buckets, others shook or bounced their buckets, causing the rocks inside to thump or rattle; one player also had a shrill police whistle. In the open air it might have been tolerable, but they were set up in a small arcade over the sidewalk, and the reverberation was fearful. I walked out into the street to escape the clangor, and covered my ears.

The exhibit I wanted to see, "Places of Power: Sacred Sites of the Americas and the Pacific in Colored Photographs" was in the second-floor gallery of the Museum of Natural History, so first I stopped off at the show "Cultures of Siberia and Alaska" on the ground floor. That depressed me thoroughly -- a dismal record of Western cruelty, greed, carelessness and exploitation, haunted by the ghosts of the native peoples who had lived in the region. I climbed the stairs hoping that the
colored photographs of sacred sites would restore my respect for the human race.

Wrong again. I had missed the operative word. It wasn't color photographs – it was colored photographs: black and white photos that had been painted with water colors. Some were reasonably skilfully done, but the net effect was not of places of power, only of the power of artifice. I felt I was right back in the Presidential election campaign: there was a reality discernible behind the paint, but the music was lost. These were the visual equivalent of sound bites, given spin by craftsmen. No rock, only interpretative ink.

I proceeded on, out to the Mall. My legs and feet were aching, and I thought that if I stopped and got some ice cream and sat down for a while I would be able to walk on down another quarter-mile or so and see the AIDS quilt. But the lines were 20 deep at the concession stands, and every bench and sit-able surface was lined with tired tourists. I gave up and headed home.

...as I have given up and will be heading home from Washington. I do not feel that I have failed, mostly because I never had any clear sense of what I was supposed to do here. What I have lost is the sense that I make a unique contribution, that I do what no one else could, and hence there is some reason to be me, and not someone else. This is not a matter of being unappreciated. In fact, I think that on the general level of functioning in a Senate office, I do make a unique contribution, that I do for John Glenn and his staff many things that no one else does, and that Glenn and my colleagues do appreciate what I do. But however adept I have become, in four years, at ‘playing the ink’, I can't comprehend ‘the rock’ it represents. It's not my kind of music.

Not that I think I have any more right than anyone else to a life of self-fulfillment, with my own private music. Few people ever have the opportunity I have had to invent myself and a music for life. And I am very grateful to John Glenn for making me part of his band and letting me take a few riffs, and for making it possible for me to get out of a city I can't cope with.

I have also made a lot of wonderful friends in Washington -- warm, wise, witty, compassionate, thoughtful people, all of them eager and engaged by the arts, government, politics and life. The staffers in the Senate, the Fairfax Unitarians, my neighbors, and musician-friends have been a delight, and I will miss them.

I don't imagine that Kent will be the same community I left, or that I am the same person who left there four years ago. But I am hoping that once I am no longer assaulted by the sounds of bucket-bands, landing airplanes and the Beltway, and don't have to endure torture by traffic every day, I may again be able to hear the music, the rock on which my life is founded.

Logistics suggest that this will be the last letter until I get moved back to Kent at the beginning of December. After that...we'll see.

* * *

20 October 1988

Last week I heard an appeal made by a representative of the Dukakis campaign for all good Democrats to volunteer time to their campaign. The idea was for us to go where they sent us and
do what their bosses told us and do what they told us to do for an afternoon, a day, or a weekend.

I thought about that for a while and decided that I didn't want to do that. Not because I oppose Dukakis, or because I fancy myself an 'Independent.' I am a Democrat out of my beliefs about people and their right to decide for themselves what is good for them.

I chose not to get into the Dukakis volley-ball game partly because I don't think it is working and don't want to help them lose, and partly because I don't think they are listening to the American people, or to their candidate.

But having chosen not to do it their way, I feel a certain obligation to my own thing for the Dukakis-Bentsen ticket and for the election. So here it is: first, vote. However disgusted you are with all the candidates, not voting will do nothing to remedy the situation. If you don't like the candidates, vote for the ones from the party you like best; if you don't like either of those, vote for the ones who are not incumbents (on the grounds that new bungling is at least less boring than old bungling).

You will not be surprised that I counsel voting for Dukakis and Bentsen. Dukakis has administered the state of Massachusetts; he knows how to work with people, interests and bureaucracies; he can manage differences and make the best of unpromising situations; he can compromise, and he is open about what he does. Those are valuable traits for a President. What he has accomplished or failed to do is not important; what he believes, whether he is a 'liberal' or 'soft on crime', or unpatriotic, is irrelevant. He knows the terrain and what the horses can do, and he has taken his tribe where they wanted to go once before.

That metaphor fits the other foot as well. George Bush keeps telling his tribe all the glorious places they are going to go under his leadership. But he hasn't demonstrated the knowledge of the terrain or the survival skills that are necessary to get there.

I have other problems with Bush. I still want to know what role he had in the Iran-Contra affair, and why he chose it. It matters to me whether he did what he did out of fear, denial, carelessness, indecisiveness, or unwillingness to take responsibility for his action, or whether he acted out of loyalty to President Reagan, out of conviction that the scheme was justified by the circumstances, or even if only because he thought it would work. I would certainly disagree with the last three choices, but I would respect him for reasonable reasons. But if he acted from any of those reasons, I do not believe he deserves my respect: he is a coward.

I have a further concern about the nature of the underlying assumptions of both parties. Will Rogers is supposed to have said "I belong to no organized political party – I am a Democrat." I will argue that as individuals we ought always to fight against organized political parties – parties should always be poorly organized, if not disorganized. They should be messy, changeable, loud, and unstable because American democracy is an amazing bipedal creature. It stands up and walks in any direction on left and right legs of political parties. It can jump, stand on one foot, and hop for some distance forward or backward.

As anyone knows who ever tried to get a doll to stand up, or a robot to walk, bipedalism is impossible – it is impossible to stand or walk on two feet. Impossible, that is, unless all parts of the body are able to report minor changes in orientation or pressure and make small changes in
muscles to adjust constantly to these changing conditions. I submit that if either leg of our democracy undertakes to organize its sensors and muscles according to some ideology, that the stability of the entire body may be affected. It may be momentarily balanced by being rigid, but it is very vulnerable to any unexpected breeze or tremor of the ground it stands on.

* * *

NOVEMBER 1988

to Jan and Fritz Lehmann

November 2, 1988

Before I begin, I have to answer Fritz's questions:

1. The reason I have such a different ZIP CODE from Jan's mother is that it has to stop raining somewhere.
2. All postage stamps are political messages, but rates from the U.S. to Canada are the same as domestic rates.
3. Au contraire, the U.S. Postal Service does not think and cannot read: it uses Optical Character Scanners (OCS) and bar-codes to deliver mail. The amazing thing is that it works at all.
4. I don't know why anyone would marry a girl who had appeared in Playboy. I certainly wouldn't, but then, I don't suppose I'd be asked.

...and expecting to move in December. Not much has been doing around the office, except to keep the Senator facing the right way and one step ahead of the next vote on the Senate floor. I have been getting a little more high-level political stuff, speeches and VIP letters. We are to have a new Legislative Director, who has been with Proxmire and Frank Church before. It is hoped he will build some new legislative initiatives for Glenn, whose most major legislation – and not inconsiderable – was the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1978.

* * *

This should arrive with some presents for Jan. First, a Moominbook, one of my favorites, though there are no Hemulens or Fillyjonks. It does have Little My and the Groke, and something of the sweep and depth of the sea. Then there are quinces, for whatever you want to do with them. They are rather smaller this year than usual, but just as hard and tough as ever – I recommend a chain saw. I usually just keep them in a nice pottery bowl with a couple of hedge-apples and a pomegranate, but you can make quince-honey if you like.

* * *

Kevin's pictures of us on the beach at Flag Ponds came out nicely. I'm keeping the one with you in it, but here's one of me making sand castles. It was a lovely day.

* * *
A fine thin snow is falling, visible only against the dark of branches and trunks. It is winter here, cold and white and still. This afternoon I took time from my endless task of reorganizing my things to go out to ski, cross-country, down along the Cuyahoga River on an old rail right-of-way. The river was black, the sky grey, and the snow deep and as fine as sugar on the trail and among the tangle of hardy shrubs and tall dry weeds beneath wild-cherry trees and great oaks. There was a great blue heron standing in the reeds at the outfall of the wastewater treatment plant, and as a special treat, three deer feeding in a weedy fallow field, beneath an old apple tree. They started as I approached, leaped, and then stood, watchful, in a universe of tan and white. I looked away for just a moment and lost them, and was alone once more in the snow and silence. I belong here; this is my home.

But the frustration is considerable. My things are in boxes bags, baskets and crates. I don't know what's where, and worse, I'm not even sure what things I have. I tend to go into oscillation -- a little of this, start that, turn to something else: look for my turtle-neck shirts, find a wall lamp; look for the extension cord for the lamp, find my stamps and envelopes; take those to my desk and find my scissors; remember the lamp, but can't find the hammer to put it up with; look for hammer, find missing gloves, but they need to be washed; add gloves to basket of laundry and carry that down to the washing-machine; while waiting for the washer to fill I rummage in some boxes and find my favorite bowl and a couple of coffee mugs; then I notice a coat-tree I could put in the front room for outdoor jackets; I carry that upstairs, then return for a pile of blankets and pillows, take them upstairs and stuff them under my bed, after taking out a box of cello music, two rugs and a basket of vacuum cleaner attachments.

By this time, of course, I have not found the turtle-necks, not hung the lamp, not brought the dishes up from the basement, and not hung up the jackets. There is now a box of music in the middle of the bedroom floor, rugs on my bed, and I have shoved some boxes of books or dishes into corners so that the labels are hidden. I have also noted a large number of things that need to be somewhere else, but done nothing about them.

The last four years for me have been a kind of Cinderella story -- of a middle-aged orphan plucked from an Ohio chimney-corner and set down in the middle of a U.S. Senator's office in Washington. I am now back at my own hearth still wearing my Senate ball-gown and slippers. I am home, commuting every day to Glenn's Cleveland office and doing the same work I did in Washington.

I never hoped or expected to go to Washington. It had never occurred to me that I would have anything to contribute there. It's not that I am excessively modest about my abilities or accomplishments, only that I felt it unlikely that what I was good at would be perceived as useful in the fast lanes of national government. But being without a mind-set is just as limiting as having an invalid one, and it took a while for me to figure out that I had actually made a success of my work for Senator Glenn.

Success as a resident of Megapolis eluded me, however, and I am immensely grateful to be back in
Ohio. Although the trip to Cleveland is proving to take about an hour and 20 minutes each way, it is pleasant. Almost a third is over country roads among trees, fields and lawns; another third is on a freeway, and the last part on the Shaker Rapid -- a slightly modernized Toonerville Trolley that runs past Tudor-style houses with neat half-timbering and mullioned windows along Shaker Blvd., and on down through ravines on the edge of the Cuyahoga River valley, mostly dumps adorned with old tires, rusting car parts and broken pieces of our materialist society. Downtown Cleveland is grimy and harsh. At this time of year the "Twinkling Kingdom of Cleveland" defaces all four quarters of Public Square with cartoon-like giant bears, elves, Santas, trains and toys built of wire frames covered with dirty tinsel and colored lights.  

There is much I want to say about my last four years and about my homecoming, but it is now the 23rd of December, and time to close out 1988.

I am back in Kent; Seth and Alys are both still in Santa Barbara. Alys is managing a shoe store in La Cumbre Mall, Seth doing screen printing at Powell-Peralta. Alys now owns a real car (contrast to her previous vehicle, which might have been considered a surreal car) and Seth a motorcycle and bicycle – one to take apart and reassemble and the other to get around on.

* * *

to Seth and Alys

December 28, 1988

I took two days off to set order in my house, and it only made it worse: your presents aren't wrapped, my Christmas letter to my 100-odd friends (or, as applicable, 100 odd friends) is unfinished. I am trying to resume all my old friendships in Kent on top of an 11-hour work-day and there isn't enough time. This is just a quick note to wish you both a modestly merry Christmas, and a little wherewithal to enjoy it.

I am seasonally depressed by the poverty and suffering of so many of our brothers and sisters in our nation and worldwide while we wallow in VCRs and Christmas cookies. The only thing I can do is promise myself that I will try, one more year, to be part of the solution instead of part of the problem, and try to look out for my friends and neighbors.

And my kids. I have the special privilege of being the mother of two really neat kids with imagination, vitality, good minds, nice manners and friendly concern for others. I'm proud of both of you.

With all the disasters in the world, this Christmas almost seems more bitter than sweet. Yet if there is ever a time when we need hope, it is in such dark days, when our failings and weaknesses have brought death and degradation to so many of our brothers and sisters. Perhaps this year we have some reason for rejoicing: we are, slowly and painfully, learning to take care of one another. We're not very good at it, but we do keep getting a little better at it.

To me, that's the message we celebrate at Christmas: "Love one another, take care of one
another”.

That's enough.