

TIMER

An American Story

A Non-Fiction Novel

by

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For those who helped me earlier in life and have since passed away: You are gone, but never forgotten.

-Jerry Lemonds, 2003

FOREWORD

He was born in a ramshackle farmhouse at the height of the Great Depression, but he never became depressed for long.

He was a cheerful, energetic and mischievous lad who would soon be blessed with 10,000 freckles . . . and also with a knack for laughing his way through some of the most god-awful scrapes to ever take place in the Great State of Missouri.

Call him “Jay.”

This is his story – the story of a farm kid who struggled out of poverty, fought to obtain a college education, and then went on to become a highly successful executive administrator in Missouri, Nebraska and then Maryland.

Through it all, “Jay” never stopped enjoying the marvelous adventure that is life, and he never lost his patience, his trust in people, or his sense of humor. Again and again, he taught himself how to transcend the inevitable pains and sorrows of existence by thumbing his nose at them, or by cracking an outrageous joke.

The book you’re about to read is the true story of this extraordinary man’s life . . . but *fictionalized* in order to protect both the guilty and the innocent.

Part social history and part biography, *Timer* is the true story of a man and his time. In many ways, it’s also the story of how an entire nation struggled through one of its most turbulent eras: the second half of the Twentieth Century.

Somehow, Jay managed to survive that chaotic and endlessly creative period in American history, along with the rest of us.

This is the story of how he got through the storm.

INTRODUCTION

He peers out at you from the faded 1936 photograph: a grinning, tow-headed kid wearing a pair of frayed Oshkosh coveralls and a battered felt hat. The coveralls are two sizes too large, and the hat looks like something lifted from the pages of John Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath."

My friend Jay.

That was another universe, believe me. That was the vast, teeming world of the Missouri cottonfields, and the indolent Mississippi River snaking through them, and children running barefooted under the mellow eye of the August sun. The late thirties in America: before television, before the computers, and before all of us became convinced that we were "entitled" to having everything and anything we want!

Rural Missouri in 1936: That was the kingdom of Jay's childhood. Have you ever heard the saying: "The past is a foreign country - they do things differently there?"

Whenever we look back on the lost world of the riverboats and the Delta roadhouses and the wooden ceiling fans paddling through those summer twilights . . .

Whenever we remember the ice cream churn and the clank of the blacksmith's hammer and the Fourth of July parades wheeling and flashing along Main Street . . .

Whenever we remember one of our fierce, shouting arguments in the schoolyard or the barnyard: "You ain't making no dern *sense!* I don't give a keer!" [Translation: "You can yell until you're blue in the face - I'm not going to listen!"]

Whenever we remember our uncovered heads, bent solemnly over our supertime plates: "O Lord, we thank you for all our blessings, and especially for this meal. . . ."

Well . . . that's when we begin to relive the times we shared as kids in the Mississippi Delta region of southeast Missouri - which was the world that shaped us.

In my memory-scrapbook, the image of the kid with the tan freckles and the huge front teeth has not dimmed with the passage of the years. Jay lives on, a youthful hellion intent on reckless fun. Trust me: The man whose story you're about to read did not get cheated at the Banquet of Life!

Jay took existence by the back of the neck and gave it a good shake. He was a philosopher without knowing it, and the bottom line of his philosophy did not change: "Do your best at everything, and then *enjoy* the struggle to grow into your fate!"

Do you remember that wise old Chinese sage who once intoned: “A picture is worth a thousand words?”

So do I. Let me paint you a few pictures of my irascible and energetic and affable and endlessly thrill-seeking boyhood pal, as we wander together along the highways and byways that flank Memory Lane.

Memory-Snapshot No. 1: *Boy chases dog chases rabbit*. Pint-sized and barefooted, four-year-old Jay follows Ole Joe through the waist-high cotton. The loyal dog barks frantically as he leaps among the rows, and Jay struggles to keep up. And the rabbit? He’s laughing his head off, as he scampers easily out of harm’s way: *Who do these two clowns think they are, trying to match my speed? I don’t give a keer!*

Memory Snapshot No. 2: *Jay holding up his willow fishing pole*, moments before it snaps in half at Ditch #36. Smiling happily, he’s probably dreaming of the Mother of All Blue Gills . . . and of bringing it home to Lola and Harold for dinner.

Memory Snapshot No. 3: *Timer and his beloved brother H.E.*, two years older, “shooting the taws” at marbles in a circle of sand. The summer wind licking at H.E.’s hair. A single black crow sits in a dead, leafless tree (what we always called “a snag”), dozing. . . .

Memory Snapshot No. 4: *The fistfight*. Timer has dared to stand up to the much older Lon. The kid keeps landing punches against Timer’s face and hands. The *smack!* of knuckles against flesh. “Jab him!” yells H.E. from somewhere outside the frame. “Flatten his butt!”

Memory Snapshot No. 5: *Boys on horseback*. Eight kids on saddle horses and pintos and bays. Timer riding low on his iron-gray mount, Posey. Timer waves to the admiring girls. You can see it in his eyes – the way he loves this horse.

Visiting The Country of the Past

Got your passport and your comfortable walking shoes?

Good. Because we're going to be visiting another country in this book; together we're going to journey through a slower, calmer universe - the world of Timer's childhood - in which nobody ever stood gaping at a television screen and nobody had ever heard of the Internet. (How could Timer's family have enjoyed either - without a telephone line or the electricity that would have been required to make them work?)

In that fast-receding, halcyon world of 1936 Rural Missouri, it was the little things that mattered most. It was the five-cent Baby Ruth your uncle unexpectedly handed you, on that afternoon when they brought in the hay. It was the full moon hanging over the pond: the magic lantern full of silver light. It was the sweet smell of her hair . . . and the tang of a crisp new apple . . . and the whippoorwill calling from the distant cedar tree. And also:

"Sitting on the front porch and watching an Ozark-inspired thunderstorm rage across the flatland - was there any thrill on earth to match it?

"A glass of chilled lemonade standing on the oaken picnic table. Ice-cold . . . and sweet as wild honey against the back of your parched throat.

"The new shoes that came in the mail each year from Sears Roebuck & Co. The way those shoes squeaked as you walked toward the first day of school. And the pungent aroma of warm leather, the first time you took them off.

"The dragonflies that hung above the creek all afternoon. The muddy water lapping against the stones. A quick splash - two bullfrogs play tag in the shallows. Youth lasts forever . . . doesn't it?

"Peach pie. The crust she made was rough and thick - a slab of crunchy dough layered deep with succulent yellow peaches. With your mouth full of her pie, it was still possible to believe in Heaven. But her "southern-style strawberry shortcake" was even better. Lolah raised her own luscious berries, then crushed and sugared them. Next she placed that melt-in-your-mouth fruit between several deep-dish piecrusts, so that it formed layers. When company came, the delectable shortcake was topped with homemade vanilla ice cream from a hand-cranked, ice-crammed wood-

en bucket. And the results? *Better* than going to Heaven . . . where all they got to eat was her peach pie!

“The patience of mules. Brown creatures, heavy-lidded, with enormous yellow teeth. Their tails beating gently against a moving wall of flies. Ours were named Mag and Diner. They endured.

“Mud on the pickup. The ancient fenders on that boxy Studebaker, and the splotches of river mud against the worn white paint. Right there . . . the whole history of civilization in a single smear of wet earth.”

If the past is a foreign country, then the language will have to serve as our passport. In the pages that lie ahead, you will hear the dialects of the Missouri cotton fields spoken loud and clear. You’ll hear the raucous laughter of school kids wrestling in the mud . . . the hilarity of young naval recruits struggling to master “close-order drill” . . . the agonizing cries of pain that attended births and deaths and all the stops in between.

Life! As the philosopher once put it: “Life is simply what happened while you were planning something else!”

Step right up, ladies and gentlemen, and meet the life of the man we have decided to call “Jay Arthur. . .”

PART I

ONE:

Way Down On The Farm

“One good thing about living on a farm is that you can fight with your wife without being heard.”

Frank McKinney (“Kin”) Hubbard, 1868-1930

I guess the best place to start this story would be with Jay’s hair. It was sandy-colored, and sticking up in places, and completely out of control – just like the rest of him. And freckles? Lord have mercy, you haven’t *seen* freckles if you haven’t gazed upon the grinning countenance of my life-long tormentor and soul-buddy, Jay Arthur.

As a kid, Jay was nothing less than a freckle-machine. Like the world-famous Huck Finn – another key member of the Olympic Freckle Team – Jay looked as if his face, hands and arms had been sprinkled with nut-brown paint. Is it any wonder that he later spent endless hours while attending high school applying expensive “Freckle Cream” to his tortured features, in the vain hope of looking less “boyish?”

Fat chance. The freckles refused to budge, and the wild-haired Jay continued to provoke hoots of merriment from his classmates, each and every time he took off his shirt. Let’s face it: The kid looked like he belonged in the Guinness Book of Freckles. And with that dirty straw-colored hair-mop of his dancing wildly in the breeze . . . why, is it any wonder that he affected our good townsfolk like laughing gas?

Jay didn’t think his freckles were all that funny, however. Pretty soon, he started disappearing on us . . . vanishing for hours at a time, as he wandered along in solitary walks by the river, or sat daydreaming beneath the giant cedar out back of the barn. High-strung and sensitive, the kid was actually becoming a hermit. And his parents soon noticed his tendency to vanish on them, in order to spend hour after hour communing with nature and puffing on stolen cigarettes.

Things got so bad, after a while, that Jay’s Dad and Mom took to calling him “Old Timer,” and finally just “Timer,” because of his penchant for making like a hermit. Almost from the cradle, in fact, Jay began to distin-

Timer

guish himself by his devotion to fishing, hunting and just plain “rambling with the dog.” (Years later, in honor of these early struggles, he would opt for “Ole Timer” as his radio call name, or “handle” – and he’d become a household name among dozens of CB jockeys like himself: “Ten-four, Timer, over and out!”)

The record shows clearly that Jay was delivered by one “Mrs. Andrews, a midwife,” on January 11, 1932, in the same house where his father had first seen the light, 27 years before.

Unfortunately, Jay’s comments during this epochal event were not recorded. We can be sure that they contained a sharp critique of his surroundings, however . . . since both the roof and the floor in one of the bedrooms had caved in, just prior to the kid’s birth. The sprawling old house was actually a classic beauty – except in those areas where it had collapsed inward like a black hole, producing a definite “outdoors effect.” Can we really blame Jay for complaining about the snow that whirled through-out the exposed areas, each time the North Wind kicked up its heels?

To this day, my pal Jay remembers his years as a toddler . . . years spent crawling and then lurching on two shaky feet across the rough, naked planks – two inches by ten inches – that were nailed to the flooring. The boards served Jay well, until they rotted away or were torn from the floor to provide a few hours of heat in the fireplace.

C’est la vie, non? There’s no shame in pointing out that Jay and his folks lacked some of the material goods, such as food and fuel, during the rough years of the Depression. Jay says he doesn’t ever remember going to bed hungry – and how many farm kids in the 1930s could make that statement honestly?

Ask Jay about those early years of struggle, and this highly successful program manager won’t miss a beat. “Money isn’t everything,” he’ll tell you with a delighted chuckle. And then, after a moment of reflection: “On the other hand, it’s *way* out in front of whatever’s running second!”

In many ways, of course, living on a 33-acre cotton, general crop and livestock farm in the Mississippi River delta was paradise on earth for a bright kid with a powerful imagination. Jay didn’t need money to turn a hay barn into a pirate ship, or to create a game called “Lasso The Pig” on the spur of the moment. (The rules: While standing on the roof of the tool shed, you had to rope the meanest sow in the herd and then keep your perch high above the inevitable squealing and bucking.)

Jay had a blast as a child . . . in spite of the fact that he was extremely ill during his first year on this troubled orb. According to his parents, Baby Jay struggled with a “permanent cold” for more than a year after his birth. He was diagnosed as having endured a “mastoid process

infection” near one ear. What to do? The doctors suggested an operation . . . but a little bit of research showed that 95 percent of those children who received a mastoid operation eventually died as a result.

Jay looked at the numbers and made his wishes clear: He wanted no part of Mastoid Roulette. And although it took some time, he finally managed to convince his parents, who ultimately refused to grant permission for the procedure. Jay lived . . . and on that basis, he applauded his parents for their extremely intelligent decision. “Just look how ‘pretty’ I became,” he would tell amazed listeners in later years. “If I’d died during that operation, I wouldn’t look *nearly* this good today!”

Question: Does this man have a knockout sense of humor, or what?

He does. And that’s no surprise – not for those of us who have known Jay from the get-go. Even as a tot, he was terrific at sight-gags and one-liners. Indeed, those who knew this cut-up as an infant will tell you that Jay was an extremely happy child – always gurgling and laughing in his crib and seldom blubbing.

Examples of Jay’s youthful zest for living abound. When the kid was about four, to name an instance, he decided to accompany the faithful Ole Joe on one of his many “scouting” expeditions through the untilled and mostly treeless swampland that surrounded the farm. Led by the playful pooch, our hero soon found himself drifting deeper and deeper into the gurgling bog – and without the slightest concern about finding his way back. Was there any joy like the joy they shared on that golden afternoon, while rambling among the water moccasins and the dozing hoot owls of their Delta bog?

As the hours passed, however, the lad gradually became fatigued. Soon he was no longer hollering at his canine pal: “I can’t keep up, you ole stinker!” and had simply collapsed in place on a grassy knoll where the cotton plants had “drowned out” during the previous spring. Lost in the embrace of Morpheus, the feisty Jayster snored like an Ozark well-digger at the end of a three-day-drunk. When he finally managed to rouse himself, the blazing sunlight of mid-afternoon was surging through the cypress. Jay stood up, and realized the worst: the rugged “gumbo” earth, covered with clods, had taken several bites out of his feet. To make matters even more difficult, one of his galluses kept slipping off. And what about his big toe? Bloody! How was Little Jay to make his way home?

Alarmed, he did his best to summon help from the dog. “All right, smart aleck! Here’s something you might understand!” And he flung a gumbo dirt-clod that whizzed within inches of the mutt’s remarkably thick skull. Thank God, the loyal part Labrador-Retriever-Collie had at least enough sense to know when he was under attack. (In fact, he worshipped

our friend Jay and was nearly always by his side, regardless of flying objects.)

Having re-established discipline via this strategy, Jay hugged the brute and limped off in the general direction of home. But just before they reached the tree line – where the two of them hoped to spot a possum, or at least a rabbit – Ole Joe lurched to a stop. Then he cocked his head and pointed one ear back toward the house. Clearly, the four-legged member of this duo had heard something of significance back there. But Jay (the victim of all those earlier colds and ear infections, remember) remained blissfully nearly deaf. (Later, of course, he'd teach himself to read lips well enough to survive a four-year Navy hitch and then earn three different university degrees.)

But who could read a shouting man's lips from an eighth of a mile away?

The grim truth is that the cavorting Jay never heard his father bellying for him, on that fateful summer afternoon. Joe did his best to help, however, by ambling back toward the collapsed farmhouse on the hill. "You crazy dog," wailed Jay, "wait up, before I *really* give you a whupping! I'm goin' stick your head in the lard bucket!"

Jay panted. He wheezed. He scrambled along, alternately griping and pulling his britches up. Then he looked toward the horizon – and saw why Joe had turned tail. Jay's father stood on the sandy ground near the edge of the cotton patch close to the wagon, and he did not look pleased. "Uh-oh," thought Jay for at least the hundredth time in his young life, "I reckon I'm done for now!"

After tapping Mag and Diner for the purpose, Jay's father had placed the iron-wheeled wagon at the end of the cotton rows. It was all part of the daily ritual of "pickin'" – a brutal form of exercise and a necessary one, in this part of the world. Harvest time ran from September to November, and little Jay had already learned to read the time of day by the sound of his daddy's voice, as he hollered his orders at the mules: "Gee there, Diner. Haw there, Mag. Back! Whoa, now!"

The wagon was simply a wooden box outfitted with wheels. Along with hauling cotton, the mud-spattered vehicle was used to transport fresh-picked corn. On Sundays in wet weather, the drab vehicle did double duty as a church bus – while slogging its way through swamps otherwise impassable.

The wagon was rigged up to include a mount for the "cotton scales," which included small and large ball "peen" weights; the cotton sack featured denim material with a steel ring sewn into one corner – said ring being used to hook the loaded bag on the scale. The shoulder strap was then wrapped around the sack to secure it during weighing. Another

necessary implement was the large jar of fresh water and the “community dipper” that accompanied it.

This, then, was the backdrop against which Jay’s ticked-off daddy suddenly materialized, with the anger of Thor writ large on his face. To say that Harold looked “aggravated,” as the boy and his dog approached, is to greatly understate the case; in point of fact, the peeved parent seemed ready to erase both his beloved son and the trailing mongrel from the entire Missouri map.

Jay was no dummy, of course. And one glance was enough to tell the tale: Our Jay-Man was lost in a world of hurt. Approaching with infinite slowness, he and the dog set a new world record for foot-shuffling and hem-hawing, even as Jay analyzed potential escape routes in preparation for possible flight.

“Son, where in the blue blazes have you been *hiding* yourself? You pert-near had us worried to *death!*”

The kid went blank. Helpless, he and the mutt could do nothing more than stare at the angry man in the faded and patched gallus overalls and the sweat-stained, brown felt hat. Jay’s Mom, meanwhile, loomed nearby; as always, she wore a “flour sack” print dress with a spoon bonnet pinned neatly over her short “Buster Brown” hair style. Amazingly, Mom was only 23 years old at this point . . . which made her seven years younger than her husband. She was a pretty young woman, but alarmingly thin.

The thing Jay liked most about her was that she knew how to laugh.

“Here they come, Lolah!” When Harold bellowed like that, the ground always shook beneath his feet. “Didn’t I tell you, if I called Joe, ole Jay would show up, too?”

Mom didn’t answer. She had just started on a new cotton row. Moving slowly – why hurry, in this kind of heat? – she eased up off her knees and leaned into her nine-foot-long, heavily patched denim sack, now about half full of fresh-picked cotton. Her thin face radiated anxiety, because she knew how upset her husband could become at times. (How she worried over her brood! To this day, Jay always refers to his momma as the “Ole Hen.” And believe it or not, that gracious lady at 85 was always quick to return the compliment: “How are you doing, yourself, you Ole Bantam?”)

Could Mom save Jay from his fate?

She tried . . . and did her best to smile, hoping against hope that her hubby wouldn’t take a switch to her little joy. She loved her little cutie, no doubt about it – although she really didn’t understand just how defective the child’s hearing had become. (Did the hearing problem

Timer

explain why Jay liked to be alone so much . . . just dreaming the afternoon away on the porch?)

Can you picture the scene? Jay wore gallus overalls – whether Big Macs, Osh Kosh, JC Penney or Sears. Unfortunately, this all-purpose garment tended to ride up into the kid’s crotch, causing no end of discomfort. Along with the crotch-pinchers, our hero usually wore a faded and unbuttoned “match-me” blue shirt that hung out the sides of the overalls like the windblown ears on a running donkey. (Has anybody ever theorized that movie star John Wayne walked on his toes because he’d also worn Big Macs as a kid, and had spent many an hour wincing in pain as they bit mercilessly at his vulnerable crotch?)

But the time for reflection was now over; the moment of truth had arrived.

“Timer,” roared the man on the other side of the cotton wagon, “I ain’t goin’ spank you this time. But you goin’ ter have to learn a big lesson about disappearing on me – and I mean the hard way. Get on up to the house, and stay there til dinner!”

Jay could hardly believe his ears. Playing around the house all afternoon . . . this was *punishment*? Hey, even with one room having caved in, that house offered lots of different diversions, games he could make up and enjoy on the spot.

Not the house, paw! Please don’t throw me in that briar patch!

Off he went, running. For the next hour or so, he wandered around the mansion, sticking his nose in and out of places where it didn’t belong. Then, somewhere around five o’clock, he made an important executive decision: He would “help” Mom by cleaning up the old newspapers that were lying on one of the beds.

Voila! Within a matter of seconds, the hard-working Jay had touched a match to the pile of papers. Imagine his surprise with the bed went up with the papers in a blazing fireball! Luckily for all parties, however, the inferno burned itself out before spreading to ceiling and walls . . . or burning up one of the very few photographs of his grandparents that then existed in the world, hanging nearby.

Jay howled. Afraid of being singed, he sneaked back to the cotton wagon, crawled under it and hid deep in the shadows beneath. Hours later, when the family returned to the burned-out bed and the scorched and smoke-stained wallpaper, Jay found the presence of mind to throw up his hands, shrug his shoulders and wail with the feigned innocence that would later become his trademark: “Who . . . *me?*”

Two: Dog Days In The Delta

The year was 1932, and the big news everywhere was the triumphant arrival of a babe clearly destined for greatness: a child named *Jay*.

While the world celebrated the birth of the Freckled One, a few other events (minor, of course, but still fairly interesting) were also taking place. Among them were the following:

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, aka “FDR,” was elected President of the United States in a landslide.

The nation continued to struggle through the depths of the Great Depression – perhaps the most terrifying and disabling social catastrophe in the history of the republic.

Led by FDR and his “New Dealers,” the federal government launched a series of “public works” projects aimed at rescuing working people from the agonies of unemployment. Among the major programs that would soon be employing millions each year were the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

All things considered, it was quite a year. Along with battling the Depression, a bemused America witnessed the birth of several figures who would one day become major players on the national landscape (even if dwarfed by my pal Jay). Among the notables born in 1932 were Liz Taylor, Teddy Kennedy, Johnny Cash, Mario Cuomo and William Christopher.

Although these luminaries would soon be casting their light over the American populace, there’s no doubt that the early 1930s represented a dark and forbidding era for millions of people who were struggling to put food on the family dinner table each night. No one knows why the extraordinarily prescient Jay Arthur chose this difficult year in which to be born – but the best guess is that the kid simply loved a challenge and decided to make his debut a survival challenge stern enough to cause the average Missouri cotton farmer’s hair to stand on end.

Trust me: It was tough. Like millions of other Americans who shed their baby teeth during the Depression, Jay will always be grateful to FDR and his lieutenants . . . who employed more than 2 million men in the WPA each year, along with another 500,000 in the CCC. For cash-strapped families all across America, these wages literally meant the difference between

survival and starvation.

As you might expect, however, massive social programs on this scale were notoriously wasteful and inefficient. Jay says he has never forgotten the joke he heard as a child about the “WPA approach” to farm work, back during the mid-1930s, when the program was at its height:

“The old hay farmer went to the WPA office in town and asked to hire two workers to mow and put up hay. Right away, he was told that he would have to hire eight men, not two. Incredulous, the farmer sputtered: ‘Why do I have to hire six additional workers?’

“‘Well,’ said the WPA manager with a weary sigh, ‘We know from long experience that this is what happens: You have two a-comin,’ two a-goin,’ two a-shittin’ and two a-mowin!’”

The story doesn’t tell us whether or not the farmer hired eight new hands. But it does make a powerful point about the inefficiency of this gigantic bureaucracy. In spite of their obvious flaws, however, the CCC and the WPA did manage to build many still-standing public hospitals, courthouses and other buildings . . . along with much of the Shenandoah National Park (where Jay took many canoe trips, hikes and backpacks), governmental malls, bridges, schools, and many installations on the federal grounds in Washington. Indeed, the great American writer John Steinbeck would one day describe his own experiences as a WPA laborer in memorable fashion in the best-selling “The Grapes of Wrath.”

Jay’s Family Farm: A Geography Lesson

If you look at a map of southeast Missouri, you’ll discover that Jay’s family farm was located next door to everywhere else. Perched on a fertile knoll above the surrounding swamp, the homestead loomed only five miles from the Arkansas border in one direction and 25 miles from Tennessee in another. The nearest town, Kennett, Mo., was only a few miles down the road from Jay’s front yard. Gaudy Memphis required a longer journey of 95 miles, and the great metropolis of St. Louis was a distant destination, 200 miles to the north. (Today this once remote region is crisscrossed by several major thoroughfares, including Interstate 55 and Missouri Highways 25 and 84.)

It’s also interesting to note that the seven Missouri counties in the Mississippi River Delta (the site of Jay’s domicile, remember) produced more per-capita farm income than the other 107 counties in the state combined, during Jay’s heyday. Part of that earnings bulge was attributed to the great 1814 earthquake at New Madrid (only 30 miles from Jay’s boyhood home), which shifted the course of the mighty river overnight and permanently altered both farming patterns and real estate development.

Jay still recalls how, when he was a young man, very few landowners in the Kennett region actually lived on and farmed their land as his family did. A few bankers owned farms, of course, but most of the owners were lawyers and doctors who rented the land out. This produced an interesting historical anomaly: white cotton-pickers! (Years later, when Jay and I told people how we'd raised and picked cotton in Missouri, they didn't really believe us. You'd be surprised how many African-Americans believe that cotton was picked exclusively by Blacks or Black slaves!)

Make no mistake: Cotton farming was a difficult life. Example: Due to the lack of plentiful water supplies, many farm families wore "clothes that could stand alone," and workers wound up with carbuncles on their necks and bottoms throughout the dusty work season. The abscesses just came with the territory, that's all; what else could you expect in a world that featured "Saturday Night Baths" in a 20-gallon galvanized wash tub - with the water supplied by hand pump in "rivers" 15 feet below the surface - as the sole source of personal hygiene?

To save the cost of shoes, we boys went barefoot from early Spring to October - and we enjoyed the resulting freedom greatly. Of course, we wore shoes to church on Sundays or when "company came" or when we went to town. Jay and I cut our feet many, many times . . . and then walked on the sides of our poor dogs until the cuts healed. But those cuts left scars, as we were almost daily lacerated by broken glass, nails, wire, splinters, cotton hoes and such. And the "treatment" for these mishaps seemed worse than the injury: Jay's mom and dad would let the cuts bleed some, and then release kerosene from the 55-gallon drum to flow over and into the cuts.

Jay and I studied this matter later, and we could never find any medical recommendations for using kerosene in this way. (If we'd smoked, we'd have gone up in a fireball!) I remember how Jay climbed to the top of a woven-wire fence one afternoon, in order to watch some men work cattle. The kid hung onto the top strand of barbed wire. But then he suddenly slipped . . . and a barb dug its way deep into the palm of one hand. Blood spurted. He was immediately rushed to the kerosene barrel and the wound was "washed" several times. No infection resulted, and no tetanus shot was given. (But the incident created a scar that is visible to this day.)

All Those Dogs Went To Heaven

The great pleasure of a dog is that you may make a fool of yourself with him, and not only will he not scold you - he'll make a fool of himself, too!

—Samuel Baker

Did Jay Arthur and his family love dogs?
Does the Pope have a Roman mailing address?

Whenever my dear friend and close associate looks back on his first 18 years of existence, he hears the sweet sound of canine barking. And then he smiles. How wonderful it was, to have frolicked in the sunshine with all those pooches! (Now past 70, he still retains that affection.)

The Arthur farmhouse was always crowded with them, and as the years passed, Jay began to assemble his own personal Canine Hall of Fame - a gilt-edged roster of the pups he'd treasured most over time. Among the headliners were the following:

Ole Joe: A reddish, long-haired and very gentle dog who may have had Golden Retriever blood. One old photograph shows a beaming Jay at age two, standing happily beside the pooch. The memories are dim, but Jay swears he can remember more than one occasion on which Ole Joe brought him home.

Buck: He was the first dog Jay can remember well. Buck was part-Labrador and part-everything else. His I.Q. might have lagged a bit, but his heart was the size of the Missouri Breaks! He also protected the youthful Jay from animals, bogs and other dangerous entities. What a shame that the loyal Buck was bitten by a rabid animal at one point, and then went on to develop rabies himself.

The poor animal suffered terribly. Unable to drink water because of his swollen tongue, he lapped uselessly at a pail of the wet stuff, while frothing at the mouth and becoming weaker by the hour. Finally his condition deteriorated to the point that Jay's pop felt compelled to dispatch him with the family's .22 rifle. But Harold, ever a kid at heart, involuntarily diverted the muzzle at the last moment; he simply didn't have the heart to put a slug into faithful Buck. Still, a rabid dog was no joking matter in those days of primitive medical conditions and few medical facilities or veterinarians. For Jay, death from rabies has always seemed like an especially cruel fate, invented by the forces of evil.

Thankfully, Buck never bit or even salivated on any of us, though

we never understood why. At the end, he simply wandered off down the dusty road toward Ditch #19, never to be seen again.

MINNIE: Can a Toy Spitz be described as beautiful? Minnie was a gorgeous creature, blessed with a snow-white exterior (when it wasn't pitch black from rat-digging, that is). Little Minnie weighed only 15 pounds, and she was living proof that the best things come in small packages. (Surprisingly, when Harold first brought her home at one year old, she wanted no part of the Arthur clan.) Jay actually slept in the empty baby chick brooder-house with her until she accepted him and thus the family. She was then committed to the entire outfit, and became a paragon of loyalty. A great companion, this hard-charger was popular with the entire family . . . and also with several male dogs in the neighborhood. Minnie had several litters of puppies, and even when she was busy reproducing, she spent many hours digging in burrows for rats - who turned out to be dead ducks, once she got her teeth and claws into them. Regardless of her big fat sides full of puppies or full "dinner buckets," she was a single-minded rat terminator!

Minnie was a bantamweight, but a ruthless fighter. In one legendary battle, she fought a jumbo-sized muskrat in Ditch No. 19 in a contest that raged both above and below water. It was nip and tuck for several minutes, and we held our breaths after both animals disappeared beneath the surface. In the end, however, it was the muskrat - easily three times the size of your average barn rat - and nearly half the size of Minnie - who did not come back up for air!

PENNY: One of Minnie's most charismatic pups - the adorable Penny - soon became a headliner around the Arthur homestead. Penny was the offspring of a purebred black-and-brown German Shepherd, but his coat gleamed with the coppery hue of a bright new penny (hence the name). Lively and fun-loving, the irrepressible Penny soon became Jay's favorite canine companion. In order to enjoy the pooch to the max, Jay and H.E. modified their old Western Auto coaster wagon - by adding a small wooden wagon-tongue - then harnessed both Penny and Minnie to the custom-built vehicle. The boys taught the dogs to pull it "just as though they were beasts of burden." The dogs loved it!

Fiesty and bellicose at times, Penny wasn't afraid of anything. Jay noted as much on many occasions, while proudly announcing that this four-legged warrior didn't mind tangling with "a 'possum, a muskrat, another dog, rat, hog, cat, my cousins, bullies or *whatever*." And, Penny had dozens of scars to prove it.

During one legendary caper, the valiant creature leaped from a hayloft in order to keep up with our hero. Too bad . . . the dog's back leg hip area cracked against the wooden rung of a ladder and snapped in two. The grotesque injury was almost more than Jay could bear to look at, as the poor dog's leg swung around in looping circles, supported only by hair and skin.

Thoroughly alarmed, Jay & Co. hustled the victim to the Vet, who installed a cast on the leg. But Penny wouldn't leave the brace alone, and the dog's leg healed crookedly as a result. Later, when the bold-hearted canine ran (and *could* he run!), the upper part of the affected leg jutted out on every single step.

Of course, Penny was always very protective of Jay - and sometimes with hilarious consequences. Example: One night when Jay was sparring with boxing gloves against two cousin-brothers named Yale and Jules, along with a third cousin named Timmie, Penny gave the latter a sharp nip in the buttocks. Timmie whirled and immediately broke the North American Cursing Record. It was touch and go for a few seconds - and poor Penny feared for his life, until the nipped youth finally managed to regain his composure.

Is there any doubt that all dogs go to heaven? Whenever Jay looks back on the golden years of his youth, it is the dogs he remembers with special fondness. And why not? Who could ever forget Jack, the white-gold "sheepdog" with the winning personality? And what about all those German shepherds and boxers and collies? And how about Duke, the purebred Walker Coon Hound, whose sense of smell was so refined that he could detect a possum breaking wind from four miles distant?

Another of Jay's favorite bone-chasers was the easygoing and fun-loving Ren - a black-and-tan shepherd (actually owned by his grandparents) who went dog-nuts every time he spotted a gun. Ren was a fanatical hunter, and he spun like a top and vaulted nearby fences at the first sign of an impending excursion in search of squirrels, possums or coons.

The truth is that Jay loved Ren desperately, and spent tons of time frolicking with him . . . but only during the two weeks each year when he visited his grandparents and uncles in the Ozark Foothill Woods. Jay was small in those days, and the elders prohibited him from carrying live ammo. The problem, of course, was that Ren wouldn't hunt except in the presence of a weapon - a quirk that forced poor Jay to lug an empty single-shot 20-gauge shotgun or rifle along, each time they set out in search of conquest.

Later, starting at age 12, the youthful hunter was permitted to stash bullets and shotgun shells in his pockets. And now the *real* fun began, as Jay and Ren closed in on their furry game. Most days, the steps

in the pursuit went like this:

First, Ren “trees” a squirrel, which makes itself as small as possible by stretching out flat on a tree limb.

Second, dog and boy circle the tree while making as much racket as possible. (Sometimes Jay would toss a tree limb to the other side of the tree to divert the squirrel’s attention.)

Third, the squirrel hightails it away from the racket and Jay cuts loose with his cannon. (And woe unto the kid, if he didn’t pull that trigger! On those occasions, the mutt would give him a disdainful look that said: “You gutless wonder – why didn’t you take him out?”)

Was there any joy on earth like the joy felt by Jay and Ren, each time they brought home another trophy – to be fried and eaten like chicken – from the Forest Primeval? And how sad it was, to realize that all good things must end . . . and to watch the beloved Ren slowly declining into infirmity. After a few years of this descent into decrepitude, the dog could barely walk, was nearly blind, and couldn’t smell, see, or hear. Yet, sadly, he still loved to hurl himself against a tree trunk now and then, just as if he’d treed a squirrel!

One afternoon – it was a melancholy day in later summer – Jay’s granddad hoisted his trusty rifle and led the excited but now ancient dog on one final journey through the familiar woods. Ren did not return, and we can only imagine the sorrow that washed over the old man when he put the life-ending bullet through the loyal warrior’s head.

Jay never forgot him, and recalling this memory often brings tears, even today. Let’s face it: the Jayster was a “dog-man,” and although he’d enjoyed playing with two cats named Spot and Snowball as a child (his own kids would later have a ball cavorting with Blackjack and Kitty), he would never become a “cat-person.” No, his heart belonged to his friends Ren, Jack, Penny, Minnie, Buck, Joe . . . and also to the legions of other canines who had stood at his side during so many unforgettable, youthful adventures.

Jay honors the memory of Ren to this day. All he has to do is close his eyes . . . and within a few seconds he’s “back in the holler,” chasing a possum or a coon through the scrub oak and the pines. Good old Ren had certainly “earned his keep” – and that was the law of survival for pets in the poor hill country of Missouri. Watchdog, possum-hunter, scourge of poisonous garden snakes, herder of cows and supplier of meat: This fabulous dog could do it all!

But the day came when it was time to say goodbye. Jay learned a great deal on that somber afternoon. He learned about time, and memory, and the shining radiance that is perpetual friendship.

He learned that all living creatures must die – but that love never

Timer

does! And that key lesson would stand Jay in good stead throughout the rest of his extraordinary life.

THREE:

Workin' Cotton, SE Missouri, 1939

"The first recipe to farm well is to be rich."

Sidney Smith, 1771-1845

What was it like to be "choppin' and pickin' cotton" for a living in the Missouri Delta during the 1930s and 1940s?

The answers to that question could fill a hundred books.

Heat and humidity, and the trickle of sweat running down your sunburned neck . . . saturating your hat, shirt, trousers and even your socks

The "community pail" of clear pumped spring water, with the aluminum "dipper" dangling from its side . . .

The crows landing and taking off moment by moment, and the flutter of their ebony-hued wings among the scarred electric poles that flanked the rural highway . . .

It was a world, that's all, and the name of that world was: "Family." Whenever Jay turns the pages of his memory scrapbook, it is the hard-working family of cotton-choppers n' pickers that leaps to impress itself upon his nostalgic, inner eye. The long hoe with its shiny, just-sharpened blade; Momma with her long denim sack, half-full of new cotton, and her six-month-old infant riding the sack happily, as if it were a rocking, springy-soft cradle.

Pa bending above his own sack, his red face gleaming in the late afternoon sun, his hat, overalls and "match-me" shirt drenched with sweat.

The kids pausing in their work now and then to secretly fling clods of dry-packed, cement-hard "gumbo" mud or green cotton bolls at each other.

And the river, always the river, and #19 and the other ditches lapping with dreamy slowness around the next bend . . . and the smell of the river and the ditches in your nose, and the immemorial rustling passage of the river, stately as time, measuring out all their lives in the cadences of running water.

Like every kid who grew up in southeast Missouri during the post-Depression years, Jay and his clan loved the green-and-white-checked cotton fields that stretched to the far horizon.

And yet, like every other kid, Jay Arthur also hated them.

Indeed, we *all* hated the way that dried gumbo tortured our feet

during the long summer months when we worked like demons to fill our cotton sacks.

We hated the heat, and the muggy suffocation that rose in a choking miasma from the boggy soil, and the grinding tedium of thinning the number of cotton plants and cutting out weeds . . . and then, during both the spring and the fall, plucking cotton bolls from the plants, hour after hour and day after day and year after year.

We hated the way those scratchy cotton fibers would crawl into our noses and our ears and even under our fingernails . . . making us itch like we'd just been attacked by a regiment of half-starved chiggers.

But there were many things we loved about cotton-picking – such as the joyful songs we belted out as we dragged our sacks along the rows, and the endless jokes we made (often at our own expense), and the mountains of food we devoured, including ham and biscuits, corn bread piled high with bacon, and jugs of ice-cold lemonade during the lunch-breaks that were the best part of each day. (Bacon and “spam” were poor substitutes for ham, of course, but often necessary in the weeks and months that followed the “hog-killing days.”)

Most of all, we loved the occasional cloudbursts that drenched us to the skin . . . each time another Delta “thunder-boomer” came slashing out of Arkansas across the cotton fields to provide such sweet relief from the blast-furnace that was the Missouri sun.

Cotton-Farming: A Day In The Life

Whenever we think back on the world of the farm – Jay’s world – we think first of the two mules, Mag and Diner, that formed the heart of their enterprise. Patient and loyal (but also given to occasional fits of infuriating stubbornness), those two plodders never seemed to tire – even when the humans who were directing them began to wilt under the glare of the August heat. Is it any wonder that we all roared with laughter on the afternoon when Jay’s older brother – the canny and quick-witted H.E. – got tired of following behind the plow, as he slipped and slid over the soft-to-cloddy soil and suddenly moaned out of his growing fatigue: “Daddy, we gotta take a few minutes and let the *mules* rest!”

Light brown with gray-white markings, gentle Mag didn’t mind a-tall when Jay leapt aboard for a ride down the rows. Diner, who was mostly black, seemed less interested in providing amusement park-type rides for the children, however . . . and we stayed away from her as a result. Who wanted to risk a nip from those enormous, spade-like teeth, or risk being thrown ten feet in the air, if Diner decided to make like a rodeo bronco and cut loose with all four hooves flying?

Feisty and high-spirited at times, Diner quickly calmed down once she was hitched up beside Mag. With Diner holding down her spot on the right side of the team, this duo knew how to turn on the jets and get the day's plowing underway, *pronto*. Still, they could prove temperamental under certain conditions . . . and the driver (in this case, dear old Dad) had to be a skilled psychologist to get the most out of them.

There's no question that Mag and Diner were valuable farm animals, however, and each would have commanded at least \$100 on the open market - a small fortune in the 1930s, as any good economist will tell you. Interestingly enough, one of the most accurate ways to estimate the value of a mule in those days was to assess the animal's muscular coordination and flexibility of movement. According to one popular formula, in fact, a mule was "worth \$100 if he or she could roll completely over!" Mag and Diner could perform this feat easily . . . and the superiority they felt because of it was written all over their faces.

Ah, the joys of picking that cotton! Imagine the scene: It's September, and the cotton plants are still leafed out in their gorgeous finery. First white, then pink, red and purple, the bright blossoms have already launched their Technicolor display and are beginning to drop from the bolls. Taller than a child's head, the plants form a brilliant canvas of snow-white bolls and emerald-hued stems and leaves. Where's the Delta Van Gogh who will paint this pyrotechnic splendor? (Alas, in the cash-starved Depression year of 1936, he's probably flat on his back in the mud, slowly starving to death!)

Later in life, H.E. presented Jay with a sumptuous painting of a cotton field at harvest time. Jay displayed the picture proudly at work in recent years - and he always got a chuckle when one of his employees muttered darkly about "Black slaves picking cotton on the wall of that office!" Of course, a closer examination of the canvas quickly revealed that the pickers were white . . . and that the "boss" who was driving the wagon appeared to be black or African-American. Black! (How's *that* for being politically correct? Jay, you're a social genius!)

Another thing our dear friend Jay *did* like about cotton-farming was the opportunity it gave him to hide from work whenever he wanted to. Was he proud of his uncanny ability to secrete himself in the higher cotton and then smoke "rabbit tobacco" at a furious clip? You bet he was! Really . . . what joy could ever top the joy of rolling a handful of the tiny, dry, crumbly leaves from roadside or fence into a page of the Sears & Roebuck catalogue (that page having been ripped, of course, from the out-house copy!) . . . and then, lord of all he surveyed, crouching in his hiding spot and puffing at his smoke with reckless abandon? And who could blame the kid, in later years, for quoting the world-renowned author of

Gunga Din, Rudyard Kipling, on the virtues of savoring the weed:

“A good woman is only a woman,” barked the great Victorian, “but a good cigar – that’s a *smoke!*”

Geography Is Destiny: The Land

Although the Arthurs were required to work hard for a living (like thousands of other Delta farmers in the Depression era), their 33 acres offered them one precious advantage over many other land-holdings in the region: Their farm contained acreage both in the “gumbo” clay sections and along the “Dunklin County Sandy Ridge” – a far less swampy area where growing conditions for certain kinds of crops were significantly improved. And this diversification of soils would prove to be enormously important in helping Jay & Co. develop the kind of broad-based farming operation that could eventually bring them economic security. Before H.E. applied his approved farming methods, however, the Dunklin County sandy-ridge section grew more grass burrs and crabgrass than high-income crops.

Of course, the landscape around them had also been greatly altered by another dramatic terrain feature: the New Madrid Earthquake of 1814, which apparently changed the course of the Mississippi so that it no longer crossed the region directly adjacent to the Arthur farm. At the same time, the huge earth-convulsion had created the shallow Reelfoot Lakes in Tennessee, where Jay would fish with his own sons, years later. And you didn’t have to be a professional geologist to understand just how the “Quake of ’14” had affected the Arthur bottom land – not when a brief walk across the flood plain allowed us to spot the “water marks” on many older sycamores . . . obvious marks that revealed with dramatic precision exactly where the great Mississippi’s highest waters had reached in eras gone by.

“We are truly blessed,” Harold often said, “to have this land, because even after a hard rain, we can get back in the well-draining sandy-ridge fields with a hoe or cultivator almost as soon as it stops raining. In the bottom, we would get our hoes or plows ‘balled up’ with gumbo.” (As kids, however, Jay and H.E. often questioned the “blessing” – while wishing out loud that their land was not so hospitable to farming in the wake of a heavy rain! And their reluctance to hurry back to the task was understandable; after all, these kids – from their pre-teen years on – worked a ten-hour shift, six days a week, during each and every hoeing and picking season.)

Make no mistake: The work was often brutally exhausting – a fact which often gets lost in nostalgic accounts of the “good old days” of horse-drawn and hand-picked farm crops. My pal Jay can tell you from personal experience what it was *really* like to raise cotton, corn, soybeans and live-

stock. And he can give you the bottom line in exactly three words: "It was *tough!*"

A few quick examples will help to make his point. "In the early days," says the Jay-Battler, "our best bottom land barely produced a bale of cotton per acre - and the sandy areas yielded less than half a bale, on average. The same land was capable of producing only 25-30 bushels of corn per acre, and the beans didn't fare any better."

But what a difference a few decades can make! These days, even the sandy regions of the old farm will generate one to one and a half bales of cotton per acre. According to our resident genius, H.E., most farmers can crank out 25,000 pounds of watermelons per acre today . . . compared with 10,000 pounds back in the 1930s. And the same acre of land that yielded 30 bushels of corn per acre in the "good old days" will easily produce 100 in 2002, and even more, with irrigation. (Corn and cotton are now mostly picked by efficient machines.)

During the past seven decades, the farmlands of the Missouri Delta have become a veritable cornucopia of cash crops. While soybeans leapfrogged from 35 to more than 50 bushels per acre, wheat was surging from 20 to 50 bushels. Thanks to major improvements in fertilizers, insecticides and cultivating processes, even such luxury items as the cantalope have taken off in earnest. So the good news - for good farmers like H.E., that is - has been very good, indeed: Most growers in this part of the world can count on being able to increase their incomes, without having to buy or rent additional acreage. The bad news is that the prices of the increased yields dropped significantly, as the law of supply and demand took its toll.

These days, the bounty created by our ever-improving technology has even given a boost to the bird population . . . and such desirable species as the ring-necked pheasant have now returned to the Delta farmlands in great numbers. (It's a bit frustrating to H.E. at times, to find himself being regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), supposedly in order to protect a number of threatened bird species. Nonetheless, Jay suspects that H.E. is secretly proud of the success he's had in restoring the local bird population's health and happiness!)

"It makes but little difference whether you are committed to a farm or a county jail."

Henry David Thoreau, 1817-1862

Whenever Jay looks back on the early years - the *hardscrabble*

years - he finds himself saying a silent prayer of thanks to his older brother, the marvelously inventive and mechanically gifted H.E. The simple fact is that H.E. liked to "fix things." He also loved to take them apart, just for the fun in it. (Fortunately, he also enjoyed putting them back together again.) Thanks to his special skills, the Arthur clan was able to keep its farm machinery on the go - usually without paying expensive repair bills.

In spite of all of his other great qualities, the blunt truth is that Harold didn't know much about mechanics. But H.E. couldn't get enough of them. And his passionate interest in maintaining the farm paid handsome dividends, later in life - when he took an avid interest in returning to the old homestead and purchasing it for his Ma, the beloved Lolah. What a gift! Donald, the younger brother, was gifted in mechanical ability, energy and intellect as well. He operated the farm equipment skillfully and was extremely valuable to Harold, Lolah and his sister Teri, when it came to the important business of farming.

Jay Welcomes A New Punching Bag: Brother Donald

What's a younger brother for - if not baseball, basketball, boxing and wrestling?

When Jay's youngest brother, Donald, was born in March of 1936 - at the very heart of the Great Depression - our hero saluted the new arrival with joy in his heart. And for good reason: Jay was finally going to have a steady playmate. H.E. wasn't much fun anymore (always busy fixing the tractor, or helping neighbors overhaul their automobiles), but Donald was destined to be born four years after the Jayster . . . which made him absolutely ideal as a sparring partner.

Was Jay too rough on his younger sibling? Maybe. On the other hand, Don went on to become a highly successful stockbroker, and to flourish in a world that requires grace under pressure and nerves of steel. (Jay reports in jest that he has never charged his brother a fee for this early work as a "character-builder," however.) And the truth is that Jay remains very proud of Donald - to say nothing of his older sibling, H.E. and much younger sister, Teri.

It's interesting to see how siblings differ within a family. Here's a thumbnail sketch of the temperamental differences between Jay and his fellow-Arthur offspring:

"H.E. . . . down-to-earth, solid, hands-on farmer, solves mechanical problems and financial problems with the snap of a finger: "A Genius of

the Tractor.” Strong, but a little bit given to “rough-housing.”)

“*Jay* . . . loves to watch people in the act of being themselves . . . daydreams a lot . . . digs animals . . . has difficulty changing a tire . . . but instinctively understands how to manage organizations for achievement and how to supervise employees because of his talent for empathy and his strong desire for participative management.

“*Donald* . . . sharp analytical mind . . . understands the dynamics of the financial aspects of business . . . a quick study . . . good at making deals . . . a natural on Wall Street.

“*Teri* . . . gift for gab . . . terrific writer as a result . . . loves ideas . . . loves people of all races and nationalities and areas of the world . . . supportive of all of the family, forever . . . born to teach high school kids how to survive in today’s dog-eat-dog.

So much for the siblings. But what about Jay’s pop, the hard-charging sturdy and indefatigable Harold Arthur? Here was a rock-ribbed, fun-loving guy who enjoyed rough-and-tumble wrestling with his offspring. (In later years, Jay and his brothers managed to “pin” their dad once in a while – but not often.) Harold did not hesitate to apply the switch or paddle when he thought it necessary, however. And he *did* succeed in gaining their attention, each time another blow found its mark. Of course, Harold had learned about crime and punishment during his own strenuous upbringing; orphaned with his twin brother Darold at age six, he’d endured lots of paddle-discipline from his older brothers and sisters.

Hard-working and sober – and usually with a St. James Bible in his hand or by his side – Harold nonetheless enjoyed a flair for the dramatic. How he loved to rehearse the “outlaw legends” that he’d grown up with – the hair-raising sagas of Bonnie and Clyde, Pretty Boy Floyd, John Dillinger, Machine Gun Kelly and Ma Barker and family! He enjoyed these tales of banditry no end . . . yet he was so set against alcohol that he voted the Prohibition ticket throughout most of his life.

Jay, himself, has never forgotten the thrill of curling up beside the giant Philco “cabinet model” radio and then listening raptly to the amazing adventures of:

—Jack Armstrong, “The All American Boy,” whose heroics were wrapped in the comforting colors of red, white and blue;

—Buck Rogers, the fearless astronaut and battler of goggle-eyed

Timer

Martians;

—Dick Tracy, jut-jawed and clean-cut, barking orders into his “Two-Way Wrist Radio”;

—Tarzan, accompanied by the svelte and vine-swinging Jane, whose loin-cloth never once slipped;

—Flash Gordon, the incredibly courageous sky-pilot, zooming over the airwaves on a cloud of boiling exhaust;

—Little Orphan Annie, whose bright red curls and giant smile were enough to make a strong man weep over the Sunday “funny papers.”

And how about those bold-hearted stars of the Silver Screen . . . titanic figures of action and romance who loomed larger than life from theaters with names like “The Lyric,” and “The Hippodrome,” and “The Bijou?” Among the immortals of the 1930s and 1940s were such figures as Gary Cooper, Clark Gable, Dick Powell, Mickey Rooney, Groucho Marx, Jimmie Stewart, Spencer Tracy, Claudette Colbert, Myrna Loy, James Cagney, Alfred Hitchcock (writer, director and producer) Humphrey Bogart (“Bogie”), Charles Boyer, John Wayne, and Vivian Leigh.

To this day, the lovely Bell (Jay’s longsuffering wife) prefers to rent “classic videos” featuring these older stars. As far as Bell is concerned, “older” always means “better!” And what else would you expect from a woman who once attended dances – as a Baltimore teenager – presided over by the likes of “big-band swingmen” such as Benny Goodman, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, and Harry James? (Despite his frequent disclaimers, you can be sure that Jay also enjoys most of the older Hollywood flicks.)

Getting Back To His Roots

Whenever the Jayman looks back on his native roots, he celebrates the unique diversity of his status as . . . *Everyman*. His dear momma, Lolah, provides a wonderful example of such diversity at work – descending as she did from both German and Scotch branches of a beautifully variegated family tree.

Jay’s daddy Harold enjoys an even *more* spangled heritage, consisting of the following ethnic fractions: one-half Cherokee American Indian and one-half French.

Do the math with Jay, and you come to the shocking realization that this man’s bloodstream surges with hemoglobin from almost every

ethnic enclave on the planet. Here's the tribal breakdown on our protagonist, with fractions accurately intact:

- 1/8 Cherokee
- 1/4 French
- 1/8 Scotch
- 1/2 German and Irish, as far as he knows.

(Add those fractions up carefully, and you'll come to the disturbing realization that Jay is just barely *all there!*)

Wherever Jay looks on his family tree, he finds uniquely twisted branches. Take his father's grandfather, for example. A French gentleman, this independent-minded individual set tongues wagging by deserting from the Confederate Army during the Civil War around 1862. According to Jay's careful study of National Archives in Washington, D.C., the Rebel soldier "missed muster" on two occasions . . . and was then presumed to have deserted. (Perhaps he simply got lost in the chaos that crackled all along the Mason-Dixon Line during this tumultuous era? Jay hopes so!) Lolah's grandfather, meanwhile, was one of 15 children, and served in the Union Army.

Another family legend has it that some thoughtless malefactor fired a rifle ball into the house where Jay's grandfather, Gene, stood leaning against a door. This chilling mishap supposedly occurred *after* the Civil War had ended, and raises a disturbing question: Why was the gunman still shooting, if the hostilities had ceased? (The ball reportedly whizzed past the man's skull at a high rate of speed, and missed him by a shaved cat's whisker!) Apparently, he had joined a group like Quantrill's Raiders and then spent some time in the courtroom – since a murder charge against him was dropped before he went to Missouri.

Deeply rattled by this incident, Gene apparently transported Jay's grandpa – then about seven – and his two older brothers from Paris, Tennessee, across the Mississippi River on a cable ferry boat in 1872. Later still, Gene arranged for Josephine to journey from Illinois to visit his son in Missouri. And indeed, the record shows that Jay's great-grandmother dropped out of the Cherokee "Trail of Tears" and married a German coal miner in Illinois.

Lolah Had A Song In Her Heart

Whenever Jay wanders down Memory Lane, he finds himself sighing over memories that can easily bring on a fit of melancholy. He has never forgotten, for example, how the old family barn blew down during a storm (or did it merely *fall* down, a victim of old age?). Jay was only three

or four when that cataclysm occurred. He also recalls how his dad then split the heavy wooden barn-shingles with an axe – presumably to be used as kindling for building fires. They also served as extremely durable paddles, however, until Jay began his checkered career in high school.

Jay regretted his father's decision to employ the shingles in this fashion, of course. Curiously enough, however, the “shingle factor” may actually have saved his nether parts on many occasions . . . since the “pile” was located on the other side of the yard, and required half a minute or so to reach. On many occasions, the walk to the shingle-paddles provided just enough time for Jay to plead innocence and for his Dad to cool off . . . so that the mischief-maker of the moment received fewer whacks than he might have otherwise have expected. (On some occasions, Harold even changed his mind about the paddling – and settled for a stern lecture!)

But the shingle-paddles weren't the only reason to regret the destruction of the old barn. Once that colossus had been leveled, Jay could no longer spend so many exciting hours in the hunt for eggs, snakes, rats, mice, or baby kittens.

Unfair! But Jay's devoted mother, Lolah, made up for the loss of the barn with her delightful music. The oldest of four kids and the only girl in her family, Lolah had never forgotten the joy of hearing her father and brothers playing the harmonica, violin, mandolin and the guitar, while belting out bluegrass and religious numbers in the old Ozark family cabin. Sometimes, neighbor boys had even joined in. Lolah also learned to play the piano when her children were fairly young, and she had a beautiful, clear voice. And yes – she dearly loves music to this very day. In recent years, she wrote four songs and had music put to them. The results were then taped and sent winging to the grateful Jay, who arranged for a professional singer to record them. They were great, and Lolah loved them! These tunes were very short, so Jay didn't try to do anything else with them . . . although he still enjoys listening to the tapes from time to time.

Ah, the joys of family. Although Jay had often heard stories about his granddad physically and verbally abusing his mother, the beloved Lolah never complained to him — other than to report that the old man worked her extremely hard when she was a very young child. The older man came down with severe diabetes in his fifties, and passed into a coma from which he was not expected to recover. Yet he would live for another 20 years – thus proving that he was every bit as tough as his reputation!

Lolah's younger brothers apparently pounded her fiercely when they played, but she never chose to complain to Jay about that part of her life. The relationship between Lolah and the oldest brother was somewhat strained, however. The two younger boys were close to his mother, and Jay loved all of three of them something fierce. The older brother was avail-

able during WWII to take Jay hunting frequently . . . while the youngest uncle served in the CCC's and the other in the Army.

Although Jay's parents were extremely intelligent and gifted people, neither completed the eighth grade. Perhaps they saw no reason (nor were there finances) to finish - since that step would have required "boarding" away from home during high school. Lolah's school-career may have been a short one . . . but it was highlighted by her glittering reputation as a comic who could make her classmates laugh for minutes at a time.

One favorite scenario would begin when a classmate hollered: "Lolah!"

"What?" she would holler back.

"Gobble!"

Because her maiden name was "Gobble," the exuberant comedienne would delight her audience by responding: "Gobble, Gobble!" in the manner of a hysterical turkey. Jay loved the way that laughter filled his mother's soul, and the way it brought her family so much joy over the years.

And he wasn't the least bit surprised - years later - when he learned that the great TV comic George Gobel (now deceased) had been Lolah's cousin.

FOUR:
The Chicken N' Biscuits
Were Finger-Lickin' Good!

"If a pig could give his mind to anything, he would not be a pig."

Charles Dickens, 1812-1870

The moment of truth.

A young lad of 14 now, the deeply troubled Jay Arthur lifted the Remington .22 carefully to his shoulder, then drew a bead on the doomed hog's forehead.

His hands were shaking. *Not good.* Killing the hog was a crucially important part of the butchering process, and he should have been thrilled to know that the grown-ups had turned this part of the job over to him.

But all Jay felt was a sick churning in the pit of his stomach, as his finger slowly squeezed: *Pow!*

Dadblame it, goodness gracious — caught him right in the nose!

Suddenly, the pig in front of Jay was airborne, and kicking harder than a line of Rockefeller Center Rockettes on steroids. And *squealing?* Half-crazed with fear and pain, the porcine banshee had set up an unearthly squalling. Equally terrified, the hapless Jay watched her flounder head-on into the feed-trough . . . and then plow into the side of the hog shed. "Git back here, hawg!" yelled the ineffective gunman, by now in hot pursuit. "Don't you understand that I have to *shoot* you to stop the pain?"

Ah, the joys of hog-butchering in rural Missouri! In those simpler times, bacon did not suddenly appear in the "Meat Department" of the local supermarket. Nor was it wrapped neatly in plastic. Far from it. Instead, entire families worked together for days at a time . . . in order to kill, clean and then sugar-cure hogs in special "smoke houses" that had been designed for the process decades before.

Make no mistake: Jay did not enjoy his role of pig-assassin. (On that first botched assignment, as a matter of fact, his nerve failed him so badly that a neighbor was forced to take the .22 from the fumbling youth and finish off the pig, himself.) Nor did Jay attempt to shoot another pig

for many years.

Once the poor animal had been decently dispatched, the rest of the butchering could begin in earnest. First step: the pig's legs were tied to a single-tree (part of the dray equipment) and he was lifted high in the air . . . where his throat was quickly slit from ear to ear in order to allow his blood to drain. During this grisly process, the hog-butchering crew - men and women alike - would make sure their knives and scraping implements were sharp and then lay boards on the ground where the hair would be scraped from the pig.

Once the water in the iron kettle had reached a rolling boil, Jay, H.E. and the others would lug buckets of it across the yard, and dump them into a clean 55-gallon metal oil barrel that was buried in the earth at a 45-degree angle. Ashes were added to the water - probably for reasons of acidity level or hygiene - and then the pig's carcass was carefully pushed into its scalding bath. Now two brave men stepped forward. While struggling to hold onto the slippery pig, they "worked him" back and forth in the water until his hair began to slip off by the handful. They also flailed away at it with special bell-shaped scrapers.

The men then pulled the animal onto the boards for scraping.

Voila . . . after only an hour or so of patient labor, the pigs resembled newborns. (Pink and clean, they looked good enough to eat!) It was an extraordinary transformation, and years later - while Jay was engaged as a volunteer inspector of animals being processed for meat - he would observe these same butchering methods in action. (Somehow, the job looked a whole lot easier when the professionals were doing it! (They used hot wax to peel the hair off, for example.)

After that, the "sugar cure" would be mixed and prepared for the meat, while a huge fire roared beneath the great kettle that always served as the centerpiece of every hog-butchering. While this was going on, Lolah and the other women, along with H.E., Jay and Don, began cutting the fat and lean trimmings into pieces to provide the makings for grinding sausage, while also mixing up a batch of "head cheese." (And don't hold back on the liver! How can people turn up their noses at this delicacy . . . when Jay could never get enough of it?)

Let's face it, butchering hogs was hard work. And yet it was also a kind of celebration, a communal rite. It was a chance for friends and neighbors to get together and rub shoulders. Example: After making certain that the "sugar cure" had been properly applied to shoulders (the pigs', that is) and hams, everybody involved would be urged to take some of the meat home. This step solidified friendships and "paid" the laborers for their work.

Chasing The Chickens At Dinnertime

“The proper concept of a strengthening diet is a chicken wrung out in hot water.”

Martin Henry Fischer, born 1879

Bawwwwwwwwwkkkk!

It was a heartbreaking sound . . . and yet it was a sound we loved to hear. Tell us, Jay: Was there any joy like the joy of realizing that another frying-chicken had bitten the dust – and knowing that tonight’s dinner would include crackling-good wings, thighs, drumsticks and breasts? Of course not. And yet, whenever the Jay-man looks back on those finger-lickin’ banquets, he shakes his head in wonder at the strange sights he witnessed in the barnyard, as the birds were being dispatched.

Can you picture the scene? Can you imagine Jay’s 60-year-old grandma on the run, eyes flashing, and the late-afternoon sunlight winking from the blade of her axe? Can you see the roosters picking her up on their radar – and then heading for the exits? Tragedy! Nabbed by a sprinting senior citizen, the poor bird has time for a single, desperate lament: *Bawwwwwwwkkkk!*

A moment later, headless, he’s dancing a madcap jig, while grandma hangs onto his legs and waits for the last of his blood to sink into the sand. (Lolah had more control over Harold and her sons than her mother had managed to establish over her *own* menfolk – which meant that in the older family, the males hunted and killed squirrels for frying (and were happy to clean them) . . . but the women were assigned to cleaning the chickens. Mercy – that was a *woman’s* job!)

Suppertime!

It was a strange thing to witness, as Jay has often said. But the scenario became even weirder, he’s convinced, when his own family members were assigned to assassinate the young fowl. Their strategy, in a phrase: Wring his dern head off! And they did. Literally. It took a good bit of twisting . . . after which the offended poultry raced hither and yon, but not for long.

The American philosopher, Woody Allen, probably said it best: “It’s hell what a man must do for a piece of chicken. And that isn’t all. Frequently, there must also be a beverage!”

In spite of the psychological trauma caused by these nightly exe-

cutions, Jay's family dearly loved to sit down to a meal of chicken n' biscuits. Jay's dad, the indomitable Harold, also got a kick out of raising the birds . . . and frequently teased and spoiled his fancy roosters to the point that they became a *bone fide* threat to barelegged women and girls alike. As you might expect, however, the fair Lolah was not exactly thrilled by the idea of being flogged by a four-pound rooster whose flashing spurs could easily draw blood. After one such episode, she collared her spouse out near the barn and screeched at him, to wit: "You have three choices, Harold. One, the rooster stops flogging me. Two, you sell the brute. Three, I leave. Now decide!"

From that point forward, Harold changed his approach to rooster-coaching, and the feisty birds never steamrollered the missus again.

Although it wasn't much fun getting flattened by a hysterical rooster, even Lolah had to admit that she enjoyed the fried chicken on Saturday nights. And indeed, there's no doubt that the Arthurs ate extremely well. Why wouldn't they have - surrounded as they were by hundreds of chickens and gallons of fresh milk each and every day?

You can also be sure that the redoubtable Lolah knew exactly what to do with all of these outstanding food resources. For starters, she liked to begin each day by whipping up a batch of jumbo-sized buttermilk biscuits. (She made far more of them, in fact, than the Arthur clan could ever hope to consume for breakfast.) But this culinary delight was only the beginning of the action; later in the day, Lolah would assemble a pan of thick yellow corn bread, then lay it uncut atop the morning's cold biscuitry. The result was an entirely new hot bread concoction built around a stack of leftovers.

Along with the biscuits, of course, the Arthurs could usually choose between "honey in the comb" and sorghum molasses. For supper, the fare usually consisted of milk and corn bread - and if you haven't sampled *that* gourmet treat, you certainly must be included among the ranks of humanity's most bereft supper-eaters!

As you've probably gathered by now, nobody in the Jay-house ever went to bed hungry. And these lucky diners also enjoyed the very best *pro-duce* that a farm could *pro-duce* - including a sampling of sliced fresh tomatoes, okra, black-eyed peas, green beans, crispy onions and radishes dipped lavishly in piles of salt. Watermelon and cantalope, in season, made up for any shortfalls and filled any left-over space in their stomachs.

Pinching Teats: Always A Mistake?

If you know anything at all about farms, you probably know that some farmers spent about nine-tenths of their waking hours yanking on a

cow's most private possessions. Of course, the Arthur family pronounced them as "tits."

Is it any wonder that many cows deeply *resented* the process of having their teats pinched for a half-hour, twice a day, every day?

And yet, sadly, there was no cure for it . . . at least, not back in 1939. Believe it or not, Jay's longsuffering pop actually *enjoyed* milking cows, a service which he usually provided before daybreak. But now and then, if dad were called away on business, the Jay-man might find himself commanding the Milkers Brigade. Thankfully, H.E. was usually tabbed to milk at least one of the cows, as he was more proficient. These milkings were not happy hours for Jay, whose fingers tended to overlap and then cramp up on him - causing major-league pinches to develop on one teat out of three. The affected cows were not amused, either, and often did their best to give the young man a good kicking and soaking (and not with Vitamin D milk, either!).

Once the milking had been accomplished, it was time to transport the foamy results (no other beverage on earth can beat the taste of warm, fresh milk!) from the barn back to the house. On most occasions, Jay's dad handled this chore . . . and would scoot the distance of about three city blocks without spilling a drop. His route carried him through the lespe-deza pasture, then through the barbed-wire gate. And indeed, he often pointed out that he'd made this journey so often that he could do it with his eyes shut. (Of course, the boys plotted against him many times and did everything they could to trip him up - but he never tipped over a single pail.)

Another favorite prank among the younger set required a sophisticated knowledge of the battery-powered electric fence around the cow pasture. The current flowed intermittently in this system - and you could tell when it was running by listening for the telltale "click," each time the juice reversed its flow. The prank worked like this:

First . . . the pranksters have understood that if one of them grabs the fence alone, he'll receive a solid jolt: *ka-pow!*

Second . . . the pranksters have discovered that if they hold hands, then grab the barbed wire (after the "click") and then grab somebody *else's* hand (Jay's? Why not!) . . . why, the juice will all flow to the third man in the daisy chain - *ka-POW!* . . . and the kid will positively levitate, with his hair standing on end and his eyes rolling like the lemons in a Vegas slot machine! After which, the half-electrocuted Jay cuts loose with the kind of invective that would have shocked a drunken stevedore. The pranksters laughed until they cried. (Given his inner ear problems, Jay would have required a hearing aid in order to pick up the sound of the "click" that signaled the shock-to-come.)

Fun down on the farm!

Roots: The Past Revisted

How can we hope to understand the present without having come to terms with the past?

Whenever Jay Arthur reflects on the forces that shaped his father Harold, he feels compassion for what the older man endured. At the tender age of six, Harold had lost his own father. Only a year later, his mother also passed on to her reward. Along with his twin brother Darold, Harold was now an orphan, and would be handed off from one older brother or sister to the next, until both boys finally reached the age of 21.

At that point, the two brothers received their half of the 65-acre Home Place as their inheritance.

The net result of this sequence of financial steps (after Uncle Harley had taken his cut for raising them) was only a few hundred dollars. And yet it was enough to allow each young man to become the proud part-owner of a 1926 Model "T" roadster with rumble seats. What a glorious moment it was - that shining hour when Harold and Darold spun the starters on their Fords, then roared off at a terrifying 27 miles an hour to shake, rattle and roll across the rutted, potholed roads of Dunklin County! Suddenly, girls were noticing them!

After launching his fabulous new invention in 1908, the indefatigable Henry Ford would sell 15 million of them within a decade - which meant that the Dearborn tycoon had manufactured more than half the automobiles then in existence. The Model T was a marvel of engineering, of course, but the roads on which it traveled could only be described as "lousy."

Can you imagine the pain that surged through both Harold and Darold when both of their Fords fell apart on those brutal county roads during the late 1920s?

These two Arthur brothers - what a story they had to tell! Darold, the first-born, had been injured in the womb somehow; he would be crippled for life. Although he was perfectly competent, mentally, he would also be legally labeled throughout his lifetime as if he lacked intelligence and judgment. (Of course, the real lack was in those who leaped to assumptions about him.)

Darold walked with a bad limp. He also held one arm behind him, as if it were crippled. In addition, he always jutted his jaw to one side when he wasn't talking - a practice that unfortunately tended to encourage the idea that he lacked intelligence. And yet, in spite of reports that he sometimes engaged in bouts of heavy drinking, the man turned out to be a

good husband and a dedicated provider – after marrying a good-hearted woman and settling down to raise several kids who turned out very well.

As you might expect, Darold finally came to resent the assumptions people made about him. And these misconceptions became even more pronounced as the local courts had awarded Harley legal guardianship over his injured brother. The tension came to a head one cold winter day, when Harold, Darold, Harley, H.E. and Jay found themselves huddled around the family's red-hot heating stove. Jay doesn't remember the exact sequence of exchanges – but he *does* recall how Darold suddenly jumped to his feet. Hands doubled into fists, the angry younger brother was shouting: "Harley, I've been wantin' to whup you fer a *long* time!"

Fortunately for everyone involved, Jay's pop managed to get between the combatants before the infliction of major bodily harm. Still, it was now clear to everyone that Darold had had enough . . . that he was totally ticked off, and would tolerate no further insults.

A few years after this incident, Darold went to court and obtained a ruling that ended Harley's rule as his legal guardian. But this decision also meant that a saddened Darold would be forced to sell off his portion of the farm, while hanging on to only two small acres for his own house and his swarming chickens. Harley had done a fine job in a thankless endeavor – but in today's world, naming a guardian probably wouldn't happen.

Was Darold "abnormal," by the standards of the time? As far as Jay is concerned, his Uncle Darold earned the right to be defined as perfectly sane and capable. And his kids certainly became responsible citizens. In the end, Jay concluded that Darold belonged in the ranks of the "normal" citizenry (some of whom, if subjected to closer inspection, would have seemed far less sane and solid than they claimed to be!).

This Hand For Hire

Along with growing and harvesting their own crops (and especially cotton), Jay's father and brothers were often in demand as "hired hands" . . . and were greatly valued for the high-quality services they provided in both the cotton and corn fields. Indeed, everybody in the Kennett region understood that Harold Arthur was a farmer by chance of birth and was actually a more dedicated employee when working for others than when working for himself! The truth was that Harold simply enjoyed preaching, raising kids and raising farm animals, and especially chickens.

For Harold, the challenge of mating pure-bred chickens and pigs with other breeds – known as "crossing" – brought endless hours of fascinating experimentation. Let's fact it: The man got a huge kick out of mar-

rying a Poland China hog to a Duroc, or crossing a Leghorn chicken with a Rose-Combed Buff Orpington with feathered legs. Of course, he also found immense satisfaction in matching bantam chickens with regular-sized birds, in order to produce cross-breeds that highlighted the best qualities in each. And it was quite a sight to see a bantam and a regular-sized chicken mating!

Harold treated his animals with exquisite care, and he produced some of the finest hogs and chickens in the region, as a result. (On several exciting occasions, his cross-breeding even extended to the tame local ducks, geese and guinea fowl. If it had several toes along with some feathers – and even webbed feet, in some situations – the hard-charging Harold was always eager to help it cross and reproduce with another breed!)

A truly reverent minister-farmer, Harold praised the creation by raising huge numbers of pigs and chickens – and then by sharing them not only with his own large family but with many others who were less fortunate. What faith this man had! Like Job in the Old Testament story, he patiently endured every hardship that came his way. When both of his mules – Mag and Diner – stepped on rusty nails near the wind-demolished barn and then died from tetanus-triggered lockjaw, Jay’s pop refused to despair. Years later, when all 12 of his 250-pound hogs died of cholera, he “put things in God’s hands” and soldiered bravely on.

Harold had learned his faith during several close brushes with the Beyond, way back in his own young manhood. A heavy cigarette-smoker as a youth, he’d suddenly begun to “spit up blood” at age 24. He gave up the “weed” soon after that, and never went back to it.

Harold was also tested by severe illness later in his life. An exceedingly strong man who could easily lift more than 100 pounds of corn or other animal feed, he developed kidney stones and then yeast pneumonia in his early 60s. Sad to say, he never fully recovered from these infirmities during the last 17 years of his life. Yet he battled back from them again and again. Another classic example of his astounding vitality could be seen in the fact that he continued to perform heavy work (and even to wrestle) day in and day out – in spite of his severe hernia, which became so pronounced that he was forced to wear a truss until well past the age of 50. (At that point he finally submitted to a corrective operation that repaired the disorder.)

Harold’s kidney stone attacks began around age 60, and they caused him such agonizing pain that he finally relented and agreed to see a doctor . . . and then even to enter a hospital. On one occasion, after weathering several attacks of the stones, Jay’s pop developed an uncontrollable fever. Jay later learned that the ailment had set off a bout of yeast pneumonia, a complaint so rare that the doctors failed to recognize it.

After spending several weeks in the local hospital with a raging fever, the suffering Harold Arthur was transferred to a larger facility in Memphis, where the specialists soon managed to shut down his pneumonia . . . only to discover that their patient had suffered several small strokes during his lengthy struggle with elevated body-temperatures. Eventually the beloved but now frail old man was taken to Birmingham, Ala., by Jay's sister Teri. There he and the ever-faithful Lolah would live in a small home on the farmstead operated by their daughter and her family.

On the 30th of October, 1977, this home would provide the setting for an astonishing event. While visiting his feeble father, a weeping Jay Arthur (not a religious man, under normal circumstances) would write a polished sonnet about his father - within the space of about 15 minutes.

With virtually no formal training in the craft of writing, Jay would surprise himself and his family by writing from deep in his heart the following sonnet, which still hangs in a privileged space in Lolah's home.

*A Great Man
(1905-1983)*

*He's a great man. He's a man of God.
A loving and loved man.
A man who respects . . . and is respected.
A man who loves and who's loved by his family.
A man who leads and guides people to God.
An example of a God-fearing man.
A man of humility who had once been poor.
A man who still feels empathy
For the poor man, the common man.*

*His voice that once rang clear
And strong from the pulpit,
Doesn't shout of God anymore.
But his heart does.
Through time, God has seen fit
To slow him and give him rest
As his final hour approaches.*

*His once rapid walk is no more.
And yet in the eyes of God and his family
He can still out-walk most other men.*

*Because of heavy, endless use,
Some parts of his body have failed.
His thoughts are sometimes of long ago,
And he may forget what happened earlier today.
Yes, fifty years of God's ministry
Took its toll, and he no longer seems young.*

*This man will never have a plaque
On display in the Minister's Hall of Fame.
But to those who know him best,
He'll always be the "Champion Wrestler," "Sultan of
Swat," Our "Home Run King,"
"The Preacher," and "The Father," and "The Man."
Yes. My father, Harold Arthur,
Was and is a great man!*

—*Lovingly, Jay Arthur, October 30, 1977*

Goodbye, Harold

A month or so before Jay's beloved father went to his eternal reward at age 78, the son was able to place the father's firstborn great-grandson on Harold's knee. The year was 1983, and the child - four-month-old Daniel Naher - made a huge hit with the old man.

Harold had been brought outside especially for this occasion. He sat blinking and smiling in the sunlight, and Jay's heart went out to him. The family sat quietly on the lawn of the nursing home, forming a loving circle around the man in the wheelchair.

An hour later, when someone asked Harold what he thought of little Daniel, Jay's Grandson, Harold answered brightly: "What . . . was *Jay* here?" This behavior seemed strange, since he'd responded quite cheerfully to Jay's greetings earlier in the day. Was the great-grandpa afflicted with Alzheimer's?

About a month after that visit, while relaxing in his wheelchair at the lunch table, Harold slipped silently away to "the place of no pain and all joy." Harold had been ready for the voyage for some time, of course. Hadn't he told us as much, so many times during the last few years before his death?

His wake was a crowded affair, with friends and family jamming the funeral parlor, and visitors from several states arriving to pay their

respects.

Jay listened carefully to the stories about “Brother Harold,” who lay in stately repose in his coffin. The talk was of crops and weather, tractors, cotton-picking machines, the incompetent government and how the younger generation was “going to the dogs,” and also about mules and hogs and chickens. The words vibrated with the rich, vivid colors of this man’s triumphant life. “Remember when Brother Harold and H.E. started that cotton boll fight, and then Jay sneaked up behind them, and the three of them knocked down three rows of cotton for several yards?”

“Say, didn’t Brother Harold baptize your boy and marry your daughter?”

The setting struck Jay as surreal. Each time he looked into the coffin, he saw a strapping farmer – a 180-pound man with coal-black hair. Saw him roaring with laughter as he threw corn cobs at chickens and humans alike.

Who *was* that shriveled, sunken corpse in the casket? Jay didn’t recognize him.

In the end, say this of Harold: *That his children feared but respected him.*

Sure, it was true that Jay often apologized to his childhood friends for being one of “the preacher’s kids.” And he always tried to laugh – tried to imitate his father’s wonderful, booming guffaw – each time they told him that the “preacher’s kids were usually the meanest kids in town.”

Harold had lived and died without a mean bone in his body. And Jay knew that he’d passed that wonderful trait on to every one of his sons.

FIVE: Hard Times In The Bootheel

“Poverty is very good in poems, but very bad in the house; very good in maxims and sermons, but very bad in practical life.”

Henry Ward Beecher, 1813-1887

September, 1935.

We had reached the depths of the Great Depression by now, and the human suffering was all around us.

You could see it in the faces of the cotton farmers all across Dunklin County, as they debated whether or not to plant and harvest their crops. With prices this low, the “pickin’” was hardly worth the effort.

You could see it in the faces of the hungry, exhausted men who tramped the highways and rode the freights. Penniless, these permanent vagrants begged food wherever they could, then moved on to the next town to beg again.

From one end of Kennett to the other, Jay Arthur and struggling kin could read the signs of the economic catastrophe that was tearing America apart. Everywhere you looked in 1935, crops were rotting in the fields and workers were sitting idle, staring listlessly at the empty horizon. Why work, when you stood little chance of being paid? Why plant the ground, when you knew there would be no buyers for the cotton you so arduously raised and then picked? It was brutal . . . and yet most of the “old-timers” who remember that era will tell you that they managed to take care of their neighbors, and kept on planting and harvesting their crops.

Somehow, most of the folks in Dunklin County were fed each day, all along Highways 25 and 61 (the region that later became the I-55 corridor), as tramps drifted in and out of a series of temporary homeless shelters. How bad was it? This bad: When Harold’s 12 fat hogs died from cholera in the summer of ’35, he said, “Don’t worry,” and then went around telling everyone who would listen: “It’s probably for the best. The way prices are right now, we couldn’t have afforded to pay for their feed.”

This bad: Unable to pay for coal, neighbors and relatives of the Arthur clan increasingly resorted to burning full ears of corn in their coal heating stoves.

For Jay and his brother H.E., the good news was that they were too young to understand the tragedy unfolding all around them. Like kids everywhere, they were more interested in games and toys than in anything else. And so what if their folks couldn’t afford fancy, store-bought toys? Jay

and H.E. were quite content to share a hand-me-down coaster wagon and a tricycle. They also enjoyed playing with a unique toy that consisted of a large water pipe connected to two 48-inch cultivator wheels. While pretending to be daring racecar drivers, they pushed their rolling gizmo back and forth across the yard and up the lane, laughing and skipping all day long. Another favorite playtime device was a flattened Prince Albert tobacco can nailed to a stick. The sides of the can had been rolled up, creating a “guide” that allowed the two kids to slide the hunk of metal against the iron rim of a rolling wagon wheel they’d “borrowed” from the barn. Sometimes they even rolled their toy all the way to school – a distance of more than a mile – along the dirt roads of the region.

What a racket! This rolling noisemaker provided hours of wacky fun . . . until one day H.E. tried to “wear” one of the rims by sliding it down over his head onto his shoulders. A very imaginative touch . . . but then the rim got stuck, and poor H.E. was forced to sit still while Uncle Harley cut it away from his ears with a hacksaw!

Whenever he reflects on that glorious moment when the rim popped free of H.E.’s cranium, Jay finds himself wishing he’d said: “H.E., you sure do have a big head!” (As in “swelled.”) Or maybe: “Dern it, H.E., that was an *antique* rim – we coulda been rich. Instead of cutting off that metal, we should’ve shrunk your skull!”

Jokes aside, however, the Jay-man shudders whenever he remembers the sound of the hacksaw biting at the steel rim – only a quarter of an inch away from his poor brother’s scalp. Jay has always “felt the pain” of others – and especially that of his kinfolk. Nor is he ashamed to admit that he dreads such pain, himself, and will do *anything* to avoid it. Ask him to describe a moment of “true agony,” for example, and he’ll quickly tell you about that traumatic afternoon during a recent fishing expedition when he accidentally whipped a fishhook into his own shin – to the depth of the barb – and then had to dig it out with a knife. Jay readily admits that he screamed like a tormented banshee while the knife did its work. (Later, as he meditated on the meaning of this horrific episode, he recalled another of Woody Allen’s sagacious maxims: “I’m not afraid of getting hurt, or even of dying – I just don’t want to be there when it happens.”)

One thing you can be sure of: This man has never wanted to be a surgeon!

“We’re Not In The Bootheel Anymore, Toto!”

Was it Mark Twain who pointed out that everybody complains about the weather, but nobody *does* anything about it?

Fat chance. For those of us who lived – and still live – in the

seven counties that make up the Missouri Delta region, simply *surviving* the fury of Mother Nature's onslaughts was enough of a challenge.

The scene: A mild summer afternoon, temperature in the high eighties. Blue sky, and few puffy white clouds drifting overhead. And here comes Jay, barefooted, skipping across the weed patch and whistling a merry tune -

Uh-oh.

Within the space of three minutes, a jet-black cloud has blotted out the sun. The temperature plummets . . . thunder rattles the kid's teeth . . . lightning zigzags like a white-hot rope whipping back and forth above the cotton fields. Then the hailstones arrive. Pelted by jagged hunks of ice the size of ping pong balls, the boy scrambles for the only available cover: an empty 55-gallon metal oil drum. Ears covered to blot out the racket, he curls into a shivering ball and waits for the deluge to pass.

Emerging half an hour later, he steps into a smashed world ankle-deep in ice. As far as the eye can see, the cotton rows have been pummeled as if by a giant's fist. What was it Dorothy had said to Toto, moments after the tornado dropped them head-first into the scrambled Kingdom of Oz? "We're not in Kansas anymore, Toto!"

And what about the sand storms that periodically lashed the farms of the region? Jay remembers the look of fear on his mother's face: "You kids get in the house right now - a sand storm is on the way!"

A moment later she's frantically covering the windows with sheets, as the storm-driven sand begins to tattoo the panes. These storms were murder on cotton, of course, each time a blaster slashed ruthlessly through the plants. It got so bad after awhile that many farmers chose to "strip-plant" wheat alongside their cotton, so that they wouldn't have to rely on a single crop. More importantly, the wheat provided a barrier against much of the rolling, cutting sand.

They also laid in hundreds of fast-growing trees as natural wind-breaks, while adding such "green manure cover crops" as a mixture of rye and vetch each fall. This cover crop would be plowed under in the spring (after protecting the soil all winter long). The result was soil that could hold more moisture, even as it became less vulnerable to wind and rain. H.E. filed this kind of information away in his head, then applied it when he bought and farmed his 60 acres with attached farmhouse, many years later. This man did not need a degree in agriculture; he could have taught it!

Woe unto those farmers who were unable to master these techniques, however. In one of the Midwest's worst ecological disasters, thousands of farmers and ranchers in western Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, Nebraska and Texas (known collectively as the "Dust Bowl") were driven

off their land by these tidal waves of blistering, wind-driven sand.

Ab, The Games We Played!

While the grownups struggled to protect the cotton from the teeth of the wind (even as they paid the mortgage and bought winter shoes for one and all), the children of the Delta remained blissfully ignorant of the storm and stress all around them.

As Jay will tell you, the pre-teen boys were too busy “shooting marbles” to worry much about anything else. After drawing an oblong circle in the sand, we would place a few “regular” marbles inside it. Next we’d toss a favorite marble (or “taw”) close to the circle and then shoot it with the thumb and first two fingers. The object of the game was to knock the *other* kids’ marbles out of the circle, which meant that you could then keep them as your own. (Of course, the marbles you’d placed inside that oval were also fair game for the other players.) Along with the “regulars,” such exotic prizes as “log rollers” (marbles made of steel) and “marble-marbles” (jumbo-sized) made for a real treasure trove inside that circle, and were coveted by all.

Fortunately for all who played this game, the standard practice in the Bible Belt was to return all of the marbles to their rightful owners at the end of the day. (As a matter of fact, most of us were sternly forbidden from playing “keepers” – since it amounted to nothing less than a form of gambling.) Sounds pretty innocent, right? But this harmless-seeming sport nonetheless had its share of hustlers and con-men. Jay learned his lesson the hard way, at age 10 or 11, when he purchased a package of 25 marbles for a dime . . . then played all day long with them. But when the precious objects were returned to him, lo and behold, they were cloudy and chipped. Some unscrupulous player had pulled a *switcheroo* on the Jay-man!

But shooting marbles was only one of a hundred pastimes that filled their days. Together, he and H.E. chugged around the farm on a shared, battered bicycle, or took turns riding every horse they could safely mount. And these thrilling adventures left their mark; to this day, H.E. and Jay remain best friends, and communicate frequently by telephone, fax and even Internet.

When they talk, they look back fondly on memories (or at least H.E. does), such as the many times when H.E. would return home late at night from a hot date, then prod his brother to make room in the warm feather bed: “Scoot over, Jay! I can’t get in!”

And Jay would always respond, before jerking awake: “I’m gonna get you for this, H.E.!”

Jay never did exact his revenge . . . but like brothers everywhere, he never stopped threatening to even the score, either!

Isn't that what brothers *do*?

The Preacher's Kid

"One of the advantages of being poor is that it necessitates the cultivation of the virtues."

Jerome K. Jerome, 1859-1927

If Jay Arthur had to name the most important single fact of his childhood, that fact would probably be this: In addition to serving as a full-time Baptist minister and father, Harold raised cotton and other crops part-time, and he was dedicated to his ministry and respected and loved by hundreds of people for it. Dad was a minister first and farmer second, although he loved his chickens!

Ask any mature adult what it was like to grow up as "the preacher's kid," and the odds are high that you'll hear some "cognitive dissonance" in the response you get. Let's face it: surviving the stresses and storms of adolescence is tough enough in its own right. But what's a rebellious teenager to do when he or she looks around and sees an entire Sunday morning congregation treating dear old dad like a "living saint?"

In Jay's case, the struggle began early - since he was only five years old when Harold Arthur was chosen as pastor of the Friendly Baptist Church, located only about two miles from the family farm. The job didn't pay much, but it provided some very nice fringe benefits - starting with the fact that the family was permitted to live in the parsonage that flanked the church. Wonder of wonders, the white-painted residence contained not only a water pump on the back porch - but even *electricity*!

These new living arrangements were a great blessing, and powerfully underlined the theme of many of Harold's sermons: *Trust in the Lord, and your needs will be provided in due time*. Although the Arthurs lived in the house for only a year, this no-cost shelter gave them the precious time they needed to tear down their old farmhouse and build a "new" four-room edifice (but still without electricity) on the homestead.

During the next few years, they continued to light their home with hurricane lamps and, sometimes, a bright, high-powered gas lamp. But progress was loose upon the land, and rural electrification was everywhere the order of the day. And eventually the hour came when Harold

and Lolah were forced to admit the obvious: They needed to go electric. But it still took several more years before this goal was achieved and they actually got the service hooked up.

Bringing “Reddy Kilowatt” aboard the Good Ship Arthur wasn’t as easy as it looked, however. That task was indeed a huge one! Due to the remote location of their house, the house had to be physically transported a quarter-mile—at a cost of \$25—to the electric light poles on the main road. Then, the family hired a contractor (Jay seems to remember the figure of \$50 being mentioned) to install the necessary wiring, five years after moving the house, due to a lack of funds for that purpose.

The strategy paid off handsomely, since the move to roadside allowed the home dwellers to hook up to the Rural Electric Association (REA) lines that ran along the road. The REA had balked at the cost of running the line that quarter-mile back to the homestead, since Harold would have been the only customer on that extra wire.

The arrival of “the juice” unquestionably changed the lives of my pal Jay and his family, along with the lives of thousands of other Dunklin County residents. But it’s also true that “old habits die hard.” And one of those habits - the twice-weekly visitations of the “Ice Man” - seemed especially hard to break. Jay remembers how his kinfolk continued to use the old “icebox” long after refrigerators and the electricity required to operate them had become “old news” in Kennett and environs. And why not - when the primitive electrical system allowed only a single hanging light bulb in the center of each room, and no other electrical outlets?

Like hanging wet laundry on the backyard clothesline and cleaning out the basement every spring, the Ritual of the Ice Man had become deeply embedded in their lives. Jay still recalls how a card would be placed in the kitchen window, in order to let the tong-man know how much ice was needed. Depending on the family’s requirements, the card might ask for 12 and a half, or 25, or 50 . . . or even 75 pounds of the frigid stuff. With a single glance at the card, the ice man could immediately load the requested amount into the icebox - even if the family wasn’t at home.

What a joy it was during the hottest weather of the year to anticipate the arrival of the ice truck! Glistening with moisture, the smoking shards were so cold they left the boys dancing a jig - even as they searched frantically for a clean rag or some paper in which to wrap their summertime treasure. And ah, the blessed relief from the muggy heat of the Delta . . . each time you ran a hunk of that glittering crystal along your sweating shoulder, or lapped at it with your thirsty tongue!

Whenever Jay pictures them running toward the ice truck - the thirsty, sweaty children of the Missouri cotton fields - he remembers Robert Frost’s wonderful line in a poem called “Directive”: *Weep for what*

little would make the children glad! Beloved or not, however, the ice box was doomed – as soon as money became available for electric outlets and an electric refrigerator. How long, after all, could the icebox ritual survive the arrival of the refrigerator – which provided all the ice cubes you could ever want at the mere flick of a switch?

But the decline of the ice box wasn't the only sign that the world of the Delta was changing beyond recognition, back in the early 1940s. Only a few years after the arrival of the juicer, the family's old-fashioned (and incredibly noisy) washing machine (a gasoline-powered "roller-model" Maytag) had become a household appliance dinosaur, as newer and quieter electric versions of the machine invaded homes all across Missouri. (If a kid or two didn't get their arms caught in the rollers while "exploring" them, it was considered a miracle!)

Of course, the installation of the outlets also brought the radio into the parlor. Suddenly, almost every household contained a bright circle of magic – the space in front of the Philco or the Zenith – where a child could stretch out after supper and imagine the flickering, vivid world of *The Lone Ranger*, or *The Green Hornet*, or *Mark Trail*.

*Alone and wandering through the vast open spaces of
the Great Canadian Northwest . . . Mark Trail!*

*Masked man, a stranger just got off the train carry-
ing many guns! Okay, let's go. Saddle up, Tonto.*

How often in memory has the Jay-man summoned back those thrilling ghosts! Ozzie and Harriet . . . George Burns and Gracie Allen . . . Jack Benny . . . Fibber McGee and Molly . . . Amos N' Andy . . . Gangbusters . . . Edgar Bergen with Charlie McCarthy . . . Batman . . . Big Town . . . Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons . . . One Man's Family . . . Kate Smith . . . Death Valley Days: Like the sacred litanies of religious ritual, this roll-call of early radio programs seems to command an uncanny power.

Is it the power of memory? The power of knowing the past, of feeling the texture of the past in your very bones?

The past is foreign country; they do things differently there.

Meet Me At The Fair!

On the 30th of April, 1939, the New York World's Fair opened with

a blast of trumpets and the announcement that the entire extravaganza would be named: "World of Tomorrow." And indeed, as many historians have noted, this unforgettable day would mark the beginning of a new chapter in America's rapidly accelerating evolution into a high-tech, global superpower.

The World's Fair was a smash hit from the moment it threw open its gates. Each day, thousands of stunned Americans wandered through such dazzling displays as the "Futurama" exhibit that had been assembled by General Motors. The glitzy Futurama drew upwards of 28,000 per day, according to Life Magazine, and most visitors found themselves fascinated by a series of predictions about what daily life would be like in 1960. Among the wild-eyed prophecies that didn't materialize were the following:

**People in 1960 will be able to cross America on trains, express highways and planes within 24 hours.

**Americans will enjoy two-month vacations in 1960.

**These lucky citizens will be able to zoom along on seven-lane expressways that include four 50-mph lanes, two 75-mph lanes, and a single 100-mph lane for the especially bold of heart.

**The lanes will be controlled by special radio towers in a system that will make auto accidents a thing of the past.

**New cars will be shaped like teardrops. All will be equipped with air conditioning, and the average new car could cost as little as \$200.

Although these remarkably upbeat (and exaggerated) predictions looked toward a bright and prosperous future, the world situation in 1939 actually seemed much darker. In September of that year, for example, a German tyrant named Hitler would decide to invade neighboring Poland - in a brutal, premeditated attack that marked the beginning of the great conflagration that was World War II.

While the valiant Poles fought German tanks with outdated cavalry regiments and sword-waving soldiers on horseback, the Japanese juggernaut was marching without resistance across vast areas of Southeast Asia. Within two years, the onslaught would reach Hawaii and a U.S. naval base that would live forever, to quote FDR, in the "annals of infamy." With the attack on Pearl Harbor of December 7, 1941, the Americans entered the war and young men from cities and towns and hamlets all across the United States headed for the nearest enlistment office. Jay clearly remembers listening to President Roosevelt's message on a battery-powered radio.

Suddenly, the nation was caught up in a burst of unprecedented patriotic fervor, as marching bands and confetti-tossing citizens gathered in the great shipping ports to bid farewell to their valiant soldiers and sailors. Led by the endlessly calm and encouraging Roosevelt (and later by

Missourian Harry “Give ’em hell!” Truman), America took on a new role as an international military power determined to “make the world safe for democracy!”

Meanwhile, the world of America’s farms – and the world of the Missouri Delta – had also begun changing beyond recognition.

The Arthur Clan: A Day In The Life

Whenever Jay Arthur remembers his family, he thinks first of the patriarch – the endlessly dependable and remarkably compassionate Harold Arthur, who proved over and over again that love consists mostly of doing the small, repetitive tasks that form our daily lives. Example: On winter mornings (*thousands* of them, over the years), Harold always got up first in the unheated house and padded in his bare feet out to the living room, where he would quickly light up the “heatin’ stove.” Jay would always shiver at the sound of Harold’s bare feet on the linoleum – and would then snuggle even deeper into his featherbed!

The ritual was ever the same. First the hard-working Harold would lay in a dozen or so dried-out barn shingles, along with kerosene-soaked corn cobs and small slivers of coal. (In later years, Donald would assume this task.) Once these combustibles were in place, it was time to strike one of the giant kitchen matches he always kept on hand . . . and then to step back and let the blaze do its magic. Within minutes, that fire would be roaring up the stovepipe, and the living room would begin to glow with the heat it contained. Unfortunately, the heat didn’t quite reach the kitchen – where Lolah often froze as she cooked breakfast.

Make no mistake: Those winter nights in Southeast Missouri were no joking matter, where one winter the temperature fell to 14 degrees below zero! Our best defense against the frigid winds that gnawed at windows and doors was the “feather bed” – a sumptuous lair crowded with gossamer-like chicken and goose feathers, and topped by piles of homemade quilts. Bundled up in our “long-handled” underwear (“trap doors” were an essential feature, in order to make it easier to answer “nature’s call”), and burrowing deep into our feathered nests, we slept like kings – and let those howling Mississippi Delta and Ozark snowstorms do their worst!

The only downside to the feather beds was the fact that sooner or later, we had to climb out of them and face the wintertime music. Ask Jay to describe that brutal trip to the “privy” on a winter morning – or the equally challenging task of pumping a hundred gallons of ice-flecked water, along with pitching corn and hay to the animals, and he’ll tell you

that there are some good things to be said about the modern world . . . starting with the joyful experience of using real toilet paper in *la salle de bain*, rather than crackly pages torn from last year's Sears catalogue, and in an "indoor facility!"

Amazingly enough, the now-90-year-old Lolah Arthur lived on until the age of 85 in relative comfort and no small degree of happiness on the family's old Missouri farmstead, even though her eldest son H.E. now owns the property. Feisty as ever, Lolah *also* insisted on cutting the grass - while perched boldly aboard her very own riding mower! Ask her why she still bothered and she would blurt happily: "Why, that girl H.E. hired, she just doesn't get close enough to my flowers, and if this keeps up, the weeds are gonna take *over!*"

Her home may have been outfitted with a dishwasher, a microwave oven, an electric washer-dryer and all the other modern appliances - but it's easy to see that part of Lolah didn't really trust these new-fangled devices. With her loyal dog Rhett at her side (a gorgeous Sheltie), she was happiest when she could leave the "comfort zone" of her lovely house and tramp the neighboring fields to her heart's content . . . while reliving all the wonderful years she had spent here with Harold, raising her contentious brood.

SIX: Donald Arrives - And The Depression Departs

“The poor on the borderline of starvation live purposeful lives. To be engaged in a desperate struggle for food and shelter is to be wholly free from a sense of futility.”

Eric Hoffer

One fine morning somewhere in the early months of 1936, our man Jay awoke to a major discovery: a noisy, gurgling creature in diapers had just invaded the spare bedroom!

The creature’s name was Donald, of course; his role in life was to serve as Jay’s best buddy and most loyal punching bag. As time passed, Jay and Don would become the very best of friends. Tell me: Is there any joy on earth like the joy that an older brother feels for a younger one? Whether Jay was slugging his “baby bro” on the arm, or doing his level best to swipe the kid’s chocolate ice cream cone, the fact remains: Big Jay deeply admired (and still does) Little Don!

Let’s face it: These two had some fabulous times together, and it gave Jay an enormous sense of satisfaction to see Don develop into a man who burned with the drive it takes to succeed. Of course, Jay’s encouragement (Don called it “goadings”) certainly played a major role in the latter’s success. No wonder Donald became such a powerhouse . . . after all those years of boxing his brother Jay (while the latter restricted himself to using a single glove), or facing up to Jay’s best baseball fastball (from a distance of exactly 25 feet).

Ouch. The Jay-man outweighed his brother by about 40 pounds - which meant that their on-the-field relationship was always determined by the Basic Laws of Physics. Translation: A large, heavy object collides with a much smaller object at a high rate of speed. Result: the smaller object gets run over, as if he’d just stepped in front of the Santa Fe Special. (Does Don still carry a grudge over this rip-snorting treatment? Probably! Jay wouldn’t blame him if he did.) But not to worry: Don’s revenge arrived a few years later, right on schedule . . . when the Jayster came home from the Navy with a bum knee and Don instantly pinned him to the linoleum, 11 times in a row. After that, the Jayster never tormented the youngster again!

One of the happiest moments the Jay-guy can remember took

place on the 26th of November, 1944, when his one and only sister – the unstoppable Teri – joined her brothers in this idyllic vale. The women of the church insisted that their prayers had produced Teri – but Harold and Lolah had a different understanding of the event! And it didn't take the kid long to make one thing perfectly clear: Miss Teri did not intend to let herself be intimidated by three rowdy boys and their pastoring father. Anybody who says women are the “weaker sex” hasn't met Teri!

She became – and still is – a great sister and a wonderful, caring person. Teri has also been a successful teacher, writer, mother and wife, even while serving for many years as a friend to many and a tremendous support to Lolah, Jay and his family. Teri also spent 2 years teaching English in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), South Africa, as a Lay Missionary for the Southern Baptist Association. Later, she amazed us again by earning her master's degree at the tender age of 51. She and her husband Roy spent 10 years trying to have a child – before winding up with *two* of them.

Ah, memory! Jay's eyes mist over whenever he recalls his early school days. But why do his own kids look so *bored* . . . each time he, tells them (at least twice a day) how he and his brothers barefooted it to school each day during warm weather? It was true! They hiked one and a quarter miles each way, and they had to be at the absolute point of death before Lolah would allow them to stay home.

Going to school was different in those days, however – starting with the fact that Delta kids attended classes in July and August. Then they were excused until about November 1, so they could pick cotton and “pull bolls” . . . a term that described the arduous process of removing bolls (or cotton still in the hulls) while wearing brown “Jersey gloves.” After attending school all winter, these hard-working youngsters were once again released from the one-room schoolhouse in early May – this time in order to “chop” (weed and thin) the cotton. Routine, every-day pumping water and feeding the livestock was a “piece of cake” by comparison.

Unlike their down-on-the-farm cousins, the kids in the “big city” of Kennett (then about 6,000 population) attended school from September to June. As Jay remembers it, the African-American children followed the same yearly schedule . . . but were bussed to then-segregated schools in the nearby town of Haiti (pronounced HAY-tie).

Interestingly enough, one of Jay's greatest challenges as a student actually occurred because he did his job in the classroom too *well*. As a first-grader in Sumach, he found himself studying in a room so small that there was no way to separate the first three grades. But so what? Jay loved going to school (and still does) – so he didn't mind the crowding in the least. And the teachers soon discovered that he was as good or better

at reading and arithmetic than most of the second-graders.

The result? Simple: The teacher promoted him to the second grade about halfway way through the school year. Jay “paid a social price” for this sudden advancement, however – and he paid it all the way through the 12th grade. Smaller and in most cases younger than the others in his classes, he learned a new respect for the word “shortie.” (Although the kid turned 7 in January, he would be enrolled in the third grade by July . . . in what turned out to be a classic case of “too much, too soon.”)

“The human race is a race of cowards; and I am not only marching in that procession but carrying a banner.”

Mark Twain

Younger and smaller than most of the other kids in his grade – and saddled with the dubious distinction of being “the preacher’s kid,” Jay gained some rapid and unexpected maturity . . . although he certainly didn’t appreciate the gift at the time. Example: Whenever he was called “runt” or “preacher’s kid,” the odds of an ensuing fist fight loomed large. The only questions were 1.) where? 2.) what time? and 3.) how badly would the Jay-man get blasted?

Of course, Jay almost always lost to the bigger boys, and especially Lon, who wasn’t much bigger, but more than a year older. Still, Jay finally did beat him at wrestling – in a battle beside the churchyard pump – after being discharged from the Navy in 1955. “Lon was really mad and trying to win,” recalls the usually easygoing Jay, “but I wasn’t carrying a grudge. And besides, Harold was preaching inside the church that night. However, I sure wasn’t going to let him ‘dirty my back!’” That was the only time Jay ever clearly beat Lon. (Unfortunately, the once powerful Lon later suffered from a heart ailment and died as a result in 2000.)

Since fighting was a “capital offense” in both the Arthur household and the schoolhouse, Jay could usually expect a switching or paddling from the teacher – and another one when he arrived home, if Harold got wind of his wrongdoing. After what must have seemed like years, Jay began to get in his licks on the older boys and out-punched some kids about his age and even a few who were larger. But the sad fact remains: The Jayster usually got not one but *two* “lickin’s” for his transgressions!

On one remarkable occasion, H.E. had to tell Lon not to hit or kick Jay when the lad was down . . . but other than that, H.E. let Jay take his lumps on the battlefield. “You bring most of it on yourself!” snapped the irate older brother.

Timer

Question: How much trouble did Good Ole Timer get into as a kid?

Answer: Jay and his fun-loving brothers counted 32 spankings or paddlings Jay had received in grade school to one for H.E. and none for Don or his sister Teri. Many of these were “switchings,” using willow limbs which stung, or heavy yard-rulers, which left you feeling like you’d been hit by a small club. Jay also learned a few things about dodging and feinting with his left! These handy lessons took place before high school, and the young man became so proficient that he actually began winning a few fights!

But Jay never lost a fight as a high-schooler – probably because he engaged in none, except while taking “formal boxing.” Instead of cutting up his pretty hands, the Jayster taught himself how to “talk things out” with other students – and gained a skill that later came in handy in government work.

Another favorite pastime was climbing trees . . . where he looked for birds, bats, squirrels, possums, snakes . . . you name it. (Or was he really in search of the honor that went with proving he could climb them?) Known as the “Daredevil of Dunklin,” Jay became very good at hiding the fear he felt. (And there was plenty of it – although the urge to Discover the Unknown was usually strong enough to overcome the anxiety.)

He fell only once – at the age of 13, in the 8th grade – and then only about five feet. But he landed on his instep, and his foot struck a raised root, with his entire weight behind it. After watching him suffer through three days of severe pain, Jay’s father took him to the doctor for only the second time in his life. (Jay was nine when he’d had his tonsils removed in a doctor’s office and went home immediately afterwards.)

According to the doctor, nothing was broken; however, Jay had to use a cane or hop on one foot for nearly three months. His mother or father drove him to within half a mile of the school, then dropped him at the point where the muddy gumbo road became impassable. From that point on, Jay literally hopped to school! He also hopped all the way home each afternoon – a distance of one and a quarter miles.

Did the Jayman let these difficulties bother him? Not in the least. During this strange period, he even managed a part in a play – and did so well that most of those in the audience thought the “hopping” was part of the script.

Roaring, they elbowed each other in the ribs: “What an actor that Jay Arthur is!”

SEVEN: All The Pretty Animals . . . And The Snipe Hunt

“Animals are such agreeable friends - they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms.”

George Elliot

What is time, and how does it move?

Ask that question of Jay Arthur, and this life-loving philosopher will tell you that “time is a river” – and that all of us are more like Huck Finn on his raft than we imagine.

The river sweeps all before it. Turn around once or twice on your raft, and your boyhood is ending. Drift around that next bend, and all at once you're a father and doing your best to raise your *own* boys. Cruise by a few more snags and sunken logs . . . suddenly you're beginning your “golden years” and wondering when it will all end.

Jay Arthur says he has never forgotten that glorious final line in F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel, *The Great Gatsby*: “Thus we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”

In the beginning, of course, the river of time seems to move very slowly. As a child, Jay drifted along from moment to moment, and each day seemed to last an eternity. Some days brought sorrow, and some brought joy, as the great tide of life moved down the river of time. Jay watched an endless parade of living forms. He saw chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese born and hatched. He played with and made friends with plenty of baby pigs, chickens, calves and other animals. But he also witnessed the naked reality of life on the farm, while watching many of his pals die.

Jay learned at first-hand the importance of good nutrition. He saw pigs and chickens eat one another alive, at times, because of the need for certain minerals and vitamins or other nutritional requirements. (Recalling such occurrences later, while attending college classes, turned out to be very helpful. What a difference there was between reading a “theory” in a textbook and describing feeding-time around the henhouse!)

Jay watched a thousand calamities unfold, as a farm kid. On more than one occasion, expensive pigs used for breeding purposes became overheated and died. He also watched horses, cows and dogs injure themselves severely in fences or on poorly constructed gates, resulting in death or crippling. Sometimes cows and pigs became infected with Brucellosis

disease, which caused them to abort their young. (After that, they could be sold for slaughtering purposes only.) Mules stepped on nails that had been carelessly left in boards around the fallen barn, and those mules then died of tetanus-linked lockjaw.

Chickens and turkeys contracted blackhead disease and died like flies. Ducks and chickens were also eaten by mink, foxes, dogs and even snakes. Example: One morning Harold summoned everyone to a fenced-in area, by telling them that he was keeping some “special pullets” there. When they arrived, they saw the 11 female chickens lying dead, with seemingly not a feather out of place. Mink, his dad said.

These accidents took strange and unaccountable forms. Jay never heard of mules hurting themselves when they ran through a fence; they simply lifted their feet out the same way they'd gone in. But horses were different. Panicked, a horse would rear up on its hind legs, then pull back and imbed the wire deep into the skin and muscle and maybe contract tetanus. Many went on to develop lockjaw . . . and then starve to death because they couldn't open their mouths to chew. Mag and Diner died that way, and it hurt Jay to watch them slowly perish.

Another painful episode occurred one Sunday afternoon when Jay was eight. This extraordinary event – profound in its implications for his development – began innocently enough, with a great picnic that included about 50 people, all of whom gathered at his Uncle Harley's farm. While the revelers laid their banquet out on makeshift, saw-horse tables, Jay found himself being lifted onto the back of a pretty quarter horse named Dan.

Dan was a real beauty. Eight years old, he was jet-black but with a white star on his forehead and a single white-stocking foot. As usual, Jay was eager to show off for the other boys (to say nothing of the girls) who were present. In a flash, he had decided to ride bareback! With a John Wayne-like gesture, Jay kicked Dan in the sides – hard – and turned him onto a solid dirt road. The horse obeyed, and took off like a shot. No way could Jay turn or slow the maddened brute down. (Later, the Jay-man learned that his older cousin, Donnell – then serving in the Army – had been racing the animal frequently, before his departure. Dan was simply “doing what came naturally!”)

Suddenly, the flying horse was making like Secretariat. Galloping furiously, he zoomed along the dirt road, then cut to the left and circled through a picked corn field, where the empty stalks stood four to five feet high. Riding bareback, Jay had his knees tightly pressed against Dan's sides and was holding onto the flowing mane for all he was worth. Indeed, the bold rider now truly feared for his life! But with every step, the corn stalks smacked against the horse's rump . . . making him think that Jay had

gone to the whip. Panicked, the poor beast continued to race along for all he was worth, and Jay could almost hear the announcer roaring:

And now they come to the top of the stretch ... and it's Secretariat pulling away by 15 lengths!

A moment later they were back on the road, and pounding toward the big crowd of boys standing in the yard. Disaster loomed. At the last moment, however, some men waved Dan away. The hard-charging gelding shied off sharply – and Jay went tumbling into deep blue space. He landed on one hip and then bounced against a large corner wooden fence post lying on the ground. Embarrassed? Chagrined? Scared? Hurt? Lucky?

All of the above, and more. But the sore hip bothered him most of all. Jay could scarcely walk for several days after this episode, a fact which inspired Harold to comment: “Funny ... I’ve never seen Jay get hurt working – but he sure gets hurt a lot *playing* ... or trying to outdo other people!”

The story had a very positive outcome, however: The very next spring, Harold bought Dan for \$75 – a lot of money then (although money was more available in 1942 than in 1941.) Donnell had just been drafted into the Army, and he probably never expected to come home alive. H.E. and Jay had tons of fun riding the horse for a couple of years, before swapping him for Posey, a two-year-old, iron-gray filly. They kept Posey for about six years, and they loved the way she would become almost snow-white in the spring, after she had shed her winter coat.

What a filly! Posey could do it all, no questions asked. Whether H.E. or Jay saddled her or rode her bareback, she loved to strut her stuff along the country roads. On other occasions, the boys would hitch her between the shays of a one-horse World War I gun cart, then set sail to impress neighbors and friends. They also commandeered a local buggy and made a name for themselves locally ... at one point even convincing the bemused Harold and Lolah to pose for pictures in the conveyance, where they could pretend to have returned to their courting days.

“Giddyap, now!” How strange it feels, to realize that those days of summer will never return ... those days on which the two brothers and their friends raced the horses, played endless games for which they constructed Western-style corrals and “jails” out of the willow poles they found growing in the swamp. At least once a day, of course, they also paused to feed their loyal steeds ears of corn that had been left behind in the fields after harvest.

Did these guys know how to have fun, or what?

Was there any joy like the joy of playing “Fox” in the moonlight?

“Fox” was a thrilling game of duplicity - and the younger kids were always the dupes. The game worked very much like the famed “snipe hunt,” in which the sucker holds the bag while the pranksters bark: “Look sharp, now! They’re gonna be driving the snipes [Kildees] from the field right into your burlap sack!” (Of course, the snipe hunt required total darkness - otherwise the birds would spot the sack!)

The rules for “Fox” were also very simple. Once the cry of “Fox” went up, the dupes were required to “freeze in place” and not move a muscle, so that the “fox,” now racing away from the hounds, could be driven toward them. At that point, our older friend Will - whose white horse was nearly invisible in bright moonlight - immediately dashed to his girl’s home, where he and his Sweetie “sparked” on the porch while Jay & Co. spent hours searching in vain for him.

The horses were a blast, but they could also be dangerous at times. Example: Dan bolted out of control with Jay on another occasion . . . and nearly decapitated him on a clothesline behind cousin Wyman’s house. Still, these mishaps were few; H.E. and Jay mostly enjoyed good times, and Jay remembers being outrun only once in a quarter-mile race.

Of course, caring for horses also taught the boys a great deal about life. Posey produced a foal - Foggy - when Jay was about 14 and a sophomore in high school. Foggy’s daddy was a pinto stallion, and did Jay get an “education” the day the pinto mated with the mare! Posey was so much in heat that Jay could hardly touch her, and whenever he did she would raise her tail and pee a little. When he finally got her to the farm where the stallion was kept, Jay was told to bring the mare next to the high wooden fence where the stallion waited. Crazy with desire, the pinto kept neighing and kicking the fence; then he reached over and bit Posey so hard that Jay was afraid she’d been disabled.

At first Posey shied away, but after the stallion continued to bite and sniff her, she leaned up against the fence. Then the farmer carefully opened the gate and brought Posey inside. The stallion promptly mounted the willing Posey and with the farmer assisting, pushed what seemed like three feet of phallus into the filly.

Ten months later, the male foal made his appearance. Although the stallion was a pinto, Foggy turned out to be iron-gray, like Posey. Even though Jay had been hoping for a “paint,” he jumped a four-foot fence the morning Harold told him Posey had foaled. Jay gave Foggy sugar cubes until the colt became so gentle that the kid was able to climb onto his back - at which point Foggy began to engage in some very serious bucking. Jay remained aboard only because the 15-month-old Foggy wasn’t very big.

A farmer who had castrated horses before was paid to neuter

Foggy, using a straight razor to remove the already fist-sized testicles. Although poor Foggy had not been consulted on the matter, he was now a gelding and would never be a father. Jay looked on from afar, and in the poetry of his soul he thought he felt something of the animal's sorrow.

But his own life was flowing in earnest, now; he couldn't stay melancholy for very long. The kid was driving a pickup truck, chasing girls, playing basketball and baseball with furious intensity. Suddenly, the horses didn't seem to matter as much. Jay quit riding and sold both of them. And yet it was a sorrowful afternoon - the day on which Posey and Foggy rode off toward the local auction barn. The guy who was going to buy Foggy said he would "treat him right" - but Jay never saw or heard of his loyal, four-footed pal again.

Fortunately, however, Posey and Foggy ended up as the property of some of Jay's good school friends, and were soon pulling wagons and plows.

It wasn't a bad life, but when Jay observed Posey hitched up like any old dray horse, he got a lump in his throat and wished there had been some magical way to save her, as in the famous saga of "Black Beauty." But there was simply no money to buy the hay and grain she required.

Goodbye, Posey.

Goodbye, youth! Jay's sadness was leavened by the anticipation of being able to drive the family pickup truck . . . and maybe even land himself a date!

He never noticed how the river of time had carried him around a bend, or how his childhood had vanished into the past.

EIGHT: These Woods Are Lovely, Dark and Deep. . . .

*“The English country gentleman galloping after a fox:
the unspeakable in full pursuit of the uneatable.”*

Oscar Wilde, 1856-1900

Ask yourself: Is there any thrill on earth quite like the thrill of the hunt?

The answer: Of *course* there is! How could a mere raccoon or fox hunt compare with a glass of premium Scotch whiskey . . . or with a pungent cigar from Havana’s finest hand-rolled stock of Corona Golds? And what about good-looking women in tight tee shirts? (Okay, okay: End of comparisons.)

Brutally honest as always, Jay will tell you that he dearly loves hunting - but that he also refuses to make a religion of it, as some men do.

Still, there’s no denying that the Timer has enjoyed his share of high times and high adventures, while creeping stealthily through the Forest Primeval in search of unsuspecting game.

Because he loved hunting so much, Jay thoroughly enjoyed the annual ritual of “visiting the maternal grandparents” - both sets of whom, as it turned out, were located on real estate perfectly designed for hunting. His mom’s folks inhabited a mysterious bog located in the heart of the Mingo Swamps near Puxico, Missouri, not far from the town of Zalma.

Jay simply couldn’t get enough of the sport. Accompanied by Ren, his paternal grandfather’s loyal shepherd-collie mix (along with a passel of his uncle’s coon and fox hounds), the kid went fox-, raccoon- or squirrel-hunting several times a week.

What adventures he had! When Timer was only 12, he shot a raccoon out of a tall tree with a single-shot .22 rifle, before his hunting companions could pull the trigger. Like the Jayster, the men on the hunt wore miners’ caps outfitted with carbide lamps. Although the headgear gave off a bright light, Jay had just barely been able to see the ringtail perched high in the tall oak.

Jay must have startled the animal out of his lair. The coon fought furiously with the dogs - so he obviously hadn’t been hurt much by the

small-caliber bullet. Of course, the experience left Jay with some rather mixed feelings – as he watched his beautiful young \$7 raccoon skin being pulled almost to pieces by six or seven raging hounds.

The truth was that he'd scored a lucky hit. Jay needed glasses badly at that time, and he'd hardly even bothered to eyeball his furred target.

On another memorable occasion, Jay and his uncle – accompanied by several other hunters – launched a marathon coon hunt at dusk . . . and didn't arrive back home until daylight. In between, they hiked an estimated 25 miles through the Mingo Swamps, while cracking through a thin layer of ice on nearly every other stride. Until that episode, Jay had never really known overwhelming fatigue. (He certainly hadn't felt it in the cotton fields!) But that night . . . *whew*. Timer walked his hindquarters into the earth – and didn't even come away with a coon for his troubles!

Years later, of course, Jay would realize that killing game wasn't the real goal on most hunting trips. No . . . these forays into the wilderness represented something much more profound. He loved the competition with fellow-hunters, for one thing, and the challenge of finding the endurance required to complete the hunt. And what a thrill it was to hear the baying of the hounds! Was it a hunger for the sublime that drove the pursuers on and on through the forest? Jay has never forgotten one amazing adventure, during which he and his uncle chased foxes beneath the stars. Some of the men built a beautiful bonfire that night, and 25 to 30 people listened to the musical baying of the dogs and shouted encouragement to them as they trailed the fox. As you might expect, the night was full of friendly arguments over which dog had the most bell-like (or sweetest) baying . . . or which dog had been cunning enough to catch a fox's scent first. Coffee was the beverage of choice, Jay remembers – but he also recognizes that the hill-folks of that long-ago night probably enjoyed a taste of the "hard stuff" in many of their cups.

The hunt! Another unforgettable saga unfolded one afternoon when Jay was hunting in the swamps near his home with his own house dogs: Minnie, the Toy Spitz, and her pup, Penny. The dogs had bounded ahead of the kid in the nearly dry drainage ditch. Only 12 at the time, Jay wasn't allowed to load ammunition in his gun until he was ready to shoot, which wasn't often. Carrying an empty weapon, he came creeping along the ditch. Then he stopped short. Was he being watched? The hairs began to stand up on the back of his neck. Against his will, he felt drawn to look slowly over his right shoulder. . .

A bobcat loomed directly above him! Slung out along a tree branch, the animal glared into Jay's eyes from a distance of no more than 10 feet! After recovering his breath and his wits, Jay quietly reached for a

shotgun shell and slid it into the chamber. But the cat was “out of there” long before he could get off a shot. Later he heard reports of several bob-cat-spottings in Missouri’s Mississippi Delta.

Fortunately, the dogs weren’t nearby at the moment. Both were quite small - and the courageous Penny would surely have attacked the beast and then been mauled.

To this day, the Delta region continues to provide a hiding place for some of nature’s wildest creatures. Example: Jay surprised a pack of “tame” dogs in a dry drainage ditch at one point - a female was in heat - and got quite a scare, although the six big dogs slunk away without attacking him.

As recently as 1943, according to local reports, a panther (cougar) had been heard screaming “like a woman” along the Floodway ditches near Hayti. Could it be true? Hard to say. Some residents claimed to have seen tracks . . . but given the lack of phones, poor transportation and the absence of Fish and Game wardens in the region, no one can know for sure.

And that’s just fine with Jay - who’s convinced that some things are better left as mysteries!

NINE: Friends And Occasional Fisticuffs

“A friend is one before whom I may think aloud.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1803-1882

Ah, the wonderful world of the farm kids!

One of the Jayman’s fondest memories of childhood and adolescence (that is, of the 18 fabulous and yet sometimes frustrating years he enjoyed before departing for St. Louis and the U.S. Navy) is his recollection of the hundreds of young people who lived on the farmsteads of Southeast Missouri. These were mostly small frame houses, with many amounting to little more than shacks and none with indoor plumbing. Yet most looked cozy and livable. The wood-frame dwellings were located every quarter mile or so along the roads, and most included no trees, fences or grass. They were simply a group of lonely-looking, unpainted houses, with many balanced on concrete blocks to keep the water out during flooding. But these rude cabins were jam-packed with rowdy kids who knew how to chop cotton and play hard.

If Jay and his pals weren’t busting their humps in the fields, they would often set about organizing a swim party, lining up a baseball game, or putting together a fishing trip. They also wrestled for hours at a time, played with homemade toys, or just plain loafed around. Some were belligerent and easy to anger, of course, but for the most part, they made easy-going and loyal friends.

Sadly enough, that world was about to come to an end.

When the huge tractors, plows and four-row disks – along with various other kinds of cultivators and planters and mechanical self-propelled cotton and corn pickers and soybean combines – became available after World War II, the shacks all but disappeared. Their occupants headed for St. Louis, California, Chicago, Detroit and everywhere in between.

Make no mistake: America was changing fast in the 1940s, and Timer would witness the changes “up close and personal.” While Jay labored from fourth to eighth grade, the nation as a whole was struggling through World War II. And he has never forgotten that somber afternoon in the seventh grade in 1944 when a school pal received an unwelcome visitor to the classroom.

The newcomer had arrived bearing the worst possible news: the brother of Jay’s buddy had been declared “missing in action.” The afflicted family never got over the shock of it, apparently, and moved to another

state immediately. Jay's pal – along with his pretty blonde sister – never again returned to Sumach School.

“A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.”

Henry Adams

Among the many imponderables generated by Jay's school days was this unsolvable enigma: Why did his teachers change jobs so fast? Looking back, he estimates the average length of service to have been about three months! His theory: In those wartime days when teachers were in short supply, the more capable ones were quickly hired away and paid bigger salaries by more affluent school districts. Others were drafted outright by the military and sent off to fight the Axis, or were recruited to work in the booming defense plants of the day.

Jay has never forgotten his eighth-grade teacher – a pretty, 17-year-old high school grad who'd married a school board member's son then serving in the U.S. Army. The instructor was (and remains) an attractive and sensitive lady. But she enjoyed very little control over the nine boys in the eighth grade. As a result, each time a classmate headed for the blackboard, he or she could count on a barrage of flying chalk-pieces whizzing past at ear-level – accompanied by the occasional flying wooden eraser.

The thing about chalk is that it can be launched silently . . . while the culprit bends over his notebook, apparently absorbed in reading a passage of American history. Is Jay proud of the fact that he helped turn that junior high school setting into a modern-day version of Dodge City? Of course not. But that's exactly what happened. In the end, the administrators were reduced to hoping that no one would be killed outright – at least not while classes were in session. Meanwhile, holes were kicked in walls, windows were blasted, youthful renegades rode their horses up the front steps and fights were as common as head colds in February.

Pity that poor school board member's daughter, who did her frustrated best to preserve at least a little bit of order in the classroom – by flailing away at her grinning culprits with a hard wooden paddle several times each day.

What a struggle! But these pitched battles in the classroom were mild, when compared to the daily brouhaha that erupted in the cafeteria. The lunchtime collisions invariably occurred in a malodorous zone dominated by the nostril-searing aroma of scorched tomatoes. To this day Jay wonders why the “hot lunches” (the school started serving them around

1943) smelled so terrible compared to the food that came from his momma's kitchen. Was it because the canned foods they served every day at lunch were being stored just above the coal bin?

Although the canned foods pantry contained nothing anybody wanted to eat, the room did serve a useful purpose. This was the one spot where the most recalcitrant boys (including Jay) could safely hide – knowing their teacher wouldn't climb the ladder after them. Sooner or later they had to emerge, however . . . and when they did, she was usually waiting with her heavy yard ruler, and would promptly “beat the tar” out of them!

Getting pounded at school was hardly an unusual event, however; during Jay's schoolboy era, there were usually at least two or three fights on the playground each week. These contests were well organized and quite dramatic, as the onlookers formed a cheering ring around the fighters. Sometimes, one of the battlers would pull a knife or brandish some other sharp object . . . or maybe even produce a club. At that point, the fans in the ring would disarm the hothead and push him back in the ring.

Jay does not deny that he participated in a high number of fist fights during this free-wheeling epoch. But not one of his opponents ever resorted to the knife or the club. Why not? Was it because they considered him so inept that they could easily handle him with their fists, alone? Probably so.

Given his lackluster track record in the classroom, Timer was more than a little surprised when he hit the eighth grade and his parents announced: “You are going to high school, young man; put *that* in your pipe and smoke it!” Jay groaned with aggravation. More school? The kid hadn't learned anything since the fourth grade! Here he was, 13 years old, and he couldn't do simple fractions or algebra. H.E. was a whiz at these subjects, and Don after him, but not the Jay-man. Maybe his poor hearing had something to do with it? Or were his dismal showings at the blackboard the result of simply having too much energy . . . and too much interest in entertaining his school pals by playing the class clown? Whatever the reason, this kid could not manage to avoid trouble!

Example: One Friday afternoon in the middle of winter, Jay was preparing to leave at the end of the day when he spotted his report card on the teacher's desk. Right away, he decided to go on the attack. Cool as Willie Sutton cracking a bank vault, he sidled past the desk and slipped the card in his pocket. A moment later, he was cruising out the door and congratulating himself on his gift for larceny.

But then the complications began.

As Timer crossed the schoolyard, a tall and powerfully built youth cut him off. “I came to fight you,” said the kid, who turned out to be the

older brother of a student whose nose Jay had bloodied only the day before. "I want to find out just how tough you are, big man!"

Jay was extremely polite. He was also terrified. Struggling to keep his voice steady, he stammered at the bully: "Listen, there's nothing I'd rather do than lock horns with you - any time and any place. But my dad - Brother Harold, the preacher? - told me that if I wasn't home within 30 minutes after school lets out today, he was gonna come down here and drag me home, himself! Why don't we bump that fight until Monday afternoon?"

The strategy worked. At the mere mention of the dreaded name - "Reverend Harold" - the older brother was high-tailing it around the nearest corner. And why not? Reverend Harold had the power to bury you (or marry you - a step that in some ways seemed even more terrifying) . . . and what kind of teenager in his right mind would want to mess with *that* kind of voodoo?

Sadly, Jay never returned to "Big" Sumach (pronounced "SHOE-make") School. To this day, he wonders if that older brother might still be hanging around, waiting to whip him. What will he do now, without Reverend Harold's voodoo to intercede for him, if the brute should suddenly materialize at the end of the block?

"What's That In Your Pocket?"

Ah, the innocence of youth.

The year was 1945, and our hero was enjoying his school days immensely, as he made one terrific friend after the next. Enter a visitor named "Deke" - a tall, very handsome, dark-haired 16-year-old youth - who was blessed (cursed?) with an anatomical wonder: a reproductive instrument the size of a bowling pin (and we're not talking *duck*-pin, either!)

At the risk of committing an indelicacy on paper, it should be noted here that Deke's *deek* ranked as the Eighth Wonder of the World - with some of his fans insisting on an even *higher* ranking. Understandably enough, the superbly endowed Deke loved to display his gargantuan appendage, and did so at every opportunity. While visiting Jay's school one day, out of sheer devilry, the playful young man announced that he intended to play a devastating trick on the girls who were perpetually flirting with him.

To make a long story (*very* long, in Deke's case) considerably shorter, it should be noted that the young man simply cut a hole in one of his pockets, then ran his member through the orifice until it nestled securely in the cavity, out of sight. Deke's plan: While pretending that he had "hurt his hand," he would ask one of the young lovelies to retrieve

something from the loaded pocket.

Oh, the rogue. The absolute renegade!

“Pull hard,” he told the shy maiden who would be his dupe.

“Sometimes it gets *stuck!*”

While the rest of the boys watched carefully, the shameless Deke pulled off his heartless stunt. The poor girl gave a mighty yank . . . but was unable to retrieve the object she sought. Roaring, the boys rolled upon the earth and grew hysterical with merriment. Cruel? Diabolical? You bet. And screamingly funny!

But the story didn't end there. The next year in high school, the 17-year-old Deke eloped with Jay's 16-year old cousin. Fleeing Seward High School forever, they hurried down to Piggott, Arkansas (five miles away), and tied the knot. Getting married was a simple matter back then - at least in the great State of Arkansas. No wait. No tests.

Deke had two beautiful sisters - Myra, a member of Jay's class, and Inez, a year behind. Inez was fully of life. Imagine the shock Jay felt two years later, when he was asked to visit the beauty . . . and found her wasting away, dying from leukemia. It was a surreal experience, and poor Inez died before her 13th birthday. Deke has also passed on now, a victim of cancer, and it seems hard to believe that a young man with so much life in him has gone to his eternal reward.

An Unforgettable Teacher

Is there any vocation on earth quite as noble as teaching? Whenever Jay looks back on the days of his youth, he remembers an elderly woman who took him in hand during the difficult years of junior high school. This lady *cared* - and the payoff for the rapidly maturing Jayster was huge. The teacher was both patient and kind. Even better, she often asked him to perform odd jobs, and to help her supervise the younger children, all of whom were in lower grades. This uplifting experience gave our friend Timer some of the self-confidence that he lacked.

Although she didn't help him improve his skills with fractions or algebra - his weakest subjects - the kid's belief in himself certainly got a boost. After that, Jay wasn't quite as worried about the academic challenges he would face in high school. Rumor had it that things really got “out of hand” at Big Sumach, with chaos running rampant in the hallways at times. But without telephones, gas, or car batteries (all had been commandeered for the war effort), who knew what was really going on?

When Jay arrived at Seward High School in July of 1945, the institution included only 200 students in all four grades. The weather that summer was simply amazing. It wasn't just hot . . . it was *blast furnace-hot!*

Timer

The study hall was on the third and top floor of an ancient brick building, and featured big round metal tubes for fire escapes. When the sun was blazing high above, those tubes resembled 140-degree branding irons.

How did they stand it? Attending Seward High in the summertime was like being locked up inside a Calcutta laundramat. It was like spending two months inside a sauna, while dressed in a polar bear suit. It was like sucking on a blowtorch, or going without a shirt on the Sahara Desert. Did they swelter? Does a wild bear break wind in the middle of the blueberry patch?

In memory, the Jay-man can still see the lazy ceiling fans revolving slowly, stirring the humid air. Once again, he's lifting his arm from a desk . . . and leaving behind a pool of sweat. School days . . . in the middle of Dante's Inferno!

"The authority of those who profess to teach is often a positive hindrance to those who desire to learn."

Cicero

Some school-days, it just doesn't pay to get out of bed!

Just when Timer was looking forward to freshman math - since the sister of that terrific Sumach Branch teacher would be conducting the class - he received a nasty shock.

Sis turned out to be loud, nasty, scowling, short-tempered . . . everything, in fact, that the saintly older instructor was *not*. And now Jay was stuck in a hellish classroom with a teacher who scowled like Lady Macbeth as she chewed the class out day after day. (She also wasted at least 15 minutes of each class period bragging about her son, the incomparable "Willy Gene," who was obviously the reincarnation of Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy.)

Was that lady mean? O Lord, tell it! Beady-eyed and glaring, she hovered above us like a starved owl searching for exposed mice. Again and again, she pressed Jay for answers she obviously knew he didn't have. And when he stammered helplessly, she would ridicule him. Was she trying to turn him into her precious Willy Gene? Depressed and disheartened by her relentless bullying, Jay wound up wishing that he hadn't entered high school.

After a few weeks of this torture, he named her "Miss Draculina." And true to form, she was always lunging for his neck! Poor Jay had never learned how to do fractions or algebra - which left him SOL with Lady Draculina. That bloodsucker lived for nothing else! She was flunking him

flat and told him so, in front of about 25 students.

She also snapped angrily: "One could put all your brains in a flea's head and they would rattle around like a rock in a flour barrel." (Try saying that fast!) Make no mistake: This lady was full of uplifting, motivating, inspiring speech!

Just when things looked bleakest, however, Jay got a lucky break. He overheard his Draculina telling another teacher that she would "never flunk a student if I see him take his book home." From that day on, Jay carried his math book down the stairs each afternoon. He displayed it in his left hand, with the title facing the chunky, sullen little teacher, who loomed outside her classroom on the third floor at the top of the stairs, intent on keeping order in the ranks.

Each evening when he walked down the stairs to the basement, Jay "institutionalized" the placement of that math book on a shelf, where it remained until the next morning . . . for the entire year. But his strategy paid off. Jay received a "D-" and it was far more than he deserved. And yet this would be his last unseemly grade; during the next 200 hours of high school and college work (including courses taken en route to two different master's degrees) he would receive only one more D- (in college freshman chemistry in 1956). Although the Jayster did go on to earn a few C's in undergraduate classes, he received but a single C in grad school (where that grade actually ranks as the equivalent of a "D").

Other than that one slip, our hero would never receive another grade ranking lower than "C."

But life with Draculina was a terrible ordeal. Jay begged his parents over a period of seven months to allow him to quit school at the end of the freshman year. And why not? Wasn't his good friend Dooley being allowed to quit to help his dad farm?

The only two courses Jay enjoyed at all were English and Vocational Agriculture. He respected but feared the Vo-Ag guy because he was tough and down to earth. Good old Goode (what an antonym!) was a World War II veteran who ate copper nails for breakfast and tolerated not the slightest bit of hooliganism in his class. His approach to discipline was simple - he grabbed the guys who were disrupting class and made them fight each other up at the front of the room, on a recently oiled and very slippery floor.

It happened to Jay only once - with an infamous local bully named "The Cowhopper." Of course, Jay did everything he could to ignore the bozo's whispered taunts, because he knew the troublemaker figured he could kick the Jayster around at will. In spite of Timer's efforts, however, Mr. Goode summoned them forward and called for a pitched battle with fists.

But Jay got lucky that day . . . because he caught the Cowhopper in the nose with a stinging left hook, and the blood sprang from the flattened honker in a scarlet fountain. At that point, Goode stopped the fight (only seconds before Jay was annihilated) . . . and the onlookers immediately declared our hero the winner!

Jay knew better, however, and he spent the next three months looking over his shoulder to see if the Cowhopper was going to pounce on him. Happily for the Jay-man's own threatened nose, the bully had been living with his grandmother, and soon left school. That was good . . . *very* good, because the cowhopping pugilist out-weighted Jay by 20 pounds. He also happened to be 17 years old, while our valiant knight checked in at only 14.

That brief battle marked the end of Jay's tumultuous career as a street-fighter. Except for some terrific practice bouts as a back-up member of the boxing team during his senior year, he would never fight again in high school.

What he *did* do, however, was to begin reading and studying and thinking for himself.

Slowly, day by day, the Jayster was awakening to the great outside world that loomed on the far horizon. One day soon, he would be leaving the world of the Missouri Delta and making his way into the Unknown. When that day he came, he knew he would have to be *prepared*.

Head down, he took the plunge deep into the world of books. In the years ahead, and especially while serving in the U.S. Navy, he would read voraciously - even as he took math and other courses by correspondence.

TEN:
My Kingdom For
A (Rideable) Horse!

“He flung himself upon his horse and rode madly off in all directions.”

Stephen Leacock, 1869-1944

This one you will *not* believe.

Jay Arthur – the Arch-Enemy of the American High School – actually decided to remain in one without being coerced!

It’s true. Although the Jay-guy didn’t know it at the time, his long-suffering parents had decided to throw in the towel and allow him to quit high school at the end of his freshman year. Why? Simple. Because they were sick and tired of listening to him whine!

But then an unexpected event happened. (Remember the theme of our novel: “Life is what happened while you were planning something else?”) What happened was that one fine afternoon right after the conclusion of World War II, Jay’s cousin’s husband – a high-spirited gentleman named Saul Pager– arrived in the neighborhood and changed Jay’s life.

Like Henry Ford 30 years before him, Saul had a better idea.

“Listen to me, Jay,” said Saul. “No offense – but you’re out of your ever-lovin’ mind.”

Jay nodded. “I know that, Saul. So does everyone else in Dunklin County. But what does that have to do with my quitting school?”

Saul sighed, then explained that he’d just spent several years in Uncle Sam’s Navy. “Trust me,” said the new arrival. “If you can learn to type in that high school of yours, your future in the U.S. military will change overnight. I understand that you want to be a sailor?”

“Correct,” said Jay. “And also a livestock farmer.”

“All right,” said Saul. “I can’t help you with the latter. But I’m an absolute treasure trove of information on the U.S. Navy. And here’s my point: If you can type 40 words a minute, you can nail down a cushy office job – instead of having steel wool tied to your feet so you can polish the deck all day, as I did so many times.”

In a flash, the Jayman saw the light.

He stayed in high school. This move paid off in two different ways. First, it allowed the kid to begin typing up a storm. Second, it gave Jay a chance to shoot a regulation basketball into a regulation basketball

hoop – instead of firing a shapeless “Grit” ball (a leather-laced monstrosity that was light as a feather) into a peach basket elevated above a heavily fertilized cow lot.

Imagine . . . playing ball inside a real-live gymnasium, with a floor yet!

As far as Timer was concerned, the decision to remain in the classroom was strictly a “no-brainer.” He’d stick it out through junior year, anyway – so that he could complete the typing class. By then, of course, he’d also be deeply involved in basketball, chasing girls and enjoying vocational agriculture. Even better, he wouldn’t be required to study math with Dracula again!

Things were looking better all the time. First Jay was elected “Reporter” two years in a row for the Future Farmers of America (FFA). Suddenly, he was an elected official – should he start looking around for something to steal? (No – our Jayman had vowed that he would *not* mimic the behavior of the politicians he saw all around him!)

While serving as a Reporter, Jay also continued to work on several prizewinning livestock projects. Why, his life had improved to the point, he told friends and neighbors, that he might not have to be “dragged down to one of the Floodway drainage ditches in a sack and then drowned like an unwanted kitten.” (Saul died in 1991, by the way, and Timer honors him to this day for both his kindness and his sound advice.)

In spite of these burgeoning successes, however, Jay felt one nagging dissatisfaction in his life: He wanted some wheels beneath him! Too young to drive until late in his junior year, he fretted endlessly over the fact that H.E. controlled the family pickup during this period. The Arthurs lived eight miles out in the country . . . which left Jay out in the cold, as far as trying out for sports teams. How could he practice after school, if he had to ride the dorky school bus home every day? H.E. didn’t even need the truck except for dates. His father, however, needed it for his ministerial and farming work while they attended school. So, they couldn’t drive the truck to school for sports.

The days passed one by one, however, and life crept slowly along. Chopping and picking cotton was a drag, but Jay dearly loved his livestock projects. While taking good care of his prize pigs, he also nursed a beef calf and looked after a platoon of turkeys, a mare and a colt. The kid felt nicely “in control” during these assignments, and he seemed to have a real talent for raising animals. Of course he also performed a lot of regular farm chores. At age 14, for example, he worked threshing or combining soybeans with his friend Dooley, the young man who’d dropped out of high school to farm at the end of his freshman year. (Dooley now farms

2,000 acres . . . with more than 1,500 of them dedicated to cotton.) Who knows but that dropping out of school might not have paid off for Jay? But his fate would be different. Along with his endless studying, he also worked in his cousin's country store during a lengthy period that followed a knee injury he received while skating.

What jobs! Day after day, the valiant Timer lifted sacks of soybeans and canned goods so heavy that they caused nosebleeds in both jobs. (The disturbing fact was that he didn't grow much until the age of 15.)

If Jay's schedule seems to have been crammed with activity, it still allowed a few hours here and there for another beloved activity: horse racing. Dooley, Yale, Bart, Jon and the Twins often had a blast riding and racing against each other's horses on the hard unpaved roads. Bart, an egotistical boy, owned a beautiful horse - but the poor animal must have been suffering from lung disease . . . because he couldn't gallop more than 100 yards without wheezing out. Dooley's horse "Bill" was a pretty good match for "Topsy" over short runs. Yale's horse was a slow runner, as it turned out, and Jay beat him easily, every time they thundered down the track. Jay always felt "ten feet tall" aboard Topsy, although she was only 14 hands high.

What a thrilling time it was to be alive. More than once, the horseback pals would race their horses up and down the sandy banks and through the streams in the Floodway ditches. Dooley's quarter horse, Bill, usually won those struggles . . . but victory was less important than the thrill of the race, itself.

In memory, Timer can see images of them still: the bold riders surging along the Floodway, the hooves kicking up a hurricane of flying spray. Remembering those golden hours, he also remembers the words of a popular song of the day:

*Once upon a time,
The world was younger than we knew.
How lucky we were then. . . .
But the years have flown away, one by one —
And once upon a time
Never comes again.*

ELEVEN:
The First Cut Was The Deepest
- By The St. Louis Cardinals

"He was thrown out trying to steal second; his head was full of larceny but his feet were honest."

Jane Austen, 1775-1817

Sooner or later, most American boys fall in love with baseball.

For Jay Arthur, the magical moment occurred in October of 1946, during the seventh game of the World Series.

The Cardinals and the Red Sox!

There's a long drive to deep center . . . the ball's headed for the alley . . . and it's off the wall! Here comes the runner rounding third, and here's the throw to the plate—AND HE'S OUT!

Ask our friend Timer to describe the single most exciting moment in his life, and the odds are high that he'll start telling you about the afternoon when he listened to the World Series on the battered old Philco portable.

He was 14 years old that afternoon, and working in his cousin Lyons' store - after injuring his knee on roller skates and being excused from picking cotton. The work in the store was tedious, and it lasted 12 hours a day, but at least he could listen to the radio.

Now the pitcher goes into his stretch . . . eyes the runner on third . . . kicks and delivers the ball to the plate. Line drive, left field - the Cardinals score!

Limping along on his injured right knee (it has remained weak to this day), the Jayman could imagine each pitch with crystal clarity. While stacking canned goods on the shelves or lugging bags of groceries out to cars and wagons, he dreamed of that glorious moment when *he* would step into the batter's box at Yankee Stadium, then glare at the towering fireballer on the hill.

Now the southpaw kicks and deals . . . strike on the inside corner at the letters. And Arthur doesn't like it one bit - he looks back at

the umpire, and you can see the disgust written all over his face. Now he's digging in, spikes kicking up dirt . . .

"Excuse me? Son . . . are you listening? I asked you if you had any doggy biscuits!"

"Pardon me, ma'am? Doggy biscuits, you say? Oh, sure. Be right with you!"

What a time he had! Like most radios in those early days of electronics, the Philco kept wheezing and fading and then crackling back to life on a burst of static. Frantic to catch every word, poor Jay would race to the speaker and jam his good ear against it - only to receive a blast of thunder when the signal kicked back in. Wincing with pain, he'd step away from the blaring device . . . only to have the volume peter out again. It was maddening, but so what? The bases were loaded by now and the Jayman couldn't stand the suspense . . . as once again he placed his ear against the -

LINE DRIVE TO CENTER!

And once again the speaker blasted his cranium with a brain-rattling jolt!

Jay Arthur has listened to a lot of ballgames since that enchanted afternoon in the grocery store. But for sheer drama, not one of them will ever match the seventh game of the Cards-Red Sox Series. With famed St. Louis outfielder Enos ("Country") Slaughter leading away from first, the Cardinal hitter slapped a single into short right. The runner took off like a shot, gunned it around second and just kept on digging.

And then it happened. For reasons that no one has ever figured out, Red Sox second baseman Joe Pesky didn't react quickly enough with his relay from short right field. After wasting a precious two seconds holding the ball, he fired a bullet toward the plate. But Slaughter beat the throw and scored the winning run - by moving from first to home on a scratch single! Announcer Harry Caray, who would one day become a baseball legend himself, kept shouting again and again: "Holy Cow! What a game! The Cardinals win! The Cardinals win the World Series!"

It was electric! As he worked in the storeroom later that day, stacking cans and mopping shelves, Timer relived the play again and again in his feverish brain. How easy it was to picture Slaughter taking his long lead . . . then being forced to dive back to the bag twice, just before the key hit to right field. And it was also easy to imagine the St. Louis third base coach doing his best to stop the runner - whose instincts told him he could make it.

What a game! What a player!

All at once, Jay Arthur understood the mighty challenge that lay

before him.

He was going to play baseball in the Major Leagues!

Burning with his newfound passion, he spent endless hours studying the St. Louis players and everything else related to pro baseball. Within a matter of a few weeks, he had memorized names, positions, batting averages, you name it. Stan Musial, Marty Marion, Enos Slaughter, Joe Garagiola, Harry Brecheen, Murry Dickson, Al Brazle, "Whitey" Kurowski, "Red" Schoendienst, Terry Moore, Harry Walker: in the Jayster's eyes, these baseball stalwarts were nothing less than living saints. And Timer had lots of company in his hero worship: kids and grownups alike all across Missouri, Illinois, Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi and Kansas idolized the "Redbirds." Remember: there were only eight teams in each league then, and no "Intra-League" playoffs (except in the case of a tie at the end of the season).

For the "Cards," of course, it was a golden era. The Redbirds had made the World Series in 1942, 1943, 1944 and 1946 - and had failed to bring home the title only once (1943). Yet it would be 18 long years before they played in another series.

By then, Harry Caray's son Skip would be announcing the games on the radio, and Jay Arthur would be well launched on his 18-year career as a Recommending Scout for the Cincinnati Reds - even though he would never stop pulling for his beloved Cardinals. Scouting kept the Jay-man close to the game . . . and helped soothe the expected but still bitter disappointment he felt after trying out for both the Cards and the St. Louis Browns (now the Baltimore Orioles). Those bold attempts fell short when it was discovered that Timer had "no arm" and very little talent . . . just a whole lot of burning desire. To this day, however, Jay blames part of his throwing problems on the fact that he was forced to cradle his right ear in the crook of his right arm for many years, on cold winter nights. Because of his ongoing middle ear infections, keeping that ear warm was a necessity.

His first tryout was for the Cardinals and took place in Jonesborough, Arkansas. He journeyed there with Holman, his classmate and sandlot baseball team pitcher, and Holman's older brother. The Cardinals had just signed Gary Blaylock, a pitcher from Clarkton who graduated the same year (1949). Jay had played against Blaylock - a terrific athlete who was also a champion pole-vaulter and an honorable-mention all-state basketball star, in addition to serving as a dazzling pitcher and shortstop for the Clarkton town team from the time he was 15.

The Cardinals brought Gary with them to Jonesborough, and he tossed a few balls from the mound for the local press. Jay had played the outfield in softball - and he'd also spent most of the summer competing in

sandlot baseball. His team had enjoyed a good run, winning almost all of their games. So how good was this kid, anyway? To find out, the scouts pinned a number on his back and positioned him 300 feet from home plate in right field. Then they slugged three balls toward the green wooden fence with the huge “Coca Cola” ad painted on it.

The object was to have the “hungry” outfielders catch the balls and rifle them “straight and true” at the first baseman’s head. The goal was to put enough “zing” on the throw so that if the first baseman let it go through, the ball would take a single hop, then zoom “like a bullet” to the catcher’s glove.

Jay gave it his best shot . . . but the painful truth is: His throws “hopped” three times before they even reached the first-sacker!

Too bad. Holman didn’t do much better, either. He was allowed to pitch briefly, but neither of the kids was even sent up to the plate to hit. Still there was no shame in failing to make the cut; more than 100 young men tried out that day, and not a single one was signed. Jay felt embarrassed and sad, because his hopes had been so high.

Within a few days, however, he was back on the diamond. He played centerfield on a sandlot team that summer, and his friend Holman pitched. The team won 15 games in a row, and the players soon grew cocky. They still couldn’t afford uniforms or even sliding pads inside their makeshift “uniforms” - but so what? These guys were headed for the Hall of Fame! Then one Sunday they played against the Gobler Mercantile team, which owned very fine uniforms. The son of the owner of the store was a left-handed pitcher and batter. Jay’s team “killed him” . . . almost literally! The local team was out in front 10-0, when the left-handed pitcher came to bat. And when Holman’s catcher fired the ball back to him, the throw hit the kid solidly somewhere around the ear. Down he went - totally unconscious! The victim was lifted quickly into the back of a car and rushed to Kennett Hospital.

The game ended at that point, much to Jay’s chagrin, since he’d gone two for two, with a couple of doubles. He could really “see” the lefty’s pitches that day - and it was the first lefty he’d ever faced. Jay and Holman visited the kid in the hospital the next day, only to find him sitting up and grinning wider than the Cheshire cat. Laughing out loud, the wounded ballplayer explained that the blow from the baseball wasn’t the reason for his hospitalization; actually, he’d swallowed a huge “chaw” of “Red Man” chewing tobacco during the episode at the plate, and the docs were watching it inch through his system. Happily, the fine young man recovered and played again the next weekend.

The team bubble burst the next week or so, after Jay’s club was challenged to a game by a Black team from Hayti, Missouri. Timer’s team-

mates did a lot of bragging before the contest, and that was a mistake - because the Hayti infielders turned out to be magicians at making diving catches, turning somersaults, scooping up ground balls and turning them into double plays. Their pitcher wasn't that great, but it didn't matter with those guys. They caught ground balls in their back pockets and snagged screaming grass-cutters without missing a beat. The score wound up at something like 7-3, and all at once, the win streak was history at 15 games.

What a sport! Later, while working as a scout for 18 years, Jay learned that an athlete can slightly speed up his or her running, or slightly improve hitting and fielding. For the most part, however, a player's genes are the ultimate determinants of strength, quickness, speed, and talent. Good eyesight also helps . . . as does the willingness to put up with long, hot summers in the minor leagues at very low pay.

But let's fact it: for the vast majority of aspiring major leaguers, failure will always be the bottom line. And learning how to *handle* that failure is an important step on the road to maturity. That was a tough lesson for Jay Arthur, but he finally learned it.

Years later, while Jay was on leave from the Navy, he ran into Blaylock in Clarkton and gave him a lift. Gary had pitched for the Johnson City, Tennessee, Cardinals in the rookie league that year and had won 28 games! He would be called up by the Cardinals within a year or so, then be traded to the New York Yankees and go on to injure his arm. Timer lost track of him after that, but was delighted when Gary resurfaced in the "Show Me World Series" as the Kansas City Royals pitching coach in 1985. (Sadly, the Royals eventually won that Series against the St. Louis Cardinals.) The last Jay heard, Gary was managing a team in North Dakota or some other impossibly distant place. Had the star been sent into exile for some reason? Or had he happily chosen it?

Jay's tryout with the Browns took place strictly on a whim, during the period when he was working the night shift for Buss Fuse in St. Louis. The kid rode the street car to Sportsman Park, with his glove and spikes tucked under his arm in a paper bag. There were at least 200 boys and men on hand, jamming the stadium. (Apparently most assumed that the inept Browns - who always finished 40-50 games out of first - would be desperate to sign players.

Jay decided to play it cagey, this time. Instead of making ineffective throws from the outfield, he would try out for second base!

When they called his number, he was sent to second to catch balls thrown by young catchers also trying out. He would then "tag" a sliding runner and quickly throw to first. But things didn't work out that way. Instead, both throws from the catcher hit the ground several feet in front of Jay, who valiantly smothered the elusive "rabbit balls," but was unable to

whirl and fire to first. In a firm but polite voice, the nearest scout asked him to “go to the sidelines.”

The Jayster’s dream of Major League stardom was dead.

It hurt . . . but Jay accepted the rejection in stride. The fantasies of childhood were ending, as they must. Besides, it was now time to begin focusing on a new “commitment” - his vow to help defeat the North Koreans, as a proud member of the United States Navy.

TWELVE: Dodging The Bullet Of Disease In The Delta

*“You can take a boy out of the country but you can’t
take the country out of a boy.”*

Arthur Baer, born 1897

Ask any senior citizen over 65 to reflect on the “good ole days,” and the odds are high that you’ll soon find yourself listening to a series of mellow, nostalgia-drenched tales that might have been written by Norman Rockwell.

Don’t believe a word you hear!

The truth is that the “good ole days” were tough as all get-out. For starters, most people worked 12 hours a day, six days a week, at backbreaking jobs (such as “chopping cotton”) that left them so exhausted they could barely get to church on Sunday.

Now, I’m not saying that there weren’t some good moments in the Days of Yore. Sitting on the porch with a cold glass of lemonade . . . or churning butter in the cool of the evening . . . or marching once a year in the *sis-boom-BAH* of the Fourth of July Parade, as it wound its way along flag-draped Main Street: these were brief interludes of magic, bright islands of hope and happiness in an existence that otherwise seemed drab and thoroughly predictable, for the most part.

And what about disease?

Somehow, Norman Rockwell never got around to painting the Polio Ward at the local children’s hospital, or the crippled teenagers who would spend the rest of their lives on crutches. And polio was only one of a dozen ailments that threatened the health – sometimes even the very lives – of American children day in and day out. Thanks to the amazing success of immunizations in the second half of the 20th Century, many middle-aged and younger citizens of this country have never confronted the whooping cough, the measles, the rubella and the smallpox that made life a living hell for millions of American parents, up until the early 1950s. Jay Arthur remembers, however.

He saw the effects of disease in his own family – and he has never forgotten the impact it made on all their lives.

How could he not remember the raging fever and the tortures

endured by his sister Teri, born in 1944, who survived a violent attack of mosquito-borne malaria? And what about H.E.'s terrible struggle with rheumatic fever, which struck him at the tender age of nine? That dangerous bout of illness left Jay's older brother with abnormally low blood pressure for many years. Somehow, H.E. had managed to pass the U.S. Army physical, in spite of his "low blood" . . . a fact which astonished several Army doctors a year later in Germany, when they examined him during routine physicals. (Jay never did get H.E. to tell him about the strategy he'd used to avoid being "weeded out." But Jay understood: It was a "male ego" thing.)

Anyone who doubts the power of disease to ravage human lives should have seen the devastation caused by malaria and pneumonia in the 1920s. In those pre-penicillin and pre-DDT days, it was common for large families to lose several children due to these ailments. In many cases, the epidemics were the result of simple geography. During "flood season," water from the Upper Mississippi and its tributaries would often spill over into the streams of Southeast Missouri, such as the St. Francis and Black Rivers. These smaller rivers would then overflow their banks and form stagnant pools that remained trapped in the tight clay soil. Such morasses provided ideal conditions for breeding hordes of potentially disease-carrying mosquitoes.

In a bid to prevent the "births" of the noxious pests, the government hired contractors who employed "drag-line" machines powered by steam engines that burned coal and wood. Belching furiously, the machines drove huge "spoons" that scooped out the ditches in a valiant effort to drain their water. Mules pulled smaller spoons also.

In just our immediate area, hard-working laborers dug more than a dozen river-sized ditches - but with an extremely gentle slope of just one inch to the mile - that ran down to the Mississippi River. Not until the advent of DDT (sprayed everywhere after WWII) did we finally get some relief from the insatiable mosquitoes. Of course, uncountable billions still haunt the grassy areas and areas of standing water today . . . although the threat has been greatly reduced for most citizens.

But the ditches and waterways also had a positive side. In one area located about two miles from Jay's home, seven "Floodway" ditches flow side by side for a few miles before they empty into the Mississippi River. Usually muddy, these sluggish waters contain lots of catfish, carp, grinnel fish and also flocks of ducks. One night Jay and his friend Ben set a 12-hook trot line across one of the ditches - and nailed a five-pound channel catfish! Incredibly ugly, these bottom-feeders were also incredibly strong. That fish swept all the hooks and short lines to the edge of the ditch . . . where he finally got hung up, allowing the excited duo to net him

the next day.

Another famous ditch, only half a mile distant from Timer's ancestral home, had been dug out of sandy soil. Here the water ran clear and swift. This was the fabled "Ditch No. 19," aka "The Ole Swimming Hole," where kids and adults from all over the region swam at the bridges, enjoyed cleansing baths, fished - and sometimes even brought their dates.

Jay fished, swam, rode horseback and explored No. 19 and another ditch, No. 36. On some occasions, he boldly sat astride his mare, Posey . . . then kneed her - and without hesitating, she would jump from the bridge into the water below: a distance of at least 10-12 feet. The water was quite swift and somewhat murky, but probably only five feet deep. (Of course, there were no railings on the bridge.)

Many said Jay was one of the smoothest and fastest swimmers around. What they didn't know was that he'd learned his skills while swimming upstream in the swift No. 19. For his part, Jay didn't think he excelled in anything. He often dove into five feet of water from the bridge, without injury. Ironically enough, however, he nearly broke his neck at one point - after merely diving from Posey's back, while she was standing in the ditch! Posey, and several other horses (and especially Bill, who'd been re-named from Whirlaway) were trained to leap from the bridge into the water, and none of the horses or boys was ever injured - why, Jay will never understand.

During the polio epidemic of the 1950s, swimming was banned there, however. Jay was long gone by that time, though, having departed for St. Louis and the Navy. Still, conditions were hardly hygienic, even in the 1940s. As Jay and his buddies paddled in the ditch, they often encountered dead hogs or dogs . . . or burlap bags of kittens or puppies floating past. All too often, this disturbing flotsam wound up getting snagged in the bridge pilings of No. 19.

Like so many other things in life, that ditch water looked clean - and wasn't!

THIRTEEN: How Much Cotton Could A Cotton-Picker Pick?

“One of the saddest things is, the only thing a man can do for 8 hours a day, day after day, is work. You can’t eat 8 hours a day nor drink for 8 hours a day, nor make love for 8 hours.”

William Faulkner

What was it like to pick - or “chop” - cotton when our hero was growing up?

Ask Jay Arthur that question, and he’ll glare at you for four or five seconds, then mutter darkly: “Take a two-by-four and nail it to your spine. Once the nails are all in, jump up and down, so that they keep biting into your flesh. How does *that* feel? Welcome - to the wonderful world of chopping and picking cotton!”

Remembering his early struggles in the rows, good old Timer just shakes his head. How can he describe - for readers who never grappled with a monster-sized canvas sack - what it was like to crawl along on your knees in a vain effort to ease the pain in an aching back? Limping over that hard, cloddy ground was like being beaten with a tangle of fishhooks, hour after hour. Brutal! Given his “druthers,” of course, Jay always preferred the chopping to the picking - because the act of thinning the cotton plants and hoeing back the weeds (the slang was “choppin”) at least allowed you to keep your back straight. The only farm chore that comes close to matching the discomfort of cotton-farming is picking strawberries, watermelons and cantaloupes. But that task usually required no more than a couple of hours a day, and the harvester could at least eat a little of his crop, now and then!

Jay started chopping at the age of 11.

Make no mistake: In 1942, every able-bodied man who could pass the induction physical for the Army, Navy, or even the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) was wearing (or on his *way* to wearing) a uniform . . . unless he could somehow manage to “buy his way out,” to use a popular expression of the day. Because of this huge drain on U.S. manpower, Jay’s Uncle Harley couldn’t get help - and wound up hiring the young man, along with his dad and H.E., to work the ten-hour days of chopping. He

Timer

paid Jay \$.75 a day to start, and the others \$1.25 a day. At the end of that first day, however, his Uncle Harley paid him the ultimate compliment: “Son, you chopped as well and as fast as the adults. Tomorrow, you’ll be paid an adult wage!”

Jay felt like he was walking on air! Until that moment, he’d felt sure that he was too little and too inept to accomplish anything in the field, or anywhere else for that matter. But the confidence Uncle Harley showed in Timer made him feel more adept – and more self-sufficient – than any number of psychotherapy sessions could have done. Was Uncle Harley a “shoe leather psychologist,” long before his time? Maybe so: After all, he did raise a bunch of successful children! Amazingly enough, the wages for chopping cotton went up to \$5 a day, or fifty cents an hour, before the spring was finished . . . mainly due to the labor shortage. Talk about a pay hike – this was a whopping 500% increase, give or take a few nickels!

Interestingly enough, we were also expected to have our cotton hoes already sharpened when we started the day. Compare that with the workaday reality of Baltimore in 1995 . . . when some State of Maryland employees (in spite of being warned by management) would clock in, telephone in a breakfast order nine floors below, then pick it up and eat it before (or just after) beginning work. It goes without saying, of course, that all of these breakfast rituals were strictly “on the clock.”

Even on their St. Louis factory jobs, Jay and H.E. had been expected to be standing by the platforms for shift changes, fully prepared for work, so the machines wouldn’t have to stop.

At first, Jay called the people who hoed cotton “hoers” – and for a long time, he couldn’t understand why his mom referred to them as “choppers.” (The Bible Belt was serious business to Lolah!) The choppers were instructed to leave one or two strong cotton plants standing from the nearly continuous rows that sprouted from the fuzzy seeds soon after planting. On many occasions, the choppers would have to reach down and manipulate the plants or grass or weeds by hand. Jay always thought chopping was the least of the two “evils” of picking and chopping, but he wasn’t crazy about *either* activity.

Let’s face it: ten hours of “squeezing a hoe handle” in the blistering Delta sun, weren’t exactly his definition of the ideal summer vacation!

“Ideal” or not, however, picking cotton was a survival skill in the cash-starved Missouri Delta, and the Jayman was hard at it before the age of five. In those early days, he dragged an empty flour sack outfitted with a sewn-on shoulder strap. These ten-pound kiddie-sacks were plain and unadorned – because the commercially printed flour sacks were all spoken for: They would eventually become dresses worn by his mother. Jay

recalls that his tiny sack would hold only about five pounds of cotton at a time – enough to bring home one or two pennies, after a couple of hours spent crawling along the rows. (Believe it or not, a penny was a fair amount of money, in those days, and would buy you a slick-looking ring implanted in a marshmallow at McHaney's Grocery Store in White Oak!)

Within a few years, the nine-year-old Jay found himself hauling a standard, six-foot-long commercially made cotton sack. This efficient container would hold 45-50 pounds of cotton . . . but it seemed small, when compared to both the seven-and-a-half-foot sack (up to 60 pounds) and the monster-sack (nine feet long, 80 pounds). Of course, these "picked weights" depended on a key factor: the amount of "green" (new) or dew-soaked cotton. Jay saw only one or two 12-foot sacks in his career, and remains impressed by the sheer size of these vast containers, which seemed easily capable of holding, say, the Houston Astrodome.

Question: How much cotton could a determined cotton-picker pick? *Answer:* Fast pickers could routinely nail down 350 to 400 pounds in a 12-hour day . . . depending on several factors, including the time of the year, the amount of dew that remained on the cotton, and whether or not the owner of the field permitted "goose locking," or leaving behind some cotton in each boll. But reaching that 400-mark was truly a Labor of Hercules. As a matter of fact, our friend Timer surpassed the 300-level only two or three times in his short career . . . and those impressive totals were all reached within the same week. Why was the kid so slow? To this day, he blames his father and his brothers. All too often, these miscreants would distract the dedicated, yet resisting, Jayman by launching "cotton boll fights" and wrestling matches in the middle of the row! Oh, the rouges!

More often than not, Jay recalls, the approach of Dear Old Dad triggered the whizzing sound they all dreaded – the sound of a little green "howitzer shell" zinging past a youthful picker's ear.

What a world! As you might expect, there were frequent "picking contests" all across the South, during which a few astonishingly skilled competitors managed to pull down 60 pounds of cotton in an hour . . . a staggering rate that would have produced 700 pounds of cotton per 12-hour shift, except it was doubtful that a human being could maintain such a killing rate all day. Nonetheless, one of H.E.'s neighbors frequently enters contests, even to this day, and can pick 62 pounds in an hour for a few hours – a level of skill that would produce about 700 pounds in a 12-hour shift. To this day, however, the cynical Jay wonders if some of those 60-pounds-per-hour pickers were actually running a scam on the judges . . . a scam not very different from the one perpetrated by one unscrupulous bass fishing contest-winner who actually caught fish *before* the event,

then successfully hid them for the days of the contest!

The years come and go, and Jay has never stopped asking himself: Were those “world-champion pickers” actually hiding already picked cotton somewhere in the field? *Say it ain't so, ye pickers!*

Although the cotton-picking contests are now ancient history along the Missouri Delta, a close cousin of this event still thrives in Nebraska - where “National Corn Hand Picking” contests still draw hundreds of competitors each year. (Timer remains unimpressed by their acumen, however; as far as he's concerned, picking corn - especially while wearing gloves and standing upright - will always be a “piece of cake,” when compared to the arduous and back-breaking labor that is picking cotton by hand.)

Picture the scene. It's two o'clock on a blazing-hot summer afternoon. And here come the Arthurs, dragging their cotton sacks behind them as they crawl along the rows. How many square feet will they cover today and how many pounds will they gather? That question will be decided by several key facts, as follows:

- The number of bolls that are open on the stalks;
- The tenderness of the Arthur backs on that particular day;
- The pain in their lacerated knees;
- The composition of the ground (gumbo or sandy).

Make no mistake, this was brutal work. And the only mercy came after a picker managed to get several pounds into his or her sack - after which he or she could stand and “lean into” the shoulder strap, and thus obtain a momentary respite for an aching back. Otherwise, the struggling pickers were forced to vary their movements in a fruitless quest for comfort . . . and would shift endlessly from bending at the waist, to crawling on their knees, to crouching, sitting or leaning on one arm while stretched out.

Another key tactic in the struggle to escape the physical discomfort of cotton-picking was the “knee pad” - a simple device that cushioned the sensitive knee joint against hard or wet ground. But the pads cost money, and there was none. Some of the pickers (including his mother) managed to make their own pads. And saving money in this way was crucially important. Remembering those hard-edged early years, Jay tends to grumble a bit about “spoiled, modern kids” . . . about contemporary teens who are not required to follow the iron rule he lived by: You have to earn the money to buy your clothes . . . *before* you start thinking about going to the movies or getting yourself a bee-bee gun!

Let's face it: Jay Arthur simply wasn't meant to spend his life picking cotton. Like his cousin Timmie Pool, who loved to make jokes about his aversion to the cotton fields (“I may have been cut out to be a cotton

picker - I just wasn't sewed up right!"), Jay could not reconcile himself to this brutally demanding life. (Timmie also "voted with his feet" later in life and became a minister rather than a picker.) But Jay's body actually revolted against the assignment. Having hurt his right knee while roller skating at age 14, he went on to tear his left knee cartilage playing basketball in the Navy at 19. Once that cartilage was removed (at age 20), this man could never crawl again! And indeed, the balance problems the injury caused him were key factors in his eventual decision not to become a farmer.

These days, the Jayman likes to joke about the fact that H.E. - still a farmer - doesn't have to worry about his knees because he's got tractors (and plenty of hired hands) to perform most of the heavy work!

The good news in all of this came years later - when Jay discovered that by wearing neoprene stretch knee "braces" and knee pads on both knees, he could hike and backpack mountain trails, along with piloting a canoe. (Maniac that he is, he even went cross-country skiing on one occasion - at age 62 - only to hurt a shoulder that required surgery, after he fell hard on concrete-like frozen snow.)

Ah, the joys of those long-ago "cotton days!" Although few lay people would imagine it, one of the greatest challenges for the pickers was the threat posed by the region's voracious mosquitoes. Some years were worse than others, of course . . . and Jay remembers one particularly difficult season in which pickers had to cut the finger tips from new brown "Jersey" gloves in order to work without being severely bitten. Mosquitoes swarmed in clouds around the workers - forcing them to smear repellent on faces and necks and to don long-sleeved shirts and pants, even in the blistering heat.

Many farmers began pulling the bolls early - wearing gloves - although boll-pulling was usually done after the weather turned so cold that your fingers didn't seem up to the task. (Years later, while studying public health, Jay learned that mosquitoes emerged from eggs that hatched into larvae in standing water - whether in pools, rain gutters, old tires or tin cans or leaves.)

During later visits back to the farm, Jay took great pleasure in teaching his folks how to locate these mosquito larvae, then spray or pour a layer of oil on the water to kill the "wigglers." But his parents only smiled. Were they listening? The young man talked himself blue in the face on the subject of "draining stagnant pools and emptying old tin cans and tires" - but to little avail. In the end, he was forced to agree with the sage who had pointed out 2,000 years ago: "A prophet is never honored in his own country!"

There's no doubt that picking cotton was brutally demanding

work. Yet it did offer a few moments of enjoyable pleasure – such as those trips Jay and H.E. took with their father to the cotton gin, each time the crop had been collected. Those rides always took place after dark, and they were moments of festive cheer, a little like Christmas. After the two-mile ride, Harold would drive the team and wagon or truck or tractor and wagon onto the huge platform scales to weigh the loaded wagon. After emptying, the wagon would be driven back across the scales . . . so that a simple bit of subtraction was all the weigh-master needed to determine the weight of cotton that would receive the price support.

The cotton was sucked out of the wagons through huge metal air suction tubes, probably 24 inches or more in diameter, into separate bins to await testing, selling and ginning. Jay was reminded of a huge “Electrolux” carpet-sweeper hose, and his impression grew even stronger as he listened to the “tall tales” told by some of the older men . . . many of whom insisted that “some little boys had been sucked up in the gin and baled in the cotton” after they foolishly moved in too close to the operation.

Always an eager student, Jay soon learned the steps in the process. He saw how the cotton first went into bins, then was vacuumed again, before baling in the gin, itself. At this point dirt and weeds were removed and the seeds were removed for processing elsewhere – into meal or oil. In rare instances, the crop would be sold for next year’s seed. The lint (cotton with the seed removed) was air-cleaned and then compressed into approximately 500-pound bales. Typically, 1,200 to 1,500 pounds of raw or “seed” cotton were required to produce this 500-pounder for shipment.

The bales were then placed on covered docks awaiting trucks or railroad cars for transport. It was a grueling process, and the Arthur boys did everything they could to break up the tedium. On one occasion, for example, H.E. and Jay wrapped loose finished-processed cotton around pieces of rough concrete and then tossed them at each other – assuming that the cotton would stay on the concrete.

It didn’t. On one occasion, Jay accidentally hit H.E. on the head as the cotton came unwrapped. Cut badly, his older brother bled profusely and still carries the scar today.

But Jay was forgiven by his brother long ago. In the struggle for survival that was cotton-picking, a cut on the head was nothing. What mattered was having a loyal friend at your side through all those long, hot days in the rows. Forged in the heat of the Delta cotton fields, the bond between Jay and H.E. remains iron-strong, even 60 years later.

PART II

FOURTEEN: First Love Is The Sweetest

“Where young boys plan for what they will achieve and attain, young girls plan for whom they will achieve and attain.”

Charlotte Perkins

Casanova, he wasn't.

Ask Jay Arthur to describe his early years as a wooer and romancer of the fair sex, and this veteran ladies man will echo the pathetic Rodney Dangerfield as he wails piteously: “I tell ya, I didn't get no *respect!*”

The truth is that although Timer's youthful heart blazed with affection for the beauties all around him, his tongue was desperately shy.

Stammering and staggering, the young man struggled throughout high school to win the hearts of a platoon of gorgeous cheerleader-types . . . and got dumped on his *derriere* for his troubles over and over again.

Things picked up after high school, of course, and the Jayster would ultimately date no fewer than 50 lovelies before finally setting down in matrimonial bliss with his life-mate. But that was *after* high school. *During* was another story, entirely . . . the tragic story of a bashful, heart-broken lad who got shot down so often that he finally started wearing a parachute to school each day.

Sing, O goddess, the agony of Jay's heartache - which began in kindergarten, when he found himself smitten with the teacher. He did his best to win her heart . . . but faced a significant handicap, in that he was only five years old. Imagine his anguish when she refused to date him! But the pain Jay experienced that year was nothing, compared to the desolation that lay up ahead . . . after he chased down a cute blond fourth-grader at Sumach Branch School. The Jayman plied her with flowers, poetry and Wrigley's Spearmint, and for a few charmed hours he enjoyed the sweet perfection of her gaze. But then she sank the dagger into his breast, and announced that her heart actually belonged to a better looking (but infinitely shallower) suitor who had just moved to Kennett from out of state!

La belle dame sans merci!

Like Dido burning in her madness, the wounded Jay Arthur raged across the desolate cotton fields of Dunklin County, while vowing that he would never again dally in the arms of a faithless, lovely female!

But he couldn't help himself.

Enter the enchanting Lois, aka known as "Jay's long-time sweetheart from afar" at Big Sumach School. Lois was pretty, nearly his own age, and also very strong. But why couldn't she see how badly the Jay-guy had fallen for her? Day after day, she failed to pick up on his signals . . . even though he invariably panted at her approach like an ocelot in heat!

At last the kid could bear his frustration no longer, and found the nerve to write her a note in class: "Lois - can I please walk you home?"

It was an offer she couldn't refuse. And when she smiled her acceptance, the Kennett Romeo lit up Yankee Stadium during a night game. Besides, the two kids lived less than half a mile apart, so the situation seemed ideal. With his heart pounding like a steam hammer, the entranced Jay Arthur carried Lois' books to the point where the dirt lanes split into a "Y." As a matter of fact, he absent-mindedly carried them a quarter of a mile *beyond* that point. Goggle-eyed and mush-brained, he lugged the dad-blamed textbooks all the way home before he realized what he'd done!

Uh-oh.

As you might imagine, the kid died a thousand deaths later that evening, when his amused and helpful Dad insisted on returning the texts via the family automobile. (Jay was unable to work up the courage to make the trip with him.) Moping around the backyard that night, a mournful Jay Arthur found himself crooning the same broken-hearted melody that would soon make Roy Orbison a household name in the world of American music:

*Only the lonely
Know the way I feel tonight;
Only the lonely
Know this feelin' ain't right. . . .*

Somehow, their relationship survived this blow. And as the weeks passed, Jay got to know his beloved much better . . . although not exactly in the way he had desired. Among the things he learned: Lois could really fight! On one occasion, the two of them slugged it out for 30 minutes . . . or at least, Lois did - since the Jayman simply did his best to keep her at arm's length. Flailing the air frantically, the hellion scratched him until he looked as if he'd gone nose to nose with a bobcat.

Sadly enough, this one-sided combat would ultimately represent the high-water mark of their shared intimacy. For the blunt truth is: *Timer never kissed or even dated the lady*. How could he – when she was single-mindedly dating another bold young Turk at the high school and cruelly withdrew from her relationship with Our High-Minded Warrior? (And the final twist of the knife? You guessed it: She married the Turk three days after their high school graduation!)

O death, where is thy sting?

Somehow, the Jay-guy endured his heartbreak. Like Shakespeare's wistful and endlessly pining Romeo, he seemed to have a penchant for "loving from afar." How else explain the bottomless yearning he felt for a young thing named "Tammy Lee" – a lissome creature with a knockout-smile who also played a mean third base on an opposing grade school softball team? Try as he might, the Jayster couldn't put her out of his mind for several years!

Tammy Lee was an accomplished tomboy who loved to compete with the boys, while playing sports in the neighboring school. Jay looked on from a distance, and waited for his chance . . . which finally arrived on a Sunday afternoon at the local skating rink. Because he was piloting his pop's pickup truck that day, he dared to ask Tammy Lee and her cousin Jo if he could give them a lift home.

Jo said, "Sure." But things didn't go as expected – because a moment later, Tammy Lee was climbing into the back of the truck and Jo was settling into the front seat with the startled driver! Somehow, Timer managed to hide his disappointment. Forcing a smile, he chatted mindlessly with Jo, while his heart shattered into a thousand twitching fragments. (Years later, recalling the fact that Jo was also quite attractive and outgoing, he asked himself a rather painful question: "Why the dickens didn't I ask Jo for a date?")

One possible answer to failure to date Tammy Lee: During most of his high school years, Jay spent lots of time around school with Tammy Lee's brother, Roy. Somehow, that fact seemed to put a cramp in his style. More than once, for example, he drove out to her house and honked the horn ("Macho guys like us never went up to the front door!"). Down deep, he was hoping desperately that she'd answer the summons and even jump into the pickup truck with him.

No such luck. On the single occasion when Tammy Lee *did* step outside in answer to Jay's honk, he "chilled" completely – and told her that he was looking for Roy! Driving away from that encounter, a demoralized Timer found himself repeating that well known maxim from Grimm's Fairy Tales: *Faint heart never won fair maiden!*

What sorrow! But once again, the Jayman survived it. And then

Timer

one fine summer afternoon when he was 16, he broke his string of scoreless innings. Like so many other good things, his first real kiss took place in a truck. What happened was this: Jay's outgoing father had invited a family of itinerant cotton-pickers to attend his church revival, and had agreed to ferry them to the meeting in the pickup. Jay sat in the back with the family's pretty young daughter, whose parents did not attend . . . and thoroughly enjoyed his first 14 kisses. All at once, Timer was in love! Sadly enough, however, she never attended church with Timer's family again, and her own family moved on soon after that.

He never saw her again.

Jay grieved . . . but recovered the moment he laid eyes on "Cindy Anne." (Yes, half the girls in the county sported two names in those halcyon days.) Jay took Cindy Anne to a formal FFA (Future Farmers of America) "barnwarmin'" at the age of 16. Barnwarmin's were not wild parties, to say the least. The "guests" sat on bales of wheat straw, drank apple cider and ate donuts. Jay thinks they might have listened to records on a "Victrola," but no dancing was allowed, just talk. (Several couples would "leave early" for lovers' lanes, however - and some would apparently even learn how to make babies!)

Cindy Anne wore a pretty pink ball gown and looked terrific. For Jay, it was one of those moments you don't forget - and he still savors the mental image of himself sitting behind the wheel of his family's new green 1949 Studebaker pickup, with the ravishing Cindy Anne nestled beside him.

Was Jay nervous that night? (Can a catfish wiggle his whiskers?) Let's face it, the kid was so shook - and so caught up in ogling Cindy Anne - that he drove several miles on a flat tire! (Later, of course, he tried to explain: "The edge of the road was so rough, you couldn't tell the darn thing was *flat!*") But that excuse seems lame . . . especially given the fact that when they reached the town of Seward - site of the Barn-warmin' - the horribly abused tire fell completely off the rim, and right in front of H.E.!

Then things went from bad to worse in a hurry, that night. Intent on showing off his powerful skills as a mechanic, the Jayman attacked the lug nuts on the new pickup and fiercely turned the wrench *the wrong way*. Instead of loosening the nuts, he worked like a demon at tightening them . . . to the point that he was finally forced to abandon the vehicle altogether, with the wheel still on the truck! (H.E. eventually changed the tire, by turning the nuts clockwise - the proper procedure for loosening them, in the long-gone year of 1949!)

Embarrassed beyond human endurance, Jay-guy briefly considered running a hose from the tailpipe to his mouth . . . then decided on a less

drastic course of action. Instead of icing himself, he would somehow get Cindy Anne home – and then *hide* from her! And then a few years later, he learned that she'd actually enjoyed the adventure – and had been hoping that he'd ask her out again! (Rodney Dangerfield, please call your office!)

Torment! But then the struggling kid finally got a small break.

During Jay's senior year in high school, H.E. moved to St. Louis – giving the lad a chance to pilot the one “set of wheels” available: that good old 1949 Studebaker pickup truck. H.E. still came home often, however (on about every third weekend, as it turned out), and he strongly insisted on his right to drive the truck on those Friday and Saturday nights. And that was tough, because the Jayster was head-over-heels that fall with a beauty named Melanie Anne. But she lived 10 miles distant – a long haul on some mighty narrow bad roads. Still, Jay made every attempt to see her when he could.

The handicaps he faced were huge, however. Was it any wonder that their relationship ended almost before it got started . . . since he was forced to woo her without benefit of a telephone, a car, or a single dollar in his pocket? The loss was Jay's, because Melanie was a really great, funny young lady!

(Four decades later, at his 45th high school class reunion, Jay sat with Melanie Anne's husband, John, at the “big meal” for all the graduates. The couple had married soon out of high school, Jay recalls. But his luck was bad: Melanie Anne didn't make it that night.)

By now desperate for wheels, Timer at last managed to purchase a 1935 Ford Coupe that would allow him to woo his *next* heart throb, a young charmer named Eve who lived outside Senath, about 20 miles away. Bouncing along in his \$75 car with a rumble seat instead of a regular trunk. Jay Arthur was the king of all he surveyed. And the excitement kicked up yet another notch 18 months later, when he met her on a Great Southern Coach bus trip to St. Louis. Jay's eyes lit up at once . . . then darkened again, as Eve explained that she was already married – but had separated and was living in Detroit. Ironically enough, another passenger actually carried a violin that day – and played a series of heart-stopping melodies while the two of them hugged, kissed, and cried. They went their separate ways when they arrived in St. Louis, never to meet again. But Jay has wondered about Eve ever since, and about what might have been. . . .

Another unforgettable journey with the opposite sex was the one that took place in May of 1949, when Jay and his classmates earned enough money to charter a Southern Coach bus to Washington for their senior trip. Jay spent several hours strolling around Capitol Hill and the Washington Monument . . . and even *more* hours romancing a hefty but appealing young German senior from Ste. Genevieve, back in good ole

Timer

Missouri. They clicked right from the get-go, and had a great time trading stories about their “Show Me” backgrounds, as farm kids who’d journeyed to the big city. It was during this trip, also, that Jay was permitted his first close brush with the female breast (but only from *outside* the clothing, of course). Still, the Jayman dug every minute of the experience, and was sorry that he never heard from her again, with the exception of a single letter.

A longtime admirer of female beauty, our hero is still entranced by the memory of the prettiest girl he ever dated (if only once). She was from nearby rural Zalma, and she was truly gorgeous. They drove to a movie theater in Puxico in Timer’s Ford coupe that night – and the entire excursion took place in a driving rainstorm. Certain that he would see her again, Jay didn’t push hard for the chance to kiss her good-night – not with her parents looking through the window at them (or so he suspected). But wouldn’t you know it? He never met Miss Zalma again . . . and once again discovered that the top-ranked beauty had gotten married soon after their brief encounter!

“They meet me, and they get hitched within hours!” Timer groaned in his best Rodney Dangerfield voice. “What am I, a marriage broker?”

Question: Why did so many delectable young women flee the Jayman? Was it because they feared his penchant for landing in trouble? Example: While scurrying about the gallery of the U.S. Senate, the kid decided to whip out his camera and win a Pulitzer – in spite of the warnings posted every few feet: NO PICTURE-TAKING.

Ignoring the signs, Jay began cranking off shots at the senatorial windbags out there on the floor. Within seconds, a security guard was confiscating his film. Undaunted, the kid asked their teacher – the doughty Ms. Quassar – if he could take *her* picture. She preened as she wailed in protest: “Oh, you don’t want *my* picture!” Within five seconds, however, she was posing harder than Betty Grable. Jay clicked off a few photos – before slinking away with some of his classmates to enjoy a big laugh at the poor woman’s expense.

*“I know the nature of women;
“When you want to, they don’t want to;
“And when you don’t want to, they desire exceedingly.”*

Terence

Here's a question for those with a taste for philosophy:

Was Jay Arthur protected by Providence on that night it rained so hard in Kennett - or was he just plain dumb-lucky?

The background: After meeting and kissing a gorgeous young creature on the square across from the County Courthouse in Kennett, the enthralled Timer made a date for the following Saturday night. But a torrential rain fell all that day, and the water was running waste-deep in many areas of the region. Ignoring his father's warnings, Jay borrowed the family pickup and took his chances. But the monsoon delayed him for an hour . . . and when he reached their meeting place, the young lady had moved on.

Terribly disappointed, the Jayster angrily drove home.

A few weeks later, he learned from a close friend that his date that night had been rumored to be carrying syphilis - and that she was famous for "getting it on" with her companions on the first date. Jay cringed . . . and swore he could smell the air burning around his head where the bullet had gone whistling past!

Like every man who has ever loved and lost, our friend Jay looks back at some of his adventures with true regret. Remembering the lovely Sharon, for instance, he asks himself why he acted so immaturely during their brief relationship. The painful truth was that Sharon had loved him - one of the very few women in his life of whom that could accurately be said. He'd treated her with respect, of course (that attitude never varied), and he'd deeply admired her ability to demonstrate her love. If only he had been more mature! But Timer had been only 18 - and Sharon was light years ahead of him in the Maturity Department.

They were parked at a drive-in restaurant when Jay told Sharon he was going to have to stop seeing her because he had become seriously ill in St. Louis (true) and couldn't work or date. Sharon didn't believe that story for a moment! She cried out in shock, then cried out bitterly. A moment later, she had jumped out of the car and gone to be with some friends.

Jay doesn't remember any other girl doing that - before or since. He yearned to follow her and beg her to come back to him, but he just couldn't. He didn't have the strength. Maybe if he hadn't been so ill . . . and with so much happening in the rest of his life. In those days he was working a job away from home in St. Louis, and also deeply involved with a young lady there.

He never saw Sharon again.

About that same time, Jay thought he was "in love" with Sally, the young country girl living in St. Louis. Since Jay worked at night and Sally babysat during the day, they were able to spend a lot of time together - while kissing and hugging and getting to know one another . . . but only up

to a point.

Soon after that, just before Jay became seriously ill, he and Sally went to the movies on a Saturday night. She had recently moved from her sister's place into a walk-up, hot-plate apartment of her own and was working as a waitress. After the movie that night, they bought a Sunday St. Louis Post Dispatch and went to her apartment. Somehow Jay kept getting the uncomfortable feeling that Sally was trying to get him to "pop the question" about marriage. What should he do? Lolah's clearest "Bible Belt" voice was evident. Debating inwardly, the young man slipped his shoes off and climbed up on the bed. Sally joined him there. They traded a few kisses. Then, all at once, Jay realized the obvious: They were completely alone and could go as far as they wanted!

He panicked. Mumbling incoherently "It's too late," he stumbled out the door and down the steps. He caught a trolley and arrived home feeling "out of it." The next night, he staggered off the Buss Fuse platform and missed work for nine weeks with a liver ailment. (The same disorder interfered with his relationship with Sharon, he suspects.)

Sally came to see him after a couple of days, and found him sick in bed. They made lots of promises to each other . . . but the spark was gone, and they never dated again. Sally got married before he returned to St. Louis for good from the Kennett area.

A few years later, however, he received a mighty shock.

"Hello, handsome," the laughing female voice said over the noise of the bakelite press. Jay looked down from his platform at a pretty, blond-haired, olive-skinned lady in blue jeans. She wore a big, bright smile.

"Are you speaking to me?" croaked the Jaybird.

"You bet! I'm Sally. Have you forgotten me already?"

Jay hardly recognized her after the four years. The girl he'd known had been young and pretty - but this was a mature, beautiful woman - a settled-down wife and mother. For a flashing instant, Jay yearned to take her in his arms. But an inner voice warned him: "Hold her once, and you'll never be able to let her go. And that will trigger a fiery explosion in half a dozen lives."

Later, Timer learned to his sorrow that Sally had divorced, moved down south and eventually remarried. He never saw or heard from her again. Durn it! Were these endless vanishings to be the story of his life?

Where was the woman who would take him into her arms and accept him as her loving mate? Was he destined to spend the rest of his life alone and miserable - a Midwestern version of the endlessly rejected Rodney Dangerfield?

No! Jay Arthur's life was going to get much, much better, and very soon. But first he had a few challenges to face.

FIFTEEN: Picking Cherries And Showing Off Hogs

*“He was a very inferior farmer when he first began,
and he is now fast rising from affluence to poverty.”*

Mark Twain

Congratulations, Jay Arthur!

And now that you’ve walked down that aisle and received your high school diploma, it’s time to get down to some serious business.

Farm work!

It’s true. Although he never expected it, our hero actually wound up spending far more hours “down on the farm” after graduation than before! But he didn’t have much choice. Who else was going to take over the 33-acre farm and get the work out, if the Jayman shirked his duty? So he gritted his teeth and grabbed the nearest hoe. And he put in hundreds of long days in the hot sun . . . days that earned him very little cash. As a matter of fact, the only *real* cash to be made out of farming in those Delta days came from loading watermelons into railroad boxcars in the “cool” of the August evenings – while serving as part of a “human chain” that moved the heavy fruit from field trailers onto waiting freight trains for shipment all over the Midwest.

The work was brutal, since it required lifting hundreds of 30-to-40-pound melons many nights. (Of course the laborers were sure to “accidentally” drop a melon now and then, so that the delectable “hearts” could be devoured later by the thirsty crews.) And it’s interesting to note that modern watermelons average only 25 pounds or less . . . a detail that shows you just how much smaller today’s families have become.

Starved for fun and money as always, Jay and his buddy Holman decided to see if they could make a decent buck as migrant laborers. After borrowing \$20 each to pay for riding in the back of a one-and-a-half-ton, tarp-covered, flatbed Ford truck to Michigan, the two graduates found themselves en route to pick cherries. A few hours into the trip, however, Jay was delighted to be kissing a very pretty girl under a blanket! Suddenly, the girl’s father yanked the blanket off. That rude assault forced the kid to keep his distance during the rest of the trip, and he didn’t get to see his paramour again. What a terribly hard two-day ride! Jay wound up

with “hip-pointers on his hip-pointers” from lying on the rattling plank floor.

Instead of picking cherries, they wound up boxing the canned fruit – along with green beans – in a cannery for three weeks before leaving the area. (Holman wasn’t crazy about climbing ladders to pick cherries, anyway.) They worked long, hard hours, during which they stood up and boxed canned goods. Then they slept on the ground in a tent at night. Jay still has difficulty believing that life could be so austere!

But the heartache wasn’t over. When the manager went to lay the workers off after the cherries and beans had been completely harvested, he told them they’d have to wait two full days to receive their paychecks. Some of the enraged workers went on strike! Nothing moved, and there was an undercurrent of actual physical violence. Can you imagine a 17-year-old Missouri farm boy on his first real “outside” job *striking*? It was difficult, but he had no choice.

About this time, Jay also was (he thought) literally forced into contact with a couple of “ladies of the night” – one in Benton Harbor and the other in Flint, Michigan. He’d never had sexual intercourse with a woman and the guys razed him pretty hard. His friends said they’d “expected that much” from a preacher’s kid!

The fun began after Holman and a few other friends decided it was time for Jay Arthur to “become a man.” Jay had another plan in mind and refused, initially; however, he was eager to visit his foster sister, Lottie, who lived only 30 miles away in St. Joseph, Michigan. But the Jayster lacked wheels . . . which made him the prisoner of Holman and his gang of merciless rogues. Finally, Holman & Co. offered Jay a deal he couldn’t refuse: They’d take him to see Lottie – provided that he *also* agreed to visit a brothel with them!

Timer didn’t want to admit it, but he was terrified.

But the laws of “macho” were clear – and ironclad. *Don’t show them you’re ready to wet yourself with anxiety!* Jay didn’t. And when the Lady of the Evening said, “Your \$3 doesn’t guarantee you’ll get satisfaction, young man; it only allows you the time,” he nodded as if he’d been doing this sort of thing for years!

Somehow, the kid survived this first encounter with a painted and rather matronly hussy – during an encounter that sounds harsh and dehumanized to modern ears, but was routinely expected of young men in those earlier times.

After these adventures, Timer went back to trying to get through the frigid Michigan evenings. This was proving to be a major-league challenge . . . especially given the fact that the Jay-guy was living in a nylon, two-person Boy Scout pup tent with a floor, and owned exactly two blan-

kets in all the world. To make matters worse, he soon loaned one of the blankets to a fellow worker with small children who lived in a tiny trailer. The man and his wife were absolutely broke, and the kids were freezing. (Of course, the guy was soon fired, and then took off with Jay's blanket - proving once again the truth in the old saying: "No good deed goes unpunished!")

Now Jay and Holman were down to a single blanket and the nights became very cold. Yet they had no car and no money (or time) for bedclothes-shopping. They took turns covering with the blanket, while sleeping on the cold nylon floor, and then placing the blanket on the floor, and freezing on top of it. During August nights in Michigan, the temperature often dropped down into the 40s. (Holman and Jay were both terribly "straight" - and they weren't interested in "cuddling" with another human male, regardless of how hard their teeth might be chattering.)

After the plant closed, Jay and Holman caught a ride on to Flint, where Holman's brother Sam lived. Sam had married one of Jay's second cousins, and he worked at a big GM plant that made Chevrolets. Married or not, however, Sam couldn't rest until he'd introduced Holman and Jay to Flint's "Whorehouse Row," located on downtown Michigan Avenue. Jay could hardly believe his eyes - or the sight of all those gorgeous-looking women in scanty clothing. Demure and pouting, the beauties posed in little alcoves abutting the sidewalk. And they smiled as sweet as a Delta honeycomb, each time they asked him to "come on in and have a little fun - only \$3."

Jay stayed close to Holman and they went into the same house together. After what seemed like an interminable bargaining session, Jay ended up with a pretty mulatto girl of about his own age. Things went fairly well, and when he helped her smooth the bedcovers afterwards, he was surprised to receive a warm smile. Jay gradually realized that neither she nor the other woman wanted to be kissed, and so he didn't even try. All in all, it wasn't a dreadful learning experience . . . although Jay felt certain that he would not repeat this activity. And in fact, he never visited a so-called "house of ill repute" again. Those ladies lived a demeaning life, he said.

On the way back home, they stopped off in St. Louis. Jay was hoping to spend some time with H.E. Meanwhile, Holman hooked up with an empty watermelon trucker going back to Kennett empty and left Jay in St. Louis. The two pals checked their bulging baggage into the same locker near the market. Since Holman was going home first, the next day, and wanted to leave his baggage there until he was ready, he kept the one key in order to save a quarter. After all, these two guys were dead broke!

And then it happened. Holman departed . . . and left the key for

“safe keeping” with the “guy at the desk.” Needless to say, Jay never saw his suitcase full of new clothes again. Another social lesson.

Soon after that, Jay met his first homosexual male when he accepted a lift to H. E.’s apartment from the bus station. The straight-laced Timer was in shock and refused his proposal. Unfazed by the rejection, the gay blade still gave Jay a free ride to H.E.’s apartment and didn’t press him. Jay hardly knew what to think. Back home, he’d known a boy or two who copulated with animals . . . but this was his first brush with a real live homosexual. Live and learn! But he knew that he certainly could do without that kind of activity!

What a financially disastrous summer! Down to his last 50 cents after a few days with H.E., Jay caught the Great Southern Coach to within a mile of home. He arrived home about five a.m., and found himself happily whistling as he remembered Dorothy’s last line in *The Wizard of Oz*: *there’s no place like home*.

Jay was 17 now, and quite busy that fall. He picked cotton and corn, combined soybeans and again deposited thousands of cotton hulls on the sandy ridge land. He hoped the hulls would help hold in moisture and fertilizer longer for the plants, rather than allowing them to leach straight on to the subsoil and then back to the Floodway ditches. Armed with only a small trailer and a half-ton pickup truck, he faced long days of slow, hard, dusty work. And then when the crops finally came in the next season, he didn’t even get to see the good effects produced by the hulls!

Jay Arthur was already embarked on the next great adventure in his life.

Like so many *other* adventures, this next chapter would be deeply connected to Jay’s love of “showing” (exhibiting) livestock. In that area, he was a real veteran . . . having won prize after prize at high school at fairs in Cape Girardeau, Mo. – along with several small county fairs and the big Mid-South Fair in Memphis, Tennessee. Those competitions had been quite demanding, of course, since Jay had been required to train his animals to “lead” or “drive,” while also washing and grooming them, and then training them to stand “just so” for the judges.

But the “show” world wasn’t always easy to negotiate. Example: The “steer” he showed at the Mid-South Fair in Memphis (or so he was told) was actually a “crypt-orchid” bull.

Translation: When the bull’s first owner had supposedly castrated the animal, he could find only *one* testicle. But he didn’t tell Jay that. Imagine the Jayster’s surprise, in Memphis, when he unloaded the animal and tried to lead him with a mere rope attached to a halter! In a flash, the bellowing “steer” was thundering through the nearly full barn. He jerked Jay off his feet, then “plowed” the young man through a mountain of hay

and a series of smashed board fences . . . until the kid finally managed to get him stopped.

Then the Jay-man scrambled to his feet, tied the rope around a post and literally pulled the bull-steer against it. Meanwhile, he glared furiously at the bystanders, as if to challenge them to say anything. Apparently they understood his bruised pride - because they quickly turned back to their chores.

What a battle! Can you picture the scene? Here's Jay, currying and washing the pure white, 1,100-pound Polled Shorthorn (the Polled breed do not have horns) . . . and here's the Shorthorn, bellowing, kicking, and trying to crush him against the steel fence. Although Jay's "steer" placed nearly last in the judging contest from Missouri, the price he received per pound was much higher than the average - simply because the animal wasn't fat. (The buyers knew they could cut out high-quality steaks as a result.)

Some kids cried when their steers were led off, but not Jay. He felt like letting out a big cheer after being abused for a year and a half by that fake steer, while losing \$50 on the project, as well.

Nonetheless, our hero did enjoy those fairs. At most of them, he would spend the nights in the hay or straw with a blanket - after cavorting through endless water fights with other exhibitors. There were also lots of pretty girls to admire, although Jay couldn't afford to take them on the rides. Fun! Jay also judged poultry in high school competitions, and actually became the top high school FFA judge in southeast Missouri.

His dad, Harold, had taught him so well that Timer could almost *look* at a hen and tell if she was a "good layer." But he could also pick them up and measure the number of finger-widths between the pelvic bones, and in that way determine for sure if they were actively laying eggs at that time. That's how he won contests.

Ah, the joys of showing! At the University of Missouri in 1958, Jay won the swine showmanship and was either first or second in judging hogs, cattle, or sheep. "Showmanship," for the record, was simply the ability to bring a pig in from the barns outside and into the show ring, using nothing but a cane to control him. The object was to keep the pig "looking like an ad in the Duroc News" (a periodical devoted to one of the popular breeds of swine). Jay and several others were awarded a three-day, all-expense paid trip to St. Joseph, Missouri. Students from the Agriculture Colleges from Missouri, Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska were fed thick steaks at that gala event, and were shown the best the meat packers had to offer. These were the first restaurant steaks Jay had ever eaten. They were also put up in the finest hotels. Jay couldn't believe how tall the young men from Nebraska and Kansas were; all of them seemed to be 6-4 or better,

with Jay feeling midget-sized at a mere 5-8!

He soon became adept at judging hogs. Once Jay even judged them at his home fair - the annual Dunklin County shindig. At that blowout, they actually gave him a microphone so he could explain why he rated the animals as he did. His dad and some of his old friends said they were impressed, and maybe they were.

Jay's mother and father didn't have much money, property or live-stock - but they always shared what they had and encouraged their kids to do their best in whatever they tried. Unlike other parents, however, they didn't pressure them to "over-achieve," as so often happens today.

In the end, all four of the Arthur kids would graduate from universities and go on to become professionals - whether as teachers, stock brokerage owners, administrators, or farmers. And their success spoke volumes about the love and the encouragement they had all received from their valiant parents! Jay was extremely proud of his parents and his brothers and sister.

SIXTEEN: The Great Turkey Caper

“Thieves respect property; they merely wish the property to become their property that they may more perfectly respect it.”

Gilbert Keith Chesterton, 1874-1936

Raising livestock? It’s a recipe for tearing your hair out. It’s like poking yourself in the eye with a stick, every hour on the hour. It’s like being locked up in a box with your mother-in-law for 14 straight days. . . .

Ask Jay Arthur why he kept tormenting himself by trying to raise livestock on the family farm as a kid, and he’ll give you a three-word answer:

“I’m a masochist!”

Make no mistake: The Jayman endured his share of sorrow and heartbreak, while breeding pigs and cows and turkeys and rabbits in the Missouri Delta.

But no creature on God’s green earth could hurt him as much as those *turkeys* did!

Example: At one point in his twisted career as an animal husbandry man, Timer owned a surly gobbler with a really nasty habit. This particular wattle-neck loved to “knife” Jay and his friends or family with his sharp spurs. And that bird wasn’t joking around, either; his dagger-like toenails invariably drew blood.

For a while, Jay considered the very appealing idea of running over the turkey’s head with the family tractor. But that strategy would have required tearing down a fence or two, and then he’d have been forced to repair them!

Besides, he needed that lone gobbler to be the turkey “husband” who would service his 12 hens! (No gobbler, no fertilized eggs for hatching!) In an effort to use his wits, the bleeding Jayster planted the strutting farmyard bully inside a fenced-in area away from the turkey hens, so that he could at least gather their eggs without being slashed. (The short fence did serve to keep the brute from getting to Jay. However, the path he had to take ran close to the barrier . . . *too* darned close!)

Each time Jay passed, the homicidal gobbler would slam into the fence, feathers flying, in a *kamikaze* bid to get to the young man with his

sharp spurs. This went on for several weeks. And then one fine morning, our hero strolled up to the fence with a heavy metal water bucket in his hand. *Gobble-gobble!* As usual, the crazed Tom Turk came flying at his adversary. But Jay didn't hesitate. Like Mike Tyson decking a foolish upstart, he caught the bird square on the side of his head with the bucket.

Remember the Titanic?

That stunned gobbler went down even faster. (And like the Titanic, he *stayed* down.)

Jay knew he should have felt sorry for the flattened slasher, but he didn't. As a matter of fact, he felt *terrific* . . . and he fairly skipped toward the school bus that would ferry him to the schoolhouse, eight miles distant. Of course the bird eventually recovered, and even began to show the Jayman a bit of respect. And that was when Jay learned a valuable lesson that would help him greatly in his quest to raise champion turkeys:

Before you can hope to change a turkey's attitude, you gotta get his *attention!*

So what happened next?

This next part, you are *not* gonna believe.

Several days after bucket-bashing the gobbler, Timer nearly stepped on a turkey in the high weeds. At first glance, he assumed this was a turkey hen on her nest. Imagine his shock, when he looked more closely and recognized the decked gobbler, who had become very quiet and motherly now. Stunned by the bird's miraculous transformation, Jay lifted the docile creature from his nest . . . and discovered that he was carefully incubating 3 turkey eggs, each of which required four weeks to hatch!

Had the brain-stunned *kamikaze* undergone a sex-change operation, or what?

Increasingly boggled, Jay watched the gobbler-mom climb right back on the nest and resume his egg-sitting. A few more days passed, and then one fine morning the bird's heroic commitment resulted in the hatching one of the three eggs. Make no mistake, that gobbler-mom cared for the poult with fervent dedication. He scratched for the infant and chirped to it, just like a turkey hen. As a matter of fact, he never gobbled again!

Later, Timer awarded the turkey poult to another turkey (an actual hen, this time) and sold the gobbler. Apparently, Jay had altered the gobbler's sex with the hard rap on the head. It was kinda strange, and sad at the same time. (Jay sent the story in to Reader's Digest, but the editors apparently refused to believe in the veracity of the tale. At any rate, they never responded.)

“The faults of the burglar are the qualities of the financier.”

George Bernard Shaw

Another incident also involved the frantic *bawkkkkkk!* of a demented gobbler, sort of. What happened was, Jay bought another really big, 25- pound Broad-Breasted Bronze gobbler at a huge cost of \$25. But the bird was promptly stolen, leaving the victim gobbler-less. (That catastrophe eventually drove the Jayster right out of the turkey business.) But one night soon after the theft, our hero and his other four family members were relaxing after supper in the living room. They couldn't go anywhere because the roads were thickly glazed with ice, after a brutal winter storm.

What a night! Not until a memorable Baltimore evening in 1994 – when walking was impossible without a shovel or ski poles – would Jay see an ice storm to match this one. And then it happened. The family heard a loud “crack, crack, crack” coming from someone walking near the poultry houses, not far from the spot where Jay's hen turkeys roosted on a board fence. The cracking continued on past their house to the dirt road.

As it turned out, the moon was very bright, and they could easily see a human figure walking towards the road. (Actually, “duck-walking” was more like it.) Without stopping to think about what he was doing, Jay ran for the .22 single-shot rifle, while announcing to one and all: “I'm gonna nail that guy!” In his haste, however, he failed to pick up a flashlight or bullets for the gun. After duck-walking as rapidly as he could behind the intruder nearly a quarter of a mile, Jay got in close to enough to count the hairs on the turkey-grabber's head. At this point, he estimated there were only 20 steps separating them, or less than 50 feet.

Suddenly, doubts flooded his brain and a sick feeling swept over him, almost driving him to his knees. And then the question emerged, stark in its simplicity: “What will I do if I actually *catch* this guy? He's probably as desperate as I would be in this situation. What if he's got a knife or a gun? I don't have a single bullet . . . and what if the lead starts flying in earnest?”

Petrified now, the lion-hearted Jay Arthur considered a possible alternative strategy: run like a demon!

No . . . there was no honor in running, and Timer was above all an honorable man. Somehow, he would have to devise a plan. But even as he mulled his options, his feet had slowed their pace; already, the turkey-assailant was beginning to open up a wider lead. Following at a safe distance, the spooked Jayster tracked the poultry-nabber . . . and finally saw him turn in the lane that led to the residence of the area's most notorious

Timer

sneak-thief. There could be no mistaking the culprit's identity - because there were only two houses in the land before Ditch #19 and the bridge was out!

Fortunately for all concerned, the turkeys were spared that night . . . if only because the birds roosting on the fences were all hens, not valuable gobblers. As he reflected on the attempted theft and its larger meaning, Timer kept remembering that famous Old Testament injunction: *Justice is mine, sayeth the Lord.*

Within a year or two, believe it or not, the suspected thief had died in a highway crash on the outskirts of Kennett.

Jay Arthur learned a valuable lesson from the Great Turkey Caper - a lesson that would stand him in good stead throughout his entire life. The name of the lesson, in a single word:

Humility.

SEVENTEEN: Hunting The Mighty Muskrat

“Nature makes boys and girls lovely to look upon so they can be tolerated until they acquire some sense.”

William Lyon Phelps, 1865-1943

Water, water everywhere . . . and the Jay-man was desperately afraid he might sink!

Ask Jay Arthur to describe one of the most thrilling adventures of his life, and he won't hesitate. "It happened at the FFA Missouri Lake of the Ozarks Summer Camp," he'll tell you with a delighted chuckle, "back when I was struggling hard to complete the Red Cross Life Saving Course. Don't ask me how I made it, but I did - and I was one of only three students who passed!"

In order to win his badge that summer, Timer was required to swim out and "rescue" the instructor or other campers - sometimes using the "tired-swimmer's carry," in which the "drownee" would be calm and cooperative. But in other situations, the "victim" would feign utter panic, and do his or her best to climb up on the rescuer's back. Timer was also required to swim a mile in the lake, then tread water for several minutes. He didn't think it was all that difficult, but several other students weren't able to meet this part of the challenge.

Jay must have done *something* right, because he was elected an officer both years (reporter the first and Vice President the second), and also earned the sobriquet of "All-Round Camper" in both years. In the swimming competition, Jay won all three races by out-stroking about 20 boys. Timer tasted sweet victory in the free-style, the breast stroke and the backstroke. (Mark Spitz, eat your heart out!) He also met a really sweet young lady from Iowa in the "farewell mixer" with a neighboring camp. The two young people traded letters once or twice, but he never saw her again.

As you might expect, our hero was especially proud of these water-borne accomplishments because of his history of ear problems, and also because of the lack of self-appreciation that sometimes seemed to darken his life.

When the Jayster wasn't swimming through the wet stuff, he was busy fishing it. Could any sport on earth match the excitement of "trot-

line" fishing (southern swamp-talk for "trout-line?") . . . a truly wild and wooly pastime in which the goal was to nail a monster "channel catfish?" Jay pursued this avocation in the seven Floodway Ditches, and usually with his good buddy Ben, who lived in the swamps about four miles distant. During this epoch, Timer also hunted duck, trapped the wily muskrat and mink, and did some boat-rowing.

On Halloween, he and Ben also did some "trick or treating!" These young zanies would turn over privies, pitch turkeys onto Uncle Darold's tin roof (what a racket!) and also drag downed trees across dirt roads so that the infuriated local folk were required to climb out of their cars and remove the intrusive lumber.

What times they had. And Jay's pop loved to get into the act; on many occasions, he'd promise to give his son a dollar for every duck he shot. Of course, this offer soon led to some "creative accounting." Example: In situations where both young men had fired at a kill, the "call" usually went to Jay. But pop always paid, bless him!

One Halloween, while skulking through pitch-black darkness, the two pranksters dragged a heavy willow tree across the roadway and then chortled merrily as they watched a car slowly crawl along the muddy, deep gumbo-rutted road. When the car stopped and the enraged driver jumped out, Jay yelled: "Doggone it, Ben! That's H.E.!" As it turned out, the older bro and his date - Larrice - were dressed in their Sunday finest. Within minutes, however, H.E. looked muddier than the Creature from the Black Lagoon. H.E.'s comment said it all: "If I find out who felled this tree, I'll fix him!"

Imagine the older brother's surprise, a moment later, when Ben and Jay literally "slithered" out of their muddy hiding place - it had rained all day - and moved the offending tree. H.E. just sat and glared, while saying not a word to Jay. Yet he never mentioned the outrage later. Jay never forgot good old Ben . . . and what a shame it was, to learn many years later that he'd been injured on a job in Indiana, and had then spent his last few years as a pain-wracked invalid, before finally dying at about age 60. (Ben had gotten married at 17 to a beautiful and sweet 16-year-old redhead.)

Over the years, Jay Arthur learned to appreciate good health - because he was forced on so many occasions to struggle for his own.

Example: every spring, Jay's grade school would have a "get away day" and go to some delightful resort like Big Springs, Missouri, a beautiful area with a huge spring gushing millions of gallons of water. But those trips took their toll; with spring came blustery winds that brought on ear infections - and sometimes even temporary deafness and severe chest and head colds for Jay. (For that reason, he didn't often make these trips - and felt pretty derned frustrated as a result!)

Why didn't the kid get some help for his endless ear problems?

Jay doesn't believe his folks failed to take him to a doctor because they didn't "believe" in the value of physicians. For his part, our hero seldom complained about the pain in his ear, even as he underwent Lolah's "home remedies" for it. The blunt fact was that Jay's parents didn't know how they would pay the medical bill - and they sometimes figured the best strategy was to "wait it out." And indeed, they may have been right; a highly regarded medical doctor later told a public health group in Nebraska that 90% of the complaints brought patients to him would cure *themselves*, given enough time!

There's no denying that Jay struggled with these physical problems, however.

The kid sometimes lost his voice with laryngitis - yet he went for years without seeing a doctor. Sometimes he also lost his hearing for several days. But he was soon able to read lips - a skill that he still practices today . . . given the fact that he still has trouble hearing voices, even with hearing aides, above a certain pitch (and especially the voices of young girls and young children). Remembering those early years of discomfort, Timer says he'll always be grateful for the way his mother would put warm olive oil in his ears when they hurt, then plug them shut with cotton, while providing the kid with plenty of aspirin for pain.

In one especially painful situation, Jay was struggling with a "tight chest" and wheezing badly. The solution that day was for Lolah to put soft cloths in a bucket of water outside in almost freezing weather. These frigid cloths then became compresses that were placed on his chest to "break up" the congestion. They did, too, although he shivered just a tad.

Did these *home remedies* work?

Ask Jay Arthur that key question and he'll laugh out loud.

"I'm still *here*, aren't I?"

EIGHTEEN: AT PLAY ON THE FIELD OF DREAMS

*“Going to bed with a woman never hurt a ball player.
It’s staying up all night looking for them that does you in.”*

Casey Stengel

It happens on thousands of American baseball fields and cow pastures, each and every day during the long hot summer.

It happens under the stern gaze of a hastily assembled, local umpiring crew . . . or when a gentleman in a padded blue uniform bends over with a tiny whisk broom and carefully brushes the sand from a diamond-shaped rubber plate that has been nailed to the earth.

Rising from his task, the uniformed gentlemen then bellows two of the most exciting words in all of American sports.

“PLAY BALL!”

Is there any joy quite like it? Can anything match the solid *thwack* of the bat on the ball, or the leaping catch? Is there any high quite like the high of victory on a baseball diamond?

The players range from pint-sized first-graders who are barely able to carry their gloves to major-league superstars who get paid several thousand dollars each time they come up to swing the bat.

Today’s youthful players dream of becoming immortals like pitcher Dwight Gooden, shortstops Ernie Banks, Cal Ripken, catcher Mickey Tettleton or Hank Aaron, Barry Bonds, Mark McGuire, Eddie Murray, Ken Griffey, Jr., Jose Canseco and many others.

Back in the 1940s - when our hero Jay Arthur played the game - young sluggers and hurlers dreamed of becoming a Stan Musial, a Ted Williams, a Joe DiMaggio, a Vic Raschi or a Bob Feller.

The names might have been different, back then, but the dream was the same. And the name of the dream was: *Stardom!*

When it comes to tradition, you can’t top professional baseball. Recite even a few of the great names from the past, and you’ll find the hair beginning to stand up on the back of your neck. Names like:

•*Home run king Roger Maris*, who broke Babe Ruth’s home run record back in 1961. (His son Roger, Jr., wound up in the same classroom with Jay Arthur’s daughter Jannell, by the way, back in Independence, Missouri — although Junior never made it to the Biggies.)

•*Brooks Robinson*: Many say he was the greatest defensive third baseman in the history of the game, during his all-star years with the Baltimore Orioles.

•*Frank Robinson*: If there was a better pure hitter in the game than this former star outfielder for the Cincinnati Reds (and later manager for the Baltimore Orioles), you'd be hard pressed to find him.

•*Yogi Berra*: One of the most beloved players in the history of the game, the great Yankee catcher also had a way with words. On one famous occasion, when a teammate suggested they have dinner at the trendy Four Seasons, Yogi snapped: "Naaa . . . that place is so damn popular, nobody ever goes there!"

•*George Brett*: The legendary slugger for the KC Royals was also a political superstar. For a while, the "George Brett for President" campaign really took off in this country . . . and there's little doubt that George could have out-performed most of our Chief Execs of recent memory! How will Jay ever forget the summer day when his daughter Emily taped a "George Brett for President" banner across her bed.

•*Mickey Mantle*: When he died on August 13, 1995, of liver failure, half the world went into deep mourning. The Mick could do it all - maybe one of the greatest outfielders who ever put on a uniform.

•*Joe DiMaggio*: What can you say about a player whose name literally became synonymous with baseball? The Yankee great became an icon of his era, as Simon & Garfunkel noted in their popular 1960s tune about lost idealism in America: "Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?"

•*Willie ("Say Hey!") Mays*: A legend in the outfield, he invented the "basket catch" and hit home runs like pop flies. To this day, many baseball *aficionados* insist that he was the greatest hitter to ever pick up a bat. Jay worshipped him.

•*Roy Campanella*: The great Brooklyn Dodger catcher etched his name in the record books as one of the best defensive backstops ever. When he was paralyzed in an auto accident, the courage he'd always shown on the diamond sustained him well during the rest of his life.

•*Ernie Banks*: Because he played for the lowly Chicago Cubs,

National League bottom-dwellers for two generations, this unheralded slugger spent most of his career mired in obscurity. Yet he was one of the greatest homerun hitters in the history of the game, and a true gentleman to boot.

•*Roberto Clemente*: They called him “The Great One” in Pittsburgh, and they weren’t exaggerating. Clemente was a huge talent, and his tragic death in a plane crash spoke volumes about his life: He was delivering foodstuffs to the poor when his small aircraft went down in the Caribbean, too soon.

•*“Hammering Hank” Aaron*: A fixture on the Milwaukee and Atlanta Braves’ baseball scene for two decades, Aaron eventually broke Babe Ruth’s record for career home runs of 714 and went on to over 750. Yet he received relatively little applause, and many observers wondered if baseball fans resented having the Babe’s record erased by a black man. Soft-spoken and gracious, Aaron set a high standard for civility.

•*Johnny Bench*: Pound for pound, he may have been the best catcher to play the game. A perennial all-star for the Cincinnati Redlegs, Bench was a consummate baseball professional.

•*Pete Rose*: What can you say about “Mr. Hustle” that hasn’t already been said? A larger-than-life figure on the field, he allowed his penchant for seeking thrills to ruin his legacy, after he was caught betting on baseball games. A troubled athlete – but he racked up more hits than anybody who has ever played the game. Jay insists that he should be judged strictly on his baseball accomplishments, and not on his moral character. Some boxers and basketball players aren’t angels either.

Don Newcombe: In his prime – as a fireballing righthander for the Brooklyn Dodgers – he was virtually un-hittable. But Newcombe’s Achilles heel was alcohol, and it eventually drove him out of baseball. Newcombe signed a ball for Jay while touring for Alcoholics Anonymous, and our hero keeps that ball atop his credenza at work to this very day.

Question: Did the Jay-man enjoy going to major-league games and wolfing hot dogs with onion and mustard, while also guzzling jumbo-sized tankards of root beer?

Answer: Was the whiskered gentleman they interred so reverently in Grant’s Tomb in New York City actually named Ulysses S. Grant?

Jay couldn’t get enough, that’s all. During his highly peripatetic

career as a baseball fan, he attended games involving nearly every major-league team in the 1950-60 era - including home games featuring the St. Louis Browns *and* the St. Louis Cardinals (at Sportsman Park), the Philadelphia A's (Connie Mack), the Washington Senators and the New York Yankees. Along the way, he was fortunate enough to personally witness the heroics of such diamond legends as Satchel Paige, Ted Williams, Yogi Berra, Mickey Mantle, Stan Musial, Enos Slaughter, Hank Aaron, Jackie Robinson, among many others.

Like these baseball greats, Jay Arthur dreamed for a while of becoming a major-leaguer. Of course, he understood from the beginning that the odds against him would be enormous - especially given the decline of the last few decades in sandlot and minor league baseball. These days, players who are serious about making a living at the game must compete for a mere 800 positions on the 20 major league teams.

Facing odds like that, it's no wonder that most of the dreamers fail.

Jay's own son, Jeff, is a good case in point. Regarded as a promising prospect by the Cincinnati Reds at age 16, the kid never delivered on his promise. Jay did all he could to help, by constructing a mound and a backstop right in the family's backyard. The "skilled" handyman even crafted a "batter" out of a broom for Jeff to pitch to, from the age of 11 on. By the time Jeff was 13, Jay had to wear catcher's equipment because Jeff's pitches were crackling with power, while displaying plenty of movement.

Things went very well for a while, and Jeff even pitched a no-hitter while playing American Legion ball. But then he somehow lost interest in the game and chose to enter the Catholic seminary. Maybe the "warming up" in the backyard snow in springtime had something to do with his losing interest?

Let's face it: The deck is stacked heavily against major-league wannabes. Example: There are a few good colleges that play about 100 games each year, but few of their players can really get the intensive training they need in order to step up to A, AA, or AAA ball (to say nothing of the Majors) from these college programs.

The chance that an outstanding high school, American Legion or sandlot baseball player will become a major leaguer is extremely slim. While Jay was an active Cincinnati Reds "Bird-dog" Scout from 1970 to 1988 in Nebraska and Maryland, hundreds of talented young men tried out at their annual one-day baseball camps. And yet not a single one of these aspiring stars was signed - or even offered a contract! Several of them were "on watch" and did sign with other teams . . . but their careers were short-lived.

Two of the youngsters who excelled in Jay's camps provide excel-

lent examples of the barriers that stand in the way of success. The first athlete was a married, twenty-two year-old recent Nebraska college graduate, and he “had it all,” according to the paid scouts. Yet this candidate was quickly eliminated from consideration – he was “too old!”

The second high-profile prospect, a nineteen-year-old pitcher from Pickrell, Nebraska, who could throw the baseball in the low-ninety-miles-per-hour range with lots of darting movement, asked for a modest bonus. He didn't get it! While the Reds waited him out, he injured his pitching shoulder and sadly ended his bruised baseball career by hurling for his local town semi-pro teams. This gifted youngster later told Jay that he deeply regretted his decision, which had cost him a shot at the Bigs.

Another huge challenge for aspiring players today is the rapidly accelerating pace of technological change in the game of baseball. A good example is “artificial turf” – the plastic grass that dominated the game for a couple of decades, starting in the 1970s, before giving way to natural grass again in most ballparks. During that era, the plastic turf in many infields meant that ground balls moved with ever-increasing speed – and required infielders far more dexterous than those of the past. As many commentators have noted, running speed, strong throwing arms, and quick hands are more essential than ever to win in major-league baseball. The injuries from the “unforgiving turf” and lack of speed of fielders no doubt has led the return of natural grass and sod in the late 1990s.

A compelling illustration: Ty Cobb set his record of 892 career steals in 1922, and it wasn't broken until Lou Brock of Jay's beloved Cardinals smashed it in the 1970s. But guess what? Rickey Henderson has already erased that “immortal” record.

Home runs have also increased, in spite of more night games. Why? The main reason is probably that specialized baseball talent scouts have been able to spot quicker hands on the bat. And it's also true that today's wonderfully effective exercise machines weren't always available in the past. In addition: The U.S. and foreign population of potential players has increased greatly over the past 70 years – even as the number of teams has also increased. The mounds are lower, bats are lighter, . . . and flying from one on-the-road series to the next is far less tiring than train travel – although some analysts have suggested that night games take a special toll on the stamina of players. (Casey Stengel had a different idea, however; he suggested that it was the “action” players sought *after* the game that wore them out!)

Another major change in the game over the years occurred with racial integration. In 1947, Jackie Robinson became the first Black to play in the major leagues and thus paved the way for other African Americans. He was cursed at, called “Nigger,” intentionally spiked, ignored, and thrown

at for his trouble. Later, he wasn't even allowed to stay in the same hotel with the White players! But he and owner Branch Rickey refused to yield on this issue - and baseball is a better game today as result. What courage!

Henry Aaron was another great example of a Black player who could do it all. Hank broke Babe Ruth's career home run record of 714, which had stood for 60 years. (Aaron ended his career with 755 homers.) And he broke that record in the South . . . in Atlanta, Ga., of all places! Another gentleman with iron courage.

One of the finest gentlemen in the history of the game - he's now known as the "Iron Man of Baseball" - Cal Ripken, Jr., broke Lou Gehrig's 2,130 consecutive game record on Wednesday, September 6, 1995. Jay, now the "Ole Timer" at 63, watched the game and the celebration. He cried along with the millions, and sat amazed as the fans erupted in an ovation that lasted for 20 minutes and 15 seconds. The fans in the stands that night included President Clinton, Vice-President Al Gore, Joe DiMaggio and scores of other sports heroes - along with Cal's family and many politicians.

Ripken had to be forcibly pushed by Rafael Palmeiro and Bobby Bonilla, in order to start him off on a walk around the entire stadium giving high-fives, shaking hands, and embracing players and friends. As Ken Rosenthal, a Baltimore Sun Columnist, wrote, "Unlike the tears at Gehrig's retirement ceremony, these were tears of joy for their `home town hero.'"

Cal jogged over to his wife Kelly, and his children Rachael, 5, and Ryan, 2. He held Ryan and kissed Rachael. "He appeared relieved and humbled, and so, so happy," Rosenthal wrote.

As of this writing, Cal's streak has added another approximately 300 games, and he continued his astonishing baseball odyssey through the 2001 season. He moved to third base in order to extend his career and perhaps his hitting may have improved because of the shift. (Not that he needed much improvement in that department: How many shortstops drove in 90-100 runs year after year?)

Ask Jay Arthur to describe his many years as an unpaid major league baseball scout, and he'll talk to you at length about a world in which hawk-like baseball fans comb the U.S. and other countries, looking for a mere handful of talents who just *might* develop and play in the majors. From the many millions they find, only a few prospects actually make to "The Show" - but that's all they need. Jay worked for two scouts for the Cincinnati Reds - Fred Uhlman (who later became a Vice President in Scouting for the Baltimore Orioles) and Bill Clark, later a South American scout for the Atlanta Braves and now San Diego Padres. Back then, their territory included Kansas, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, Wisconsin, South and North Dakota, and also

followed some imaginary lines through Canada. Interestingly enough, Bill drove and carried uniforms for his “Bird Dogs” to wear at the tryouts. That little touch was important, because it made Timer feel like a professional scout. In baseball, little things mean a lot! His picture in a Reds uniform is cherished by Jay.

Commission-only men like Jay were known as “Bird Dogs” (although Jay’s Weimaraner – “Duke” – didn’t think the scouts deserved such a high-toned title!) and observed high school, sandlot, and American Legion players. Later, they would telephone or write the paid supervisor scout to pinpoint an outstanding talent. A major league prospect seldom, if ever, escapes from this far-flung net.

The scouts were quite effective at spotting the boys with very strong pitching arms (85 miles per hour or above), and those who have excellent eyesight, hit with power, had strong throwing arms, “soft hands,” foot speed and quick bats. (The best combination, of course, was “all of the above.”) In the real world, however, you don’t often find athletes blessed with perfect eyesight (including side vision), strength, great arms with quick releases, outstanding foot speed and quick hands and bats. And that’s probably the main reason why only one or two successful professional basketball or football players have been able to duplicate that success in major league baseball.

Using a stop watch, Jay and the other scouts would test all hopefuls by having them race 60 yards in 6.9 seconds or less – the mandatory time for infielders, (except first basemen) and outfielders. Outfielders, meanwhile, were asked to throw the ball on one strong hop to the catcher from 250 feet in center field. In addition, all infielders were required to “zing” the ball to first base from deep shortstop.

Catchers had to throw “bullets” to second base with split-second release of the ball, and first basemen were required to prove they could whip a throw from first to home or third base quickly, strongly and accurately. In addition, all of them had to know how to handle that bat.

Make no mistake: the standards were extremely high. To qualify as having even a “fair” arm, pitchers had to be able to hurl a fastball at least 85 miles an hour as measured by a radar gun. The ball also had to “dip, dart, rise or otherwise move,” and not merely zip to the plate in straight-arrow fashion. A change of pace was also essential – and these “off-speed” pitches had to be thrown with the same motion. Taller pitchers usually stood a better chance of success, because they could take long strides toward the batter to intimidate him. They could also unleash “sidearm heat” against sluggers who hit from the same side as the pitcher’s release.

There’s no question but that the non-pitcher needed to be an outstanding athlete with a strong, accurate throwing arm. Success demanded

that he hit the ball solidly and often, while also displaying the ability to catch it or pick it up with “soft hands.” The major-league hopeful must start quickly and run 6.9 seconds or faster in the 60-yard dash (unless he happened to be a power-hitting first baseman, catcher or pitcher).

After 18 years of helping to run baseball tryouts, Jay Arthur sat down and wrote a moving and informative poem about what really goes on during “tryout day.”

The Tryout

From the 85 mile-an-hour, dipping, moving fastball,
To the same-motion, seventy-mile changeup;

From the explosion in the catcher’s mitt,
To the two-second bullet to second base;

From the charging “firster” to the “thirder”
To the catcher for the tag;

From the strong-armed, soft-handed shortstop,
To the contortionist second baseman;

From the quick-reflex, bullet-throwing “thirder”
To the mountain-man at home;

From 250-foot fielders’ throws from center,
To the cut-off man or blocking “rock” at home;

From the six-point-nine for sixty yards,
To the chugging, power-hitting firsters or catchers;

From the smooth, quick-bat, line-drivers,
To the quick-reflex, fence-clearing sluggers;

From the batter’s speed from home to first,
To the runner’s speed to steal bases;

From the fun-filled days playing sandlot ball,
To the pressure -packed minors;

From the severe cutting of minor rosters,
To the releases and trading of the majors . . .

These are only a few of the hurdles
That the aspiring Major Leaguer must somehow clear.

Is it any wonder that the fans always say:
“Those guys on the field are truly the best!”

Jay never considered himself to be terribly good at any sport, and his record pretty much confirmed that insight. However, he always did his best. Unfortunately, he quit the high school basketball team in his senior year - after mistakenly assuming that the coach wanted those seniors who weren't on the first 10 to turn in their suits. Not true - the coach was as disappointed as Jay was, after the kid threw in the towel! (Alas: our friend Timer only learned that fact at the end of the season. Poor communication on both sides of the coaching box!)

A lesson learned. And Jay benefited from it; since then, he rarely concedes defeat in any competition without being absolutely sure he can't perform the activity at hand. Jay played softball, baseball and basketball, while also running the mile in track, boxing, swimming, etc. But let's face it: He carried some real disadvantages out there on the Field of Dreams - staring with his youth and his small stature.

Although Timer invariably made his grade school softball teams, he encountered a great deal of frustration on the field. All too often, he would come up to bat with the bases loaded, two out and with his team one run behind . . . only to strike out. But he gave it his all!

In spite of his lack of physical ability, our hero later became a good softball fielder. Fortunately, he was blessed with a decent softball arm and hit fairly well. And did he ever hustle! It seemed like Jay was always getting hurt, while playing to win. Example: while creeping in from third to defend against a bunt, he catches a screaming line drive in the chest! (Breathing was a struggle for days after that.) He's also convinced that a lot of his problems at bat in softball and baseball - along with difficulties in passing and shooting in basketball - were due to the fact that he needed glasses very badly. Also, Jay just tried too hard, couldn't relax, and thought all the pressure was on him to come through.

Jay played baseball in high school and was pressing very hard. The numbers tell the story: He struck out eight times in 13 times at bat! He also had no hits - although he did manage to walk once, and later scored. In other words, the Jay-man racked up a batting average of .000! After high school, though, things rapidly improved; he played sandlot baseball and did very well. He also continued to compete in basketball, softball and baseball until he was 35. (But then he hurt his leg while camping and thought

it necessary he quit strenuous activities for several years.)

After that he launched an ambitious regimen of jogging, then fast-walking and later hiking, back-packing and canoeing.

As for his baseball dreams . . . well, let's just say that they haven't been fully realized yet. The St. Louis Browns he tried out for so many years ago are now the Baltimore Orioles. (They still haven't replaced the Cardinals in his heart, however. And a few years later - even though he had attended some Kansas City Royals games - he never "forgave" the Royals for beating his Cardinals in the "Show Me Series" in 1985.)

Long after age 18, Jay met Bill Clark, an Army friend of H.E.'s who worked near him in Columbia, Missouri. Clark, a newspaper journalist at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, became a professional major league baseball scout for Seattle, Cincinnati, and later Atlanta and San Diego. The two became very good friends. Clark eventually asked Jay to help him out, on a commission basis, as a Recommending Scout . . . and Jay became a Cincinnati Scout from about 1970 to 1988.

The ritual at the tryout camps goes pretty much like this:

The hopefuls listen intently as the chief scout goes over the day's agenda. Next step: the young men fill out player identification cards containing their names, birth dates, addresses, next of kin and positions they wish to play. They also describe any high school or American Legion or college playing experience in the past. The scout then collects these cards and will use them to log running speed, arm strength, etc. At this point, each candidate receives a number.

All of the wannabes run the 60-yard dash. Armed with stop watches, the scouts record their times. The bottom line: Except for the catchers, pitchers and first basemen, every Cincinnati wannabee must cover the distance in 6.9 seconds or less.

One scout whacks ground balls at the candidates for the infield. A second scout hits lazy fly balls (known as "fungos") to the outfield hopefuls

The catchers and pitchers are paired off and then engage in long toss for quite a while under the watchful eye of "bird dogs" or scouts.

The infielders begin to throw in earnest. In this test, the third basemen, shortstops and second basemen must field cleanly and throw from deep short in order to prove the strength of their arms. Next they take grounders and practice making double plays or long throws to first and home.

Outfielders throw to the plate from 250 feet and must get the ball to the catcher on one sharp hop.

Pitchers throw, while being speed-clocked by radar. To be classified as having a “fair” arm, a pitcher must throw at 85 mph or better. If the ball moves, or dips and darts, so much the better. (Unless the pitcher can jack the speed up to 100 mph, that ball better *move!*)

Catchers must release the ball quickly, with no more than one step, and whip it on a line to the shortstop or second baseman low enough to make the tag.

Prospects who are still in the running after meeting these challenges receive eye exams and play in a practice “game” to observe their savvy in a game.

The chief scout talks to the entire group, in order to boost morale and prevent discouragement. A typical speech: “Even if Cincinnati isn’t interested, you may still catch on with another team, or wind up playing college ball.” The scouts then offer to talk “one on one” with the rejected hopefuls.

How tough is it to make the cut?

Consider this fact: during more than 15 years as a scout, Jay never signed a single player – although he recommended some outstanding athletes. Still, the Timer learned to be a pretty fair judge of talent and to appreciate the amazing physical and mental attributes required to become a professional baseball player.

Jay enjoyed his scouting enormously – although he never did quite master the skill of pushing the stop watch on and off with the starts and finishes! He did much better on the radar gun, while measuring the speed of pitchers. Timer got a real thrill out of the 1983 joint Cincinnati-St. Louis Cardinal tryout, which was probably the best tryout he ever attended.

Because of his years of experience in team sports, it seemed Jay was always being elected to such posts as Church League Superintendent, manager, or coach of American Legion teams in basketball and softball.

As always, the Jay-man has a ready explanation for his tendency to wind up coaching, rather than chasing balls across the outfield or the frontcourt.

“Maybe when they saw me play, they figured the best place for me to be was the coaching box!”

Nineteen: Putting Away The Things Of A Child

“By working faithfully eight hours a day you may eventually get to be a boss and work 12 hours a day.”

Robert Frost

Fathers and sons.

In most cases, they love each other. They are loyal to each other. But sometimes, they have to fight.

Jay Arthur’s dad was a wonderful man. He was a caring man . . . but he’d been through some rough weather, himself, and he had no intention of “coddling” his sons.

The old man was part-German, of course, and maybe that explained some of his temperament. And maybe it explained why he decided to drive his sons out of the family home when they reached the age of 18.

There’s an old folk saying in Germany: “When a boy reaches 18, his father must break his plate!”

That was part of the story. Another key factor: To this day, Timer is convinced that his dad was deeply affected by his own status as a “near-orphan” who got passed on from one brother or sister to the next, for more than 15 years.

Of course, it’s also true that by the age of 18, Jay Arthur had decided he must stand up to Dear Old Dad.

On one occasion, for example, when his father started to box his ears for some mishap in the chicken house, our hero grabbed the older man’s arm. Having blocked his swing, he told his *padre*: “Dad, you’re not going to ever hit me again.” After that, the blows stopped . . . even though they’d never really left any bruises on the kid, who loved his pop dearly. Still, enough was enough: Timer wasn’t a kid anymore, and he wanted some respect from the adults around him.

The showdown with pop took place in late January of 1950, and by March 6, Jay was doing piecework on a wooden platform for Buss Fuse Co. in St. Louis. Suddenly, the 18-year-old Timer was making plastic fuse holders out of bakelite powder for defense contracts. H.E. had helped land this job for Jay, and they wound up doing the same type of work, within a few feet of one another. The kid couldn’t believe it! Today he recalls: “They actually paid me \$60 take-home pay for doing that ‘play’ for 47.5 hours each week – and they paid me in cash the very first week!”

Consider this amazing fact: Jay wouldn’t have made \$60 cash in

Timer

two months in Kennett, while working one day a week for the Livestock Sales Barn!

The young man's shift ran from 4:30 p.m. to 2:30 a.m., and featured no on-site supervision after 9:00 in the evening. Even better, Timer and his hard-working bro were paid by the piece – and they inspected their own work. Of course, there were a few drawbacks – starting with the fact that they frequently burned themselves by coming into contact with hot wax or heated wax trays. (The black or sometimes chocolate-colored powder also crept into their eyes, hair, teeth, ears and shoes.)

Still, it was an exhilarating challenge, and most of the younger, more agile men fabricated so many pieces over “quota” that they were forced to hold them back . . . since the union leadership frowned on those who exceeded “average” productivity on the job.

What a life! Every three weeks or so, Jay would visit his mom's and dad's home, after leaving work early to catch the 12:00 Midnight Great Southern Coach. Of course, this strategy required that he crank out enough finished pieces – in advance – to cover his absence from the factory floor. Remembers our hero: “We hid them between times under the platform and had friends punch out our time cards. In spite of these minor scams, however, we were regarded as reliable workers and held in the highest respect by the owners.”

For the redoubtable Timer, achieving your “quota” soon became a reigning obsession, regardless of the employment setting. And he soon learned to admire and respect those who could get the work out, day after day. Example: There was a guy working close to Jay whom they called “The Old Man.” A professional house mover during the day, this tireless factory hand sported “muscles on his muscles.” He was also at least twice Jay's age, and wouldn't stop trying to pick a fight with the kid. But our hard-charger refused to be intimidated – and instead stood up to the bully. (Once the big man's bluff had been called, the two became fast friends.)

After months of on-the-job success, the Jay-man saw his fortunes take a downturn at Buss when he became ill one night during a shift on the platform. The culprit was a liver ailment (the same disorder that had earlier interrupted his romances with both Sharon and Sally). Suddenly, a frightened Timer found himself going without pay for more than two months in the summer of 1950. Fortunately, he recovered rapidly – once the lab tests had pinpointed his problem, allowing both diagnosis and successful treatment to get underway at the famed Washington University Hospital in St. Louis.

Still, the damage had been done . . . at least as far as Jay's romantic life was concerned.

Back in St. Louis, you see, he'd been dating the sloe-eyed and 17-

year-old Sally with a vengeance, until the health problems suddenly struck. Too sick to leave his room, Jay paid her less attention than before, and the result was all too predictable: sweet Sally quickly married another guy! Is there any justice? Of course not. Whenever he remembers that long period of lying flat on his back - paralyzed by an ailment that probably resulted from being forced to eat his own cooking for six months - our hero echoes the priceless wisdom of Woody Allen, who once summarized his life by crying out in anguish:

“I got *screwed!*”

Twenty: Anchors Aweigh!

*"I joined the army [Navy], and succeeded in killing
about as many of the enemy as they of me."*

Bill Arp, 1826-1903

Ah, to be 19 years old again and whistling the theme song of the U.S. Navy: *Anchors Aweigh, my boys, Anchors Aweigh!*

One night in May of 1951, a high-spirited young man named Jay Arthur stood beside an industrial assembly line in St. Louis and listened to the Voice of Destiny.

The voice belonged to Timer's adventurous cousin Yale, who was lurking on the other side of the Buss Fuse Factory window screen.

"Did you hear me, Jay? I said I'm about to join the Navy! I'm shipping out to the Great Lakes Training Center, and I want you at my side!"

Jay peered through the screen onto the wide expanse of Jefferson Avenue in downtown St. Louis. He could hardly believe the words he was hearing. Suddenly, his brain was racing with the lines of a sailing poem he'd memorized in childhood:

*I must go down to the sea again,
To the lonely sea and the sky. . . .*

Like most young men of his era, the Jayster was afire with patriotism, and swabbing decks for Uncle Sam sounded like a dream come true. But joining the Navy wouldn't be easy, and Timer knew it. Only the previous January, our young warrior had tried to sign on with the U.S. Navy, so that he could fight beside H.E., who had just been drafted. But fate had not been kind; in the end, the seagoing docs had rejected the kid from Kennett because of his badly scarred and infected eardrums. Desperate to change their minds, Jay had tried to blame the damage on a "bad cold I developed, just a couple of weeks ago." But the military physicians knew better, and Timer had not been accepted into the service.

Listening to Yale got Jay excited all over again! Maybe he could talk his way in, if he gave it another try? The next day, Timer hustled back to the scene of his original Navy physical. The naval branch obviously needed recruits badly - and the quota had to be met, regardless of physical

problems. The Navy Chief corpsman examined the Jay-man, then barked: “Your ears aren’t the prettiest I’ve seen, but I think you’ll be fine after a few days – once that cold clears up. We’ll check you out again in two weeks.”

Feverish with impatience, Timer hated the fact that Yale would be leaving without him. But then came some good news: Yale dropped by Buss Fuse again – to announce that the Navy had experienced a “technical problem” with his papers, and that his own induction would be held up for about two weeks, as a result.

Fourteen days later, after listening to his mom cry her eyes out, Jay met Yale at the front door of the recruitment office. The two cousins were sworn in, standing side by side, with about 100 other self-conscious, *macho*, and very naked men . . . all of whom were doing their level best to look “cool.” One by one, the neophytes were given eye tests, including tests for color-blindness. Jay was informed that his eyesight could be “corrected with glasses,” once he reached the training facility, so the corpsmen overlooked that flaw. This was first time he recalls ever being told he needed glasses. Nor did he fret about this physical limitation; all he cared about right then was doing his part to whip those treacherous North Koreans. Make no mistake: Our valiant swabbie loved his country and wanted to do what was needed in the Battle for Truth, Justice and the American Way.

Interestingly enough, Jay and Yale wound up with Navy serial numbers that were only a single digit from being identical. They also rode together on the train from St. Louis to Great Lakes, Illinois, and their bunks were positioned side by side in the barracks. Jay can still remember that long number . . . which sometimes come to mind when he’s asked for his Social Security. (And why not – since both of them begin with the numeral “3?”)

Pretending to be angry with one another – a favorite ploy – Jay and Yale wrestled on the bunks, the floor or the ground almost constantly. They almost always had a couple of other recruits looking on as they panted and pushed, pulled, tripped and tried to pin each other. Yale was approximately six feet, one inch tall and 180 pounds and Jay five feet, eight inches and 140 pounds. Yale knew that if he could get Jay’s feet off the floor, he could whip him. On the other hand, Jay understood that if he could just manage to flatten Yale for a moment, he stood an excellent chance of prevailing.

Great Lakes, Illinois, was cold most nights throughout the Summer. As Jay later wrote his mom: “We had to wash our own clothes in cold water, on long stainless steel almost-flat sinks, then wring them out, all by hand. Then we hung them outside. Once dry, they were rolled up tightly

and stored in lockers, ready for the constant inspections given both our clothing and ourselves. We marched everywhere with our M-1 rifles, but we never shot them. We did target practice with .22s and I once shot a .45-caliber pistol," the young man noted in letters from Great Lakes.

The recruits marched everywhere: to classes, to meals, you name it. Said Jay: "We had one guy who rode his `motorcycle' to chow, brought it to a stop, put down the kick stand and proceeded to get in the line. He was given a medical discharge. You see, he didn't actually *have* a motorcycle! Another kid got a BCD [bad conduct discharge] for masturbating in his upper bunk one night. I think half the platoon would have been discharged, if they'd really looked around."

The schedule was rigorous, to say the least. But things improved after a few weeks, when they were allowed to play softball after evening meals. Yale and Jay soon became pretty good players. Yale coached and played shortstop, and Jay caught - until one of the unbelievably fast pitchers on his team badly bruised Jay's catching hand. After that, the kid from Kennett switched to the infield. (Unfortunately, the players hadn't been issued catchers' mitts - who would have imagined that you could throw a softball so fast?) At any rate, the Yale-and-Jay ballclub won more than 30 consecutive games, and strutted around the base as Training Center champs for four or five straight weeks!

Another highlight of "boot" came during the seventh week of training, when the Navy unveiled its "Service Week." Most of the newcomers - including Yale (until he was transferred to the chiefs' mess) - were required to hang out in the galley, where they washed mountains of pots and pans and peeled huge piles of potatoes. But Jay was spared this indignity. Because he had earned his Senior Red Cross Life Saver Badge at FFA Camp, he was selected a lifeguard and instructor at the beautiful Olympic-sized base swimming pool. Of course, this assignment also included a less pleasant aspect: Jay became the "cleanliness of the anus and disease pecker checker," and wound up barking at a thousand stunned swabbies a week: "Peel it back and spread `em!"

What a price to pay in order to avoid the galley and swim in the beautiful pool!

Another key challenge was the effort to teach non-swimmers how to navigate the pool. Many had never been swimming before, and they were more than a little nervous about the assignment. Jay got most of them swimming within 30-60 minutes, however, by employing the Navy System. He also saved several from drowning, and left a few others with black eyes after accidentally whacking them in the head with his bamboo rescue pole!

When the classes finally ended each day, Jay would swim and dive

in the pool alone or with one or two others. As you might imagine, the potato-peeling Yale was green with envy. He sure did sweat a lot doing all those pots and pans – and when Jay commiserated – “You poor thing!” – the two quickly wound up grunting and snorting through another wrestling match. Yale did get transferred to the Chiefs’ Mess...better.

Try as they might, these two pals couldn’t seem to agree about *anything*. Take “pulling liberty,” for example. While Jay felt convinced that the guys who went to Milwaukee had the most fun (wasn’t it the “Beer Capital of the World?”), Yale insisted that the real action was to be had in Chicago. Why Jay listened to him, he’ll never know . . . but the blunt fact is that he and his buddy wound up spending three straight boring weekends in the Windy City. Instead of meeting girls and quaffing suds, they sat through an endless series of movies!

To this day, Jay blames their disappointing liberty weekends on two key factors. First, they were both agonizingly “girl shy.” And second . . . Yale was an idiot who wanted to spend all his time either playing pinball machines or sitting in the tenth row of the *Lyric*, while munching popcorn and watching Humphrey Bogart slap bad guys around!

Yale’s terror in the face of the opposite sex became all too evident after basic training. Stationed aboard the Destroyer-Radar USS E.F. Larsen for all four of his enlistment years (except for Boot Camp and Radar School), Yale rarely dated. He became an all-star softball pitcher, however, and proved to be a loyal friend. Jay still sees him whenever he can, which isn’t oftener than every four or five years now. Recently retired and living in Las Vegas, Yale spent more than 30 years working as an engineer for an aerospace firm in St. Louis. Despite retirement, he has also kept up his interest in electronics as a Ham Radio Operator and has a beautiful wife and 2 kids.

Yale’s story was an interesting one. Talented in math, the young man was accepted in Radar School right after Boot. But his buddy Timer – who lacked a “math gene” (remember those problems with the high school math teacher?) – didn’t make the cut. As a result, Jay and nine other recruits from Great Lakes went by train directly to the Chincoteague, Va., Naval Air Station, Utility Squadron Four (VU-4) on the Delaware-Maryland-Virginia peninsula. (The former Station is now a NASA base, by the way.)

What followed was an exciting career – as both a sailor and an outstanding amateur athlete. Unfortunately, however, the Jayster injured his left knee playing basketball . . . which depressed him a lot, because he could really shoot the bottom out of the baskets. The resulting operation and recovery required a nine-week stay in Portsmouth, Virginia, the following June. The operation removed a torn cartilage. Except for that mishap, Jay would spend his entire four years there at Chincoteague.

Forty years later, in 1996, he returned to the base on a wave of nostalgia. The physical layout hadn't changed much over the years . . . but the landscape seemed virtually deserted. Where were the mobs of sailors he'd rubbed shoulders with during his time here? And where were all the planes? On this day a few years ago, Timer was startled to find only a single aircraft on the flight line.

That one plane was a large one, however - and it quickly brought back the memory of a landing he'd made at Norfolk, Virginia, years earlier. On that day, Jay and his crew had been touching down in a giant PBM-5A seaplane. Just seconds before the pilot prepared to set the huge aircraft down on the runway, a twin-engine Beechcraft darted in front of them. Jay's pilot pulled back on his stick and gave the engine full power. Although the plane shuddered like it would fall apart, the pilot was able to keep it up and thus prevent a disastrous crash. Jay, the crew, and the several passengers aboard would have been "basket cases" if they'd had time to think about how close to death they were during those crucial seconds!

On another occasion - equally hairy - Jay had been flying in a twin-engine JD-1 (a modified B26 Flying Fortress) with a Non-Commissioned Officer serving as pilot. The man at the controls had qualified as a pilot in WWII and was still flying - and he was reportedly an excellent pilot. (Jay was aboard because he'd managed to nab a free flight to the former Malden, Missouri, Air Force Base near Kennett for the weekend. The pilot had family there, also.)

The return trip nearly proved disastrous, however. Flying along on a tranquil Sunday afternoon, they unexpectedly strayed into the edge of a hurricane! The rather large plane suddenly dropped hundreds of feet and began plunging from side to side. Were they out of control? Is the Pope Catholic? The other passenger had grabbed the telephone intercom headset in a frantic effort to tell the pilot that there was a problem with the antennae wire to the tail. Roaring in order to make himself heard, the passenger bellowed: "The antennae wire is broken to the aileron and is trailing loose!" But the pilot must have heard: "The aileron is broken" - because he quickly told them to bail out! Describing the event years later, Jay remembered that the plane was pitching so badly, he knew he'd never be able to squeeze through the small, square opening in the floorboards while wearing a parachute.

He was spared that ordeal a moment later, however, when the panicked passenger finally made himself heard: "It's only the antenna wire, just the *antenna* wire!" The pilot ten-foured, nodded and canceled the bailout - thus preventing Jay from making the first (and only) sky dive of his life.

Another interesting (as in "terrifying") flight saw our hero zoom skyward in a single-engine TBM piloted by a lieutenant from an aircraft car-

rier. As it turned out, the pilot on this particular journey was doing his cross-country training, and Jay hooked a ride. Imagine the mood in the cockpit when the pilot ran low on fuel – perhaps because of a strong westerly head wind – and started looking around for a place to land. Why he wasn't carrying an aerial map was never explained. Increasingly anxious, the befuddled pilot buzzed several water towers in Ohio – or was it Indiana? – in an effort to learn the name of a town. (Apparently, he *did* own a highway map, if nothing else.)

No luck. After the pilot discovered that all of the towns in the region seemed to be repainting their towers, he hit the emergency button: “Mayday, Mayday, we have 10 minutes of fuel left and I don't know where we are!” When Jay heard this statement boom through his earphones, he sat up straight in his chair. Who could blame him? Suddenly, he was remembering another famous phrase by his favorite philosopher, Sir Woody Allen: “I'm not afraid of dying – I just don't want to be there when it happens!”

Fortunately, the Civil Air Patrol heard the Mayday call and told the pilot to “fly north for one minute, make a 90-degree right turn, fly straight again for a minute, then repeat the procedure but this time turn left . . . and then call back.” Jay was having trouble keeping it all straight in his head, and the clock was ticking ominously.

A moment later, however, the CAP barked some good news: “You're five minutes from the Columbus, Ohio, Air Force Base, and headed straight in for a landing.” Hearing these words, Timer stopped looking around for a parachute and started saying prayers of thanks. The carrier pilot seemed unfazed by it all, however. Remember, he lived in a world where you slammed your plane down on the deck of a wind-lashed carrier, then waiting for the cable to catch your tailhook – while your life hung in the balance.

In the end, this daring airman made a perfect landing . . . with exactly one minute's worth of fuel remaining in the tank! The plane was re-fueled and soon back in the air – in spite of a brief delay, during which Jay speculated that the pilot was being evaluated for mental competence. But they made it to St. Louis in fine fettle, although the pilot set down the compact TBM so hard, it bounced several times at the St. Louis field.

After surviving these near-crashes, our warrior could hardly complain about a mere cartilage-tear in his knee, could he? Jay had ripped the meniscus in his left knee in September of 1951, but the operation was postponed until June of 1952. After the surgery, he returned to the court wearing a heavy football knee brace – and somehow managed to make the Intramural All-Stars. (He'd been a proud member of the Base Team before the injury.)

But then a funny thing happened to the young man on the way to the All-Star Tournament in Norfolk. The trouble began when Jay allowed his good friend “Sea Daddy” Kaselbaum, a jokester from Jefferson City, Missouri, with a notorious reputation for pranks, to feed him “boiler-makers” in a Chincoteague restaurant.

Some background: At the time of the Boilermaker Incident, Jay was in the middle of breaking up with his beloved Delores, back home. He’d also spent the past two months or so restricted to base. Did he “overdo” the boiler-makers as a result? Do kids build snowmen with carrot-noses in Manitoba in January? The blunt fact is that Jay went “three sheets to the wind” – and then fell sound asleep on the way home in a cab. Sometime during the night he rolled out of bed onto a steel radiator – ouch! – and the poor lad could hardly walk for several days. Sore back, sore ribs. Headaches! Goodbye, playing in the All Star Game. Just warmed up and watched.

Kaselbaum was some jokester, all right. A “striker,” or parachute rigger, he loved to startle pilots by yanking on the ripcords of their parachutes. It was a joke, but most of the pilots weren’t amused – and Sea Daddy was nearly put on report for a Captain’s Mast by one flyboy who lacked a sense of humor.

In spite of these problems, the Jayster met some really nice people at the Chincoteague Naval Air Station. After all, there were only 2,000 to 3,000 sailors on the entire base and only 400 in VU-4, Jay’s squadron. And our heroic sailor was selected as the outstanding VU-4 “Blue Jacket of The Month” on two occasions. It was the first time anyone had received that award twice – so he soon became a minor celebrity in the Squadron. And because he worked in Supply, he rapidly became a favorite with many of the pilots and other officers and non-commissioned personnel.

Several of the fliers were about his age and even though the Navy insisted on a clear separation between officers and enlisted personnel, he developed a friendly relationship with many officers. Many of these upper-echelon pals had been present when Jay received his awards – and he took plenty of teasing as a result. At one point, the friendly kidding reached the point where an officer attempted to land Timer a “field commission” (to Second Class Petty Officer) because the young man was supervising the Supply Office in the absence of a Chief Petty Officer. Nice try . . . but the brass eventually ruled that field commissions were a no-no in situations where war had not been declared!

After the 2nd “Blue Jacket” award, our stalwart really caught some good-natured needling. To this day he owns a picture of himself receiving the award in 1954 – and he treasures it. The reward he chose after the first citation (May, 1953) was a ride in their first and only jet plane, a F9F-

2D two-seater. It closely resembled the Air Force T33, a trainer. Jay still has a picture in which he posed with the pilot, the VU-4 "legend" Ensign Smith.

Timer has never forgotten the two brave pilots who crashed and died at his base. Forty years later he would write a short story about Ensign Smith, the latter pilot, in 1995. Here's the story, word for word:

A Legend In His Own Young Time

By Jay Arthur

To see Ensign Smith in or out of his flight uniform, one might not pick him out to be anyone special unless you took note of his cocky walk and brisk, business-like manner and looked into those intelligent, serious, yet fun-loving eyes. Also, the flight crew members, who had a choice, definitely preferred to fly with him over most others.

He was not promoted to LT(jg), Lieutenant junior grade, as quickly as some of the other "hot pilots" and was probably - with elevator shoes - five foot, six inches tall at best. In addition, he appeared too young to be a college graduate, let alone have piloted as many different planes for as many hours as he had. He was very handsome, with a ready smile and was said to date his choice of ladies in the nearby towns.

I was first introduced to Ensign Smith in 1953, when I was assigned to him as my pilot to fly me to Greenville, S.C. Air Force Base in an F9F-2D, single engine, two-seater jet. The Squadron gave me the jet flight as a reward for being selected as "Blue Jacket of The Month." Normally, they just took the 'Jacket' on a flight over the base and surrounding areas and circled around. When I was asked where I wanted to go, I said 'Memphis, Tennessee.'

"They couldn't take me all the way; however, they knew Air Force flights between Greenville and Memphis were a daily or nightly occurrence. So, after pulling on flight clothing, I met the Ensign; we shook hands at the jet and posed for official photographs for back-home newspapers and the Navy releases; then we climbed into and buckled our parachute harnesses. Mr. Smith gave the signal for the ground engineer to power up the jet, and after a few minutes, we were given clearance to taxi to the duty ramp and quickly we were in the air.

"I had heard some interesting stories about 'Smitty,' as he was affectionately called out of his or Navy bureaucratic ears. We even heard he 'went up the road to Salisbury, MD, etc., with enlisted men.' Horrors! There was a story (I'm sure untrue, because I ask you—have you ever heard of a Navy man who drank to excess?) that on one Sunday evening about sundown, our twin-engine SNB 5-10 passenger plane taxied 'near' the hangar.

“The story went on to say when the hatch (it had an actual door) opened, five quite disoriented officers, including Ensign Smith and a case or more of empty beer cans spilled down the ladder to the parking apron. The word was they had been on a cross-country training mission. (Seriously, we don’t believe our pilots drank and flew.)”

Another story, I’m sure true, involved his being in an F6F-2D, single-engine, radio-controlled ‘Drone’ being commanded by two pilots in F8F-2D, single-engine fighters “somewhere” above the Naval Air Station. Apparently, the F8F controller pilots put Smith’s F6F in a steep dive, but couldn’t pull him out of it. The story goes that the Ensign, showing a sense of survival far beyond his years, kicked or somehow disconnected the control stick, breaking it loose from the radio control.

He pulled out of the dive just in time to avoid diving straight into the trees, houses or swamps below. Immediately taking charge, Smith quickly flew to the duty landing strip, expertly landed, taxied to the hangar, opened the hatch, climbed down the latter, put a foot onto the concrete and fainted dead away!

Another time, a story has it that he was piloting a WWII-vintage TBM (single-engine torpedo bomber) with heavy target-towing cables installed. The duty was to tow sleeves (the targets) hooked onto the end of the metal cable, which were unrolled to as much as one mile behind the TBM. Other aircraft would strafe the targets being towed or our ships in the Atlantic would fire their guns at them.

I saw one TBM that had what looked like shrapnel holes from poor-fire control work from the ships—a mile from the target! Smith, always looking for more interesting action, “barrel-rolled” the heavy plane over the VU-4 hangar and the Naval Air Station, and was just darned near court-martialed. They said the TBM was never designed to carry weight distributed as was the cable and reel. I’m sure he didn’t lose sleep over it, nor was his crew worried.

On my flight with Ensign Smith, there wasn’t much time to talk—in fact, he never said more than a few words – just seemed to be enthralled with being in the sky. He was all business until we cleared the Chincoteague and Norfolk control towers. He must have been aware that I was a “tit-less WAVE” (that’s the favorite handle given paper-pushers) working in the Supply Office. At first, he asked if I could see the “stick.” When I assured him I had my hand on it. He asked “Do you see the instrument straight ahead of you that has a floating line that looks like the cross hairs on a rifle?”

When I said, “I think so,” he said “You got the plane,” and released the control of the plane to the rear cockpit. As soon as the stick became operational for me, the jet seemed to go nearly straight up. “What am I doing wrong?” I called into the strapped-on mike. He said I

should just barely touch the stick, push forward and keep the cross hairs of the gyroscope straight across the center. Immediately, we seemed to go in a steep descent, and he was the one wearing the pressure suit—not I. He advised me how to level it again and let me keep it.

Within a minute or two, I was quite comfortable. Then, he said, “Roll to the right, and let’s take a look at the Tri-Cities” (I think these were Winston-Salem/Danville/Greensboro). I rolled to the right, and because we were strapped upright, we were able to look down 27,000 feet to several distinct cities. For the next 45 minutes, I concentrated on keeping at 27,000 feet and level.

Then Ensign Smith took the controls and said, “Here’s Greenville.” He banked sharply and descended quickly and the “bottom fell out” for me as we plummeted toward the landing strip 180 degrees the opposite way we were headed just seconds before. I literally blacked out from the pressure “G’s,” maybe because I didn’t have a pressure suit. When he “heard” my silence he got through my foggy senses by saying, “Turn on 100% oxygen,” which I somehow managed to do. I immediately snapped out of it, although I did have a headache for several hours!

We landed at Greenville, after only two hours of flying from Chincoteague Naval Air Station. It was about 2 p.m. when we landed there. Smith waved, taxied away and flew into the blue. It was 12:30 a.m. the next day before they were able to hook me up with a flight to Memphis Air Force Base. As I recall it, the plane was a C-119 troop carrier, which had a flight deck for officers and crew and long rows of seats for troops being flown overseas, etc.

The pilot was totally zonked out and immediately went to sleep after putting the plane on automatic pilot. A fellow hitch-hiker and I sat in the cushy crewmen seats. He was Air Force, but I noticed he was quite concerned. He asked me if I could see the co-pilot and if he was awake. I said, “Yes . . . no!” The engineer was also asleep. My fellow passenger woke the co-pilot, who discovered we were headed 150 miles off course. We made it into Memphis just as day was breaking.

In May of 1955, I was honorably discharged after four years. When I went back for a visit two years later, I was told that Lt. (j.g.) Smith had been happily ferrying the latest Navy jets to and from the U.S. West Coast. Sadly, however, something happened and he crashed and was killed. I bet he went into the ground determined he was going to make it in the last seconds, “in spite of Hell or high water.”

He was a swell guy. Full of life and loved what he did. He wanted to be in the air and was good at it. They tried to get him interested in part-time administration, but he was Regular Navy and a pilot from beginning to end, and he wanted to be where the action was.

Ah, the joys of financial independence! After saving his pennies for months at a time, Jay bought a 1947 Dodge and drove all over the East. He visited the Big Apple several times, and also toured such interesting locales as Niagara Falls, Toronto, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Wilmington, Salisbury, Pocomoke and several other small cities in Maryland. In New York, he met Rachael – an attractively voluptuous blond from Boston. If he hadn't respected her father so much, Jay felt *sure* he would have had sex with Rachael! However, they managed to restrain themselves, somehow.

Like the lovers in that old Nancy Sinatra tune (“We got married in a fever, hotter than a pepper sprout!”), the Jay-man and his new heart-throb were blazing at white heat. And when they were separated for a few weeks by Jay's hospitalization for knee surgery, the lonely swabbie couldn't bear the emptiness he felt. On impulse, he picked up the phone and asked Rachael to marry him. She accepted.

This was our hero's first-ever engagement, and he bungled it completely!

The disaster took place about two weeks after the phone call, when his blushing fiancée visited him in the hospital. Pity the poor Timer . . . who spent a few hours with her and felt his heart sink: He just wasn't ready for the confinement of marriage! After discharge from the hospital, he picked Rachel up from Boston and delivered her to New York. Somehow, he managed to explain his plight . . . while groaning through a thousand apologies. Rachael seemed understanding enough. But when he dropped her off at home in New York, he knew instinctively that he would never see her again.

He was right. And then years later, he learned from his cousin Yale that this earnest and beautiful young woman had actually been deeply in love with him.

Once again, the foolish Jayster had thrown away his chance at real happiness!

(Question for attentive readers: Do you see a pattern here?)

Even worse than the marriage problem, however, was the fact that Jay's physical condition seemed to be quickly deteriorating. While in the hospital, he'd met his foster sister's brother, who convinced him to go into Norfolk, Virginia, with him to pick up some gals. There Jay greatly enjoyed his first drink of beer or anything stronger than hard cider. Was it any wonder that the kid was grateful for a bit of narcotic? His operation had taken four and half hours, and the spinal they'd given him to deaden the pain had worn off. He was in sheer misery, because the anesthetist had

“tickled” the spine during his spinal injection, causing his feet to literally come up from the table. For several days, he was in such severe back pain that he could not rest nor sleep.

But then a tough old Navy Nurse - nicknamed “Tex” by the late-night people - gave Jay a wonderful alcohol rubdown that seemed to mark a turning point in his healing. Still, much work remained; Timer was required to exercise several times daily with weights and also to walk on his just operated-on knee. Very painful! (Does this experience explain why Jay’s “pain threshold” is so high?)

He survived, somehow. He once drank part of a beer in his hospital bed and played 500 Rummy with double decks over and over. And he got to know some real characters. Example: One deeply troubled guy threw a chair over Jay’s head into the window, ran down several flights of stairs, jumped into the bay and was picked up swimming toward the mainland.

But it didn’t help the young man any - the brass still sent him back to his ship!

When Jay Arthur saw what had happened, he realized there was no way out: He was going to have to serve the rest of his time . . . and he damn well better make the most of it!

TWENTY-ONE: Adulthood Looms, Like It Or Not!

“It was a woman who drove me to drink—and, you know, I never even thanked her!”

W.C. Fields

(Aside to the reader: Although it may appear at times that our man Jay Arthur was in fact a prowling wolf when it came to the opposite sex, nothing could be farther from the truth. If the Jayster seems a bit promiscuous at times, blame it on the war! The war was famous, wasn't it, for throwing impulsive, immature men and women together in circumstances that were certain to be temporary? Hence the birth of the “one-night stand” - and also that famous saying: “War is hell!”)

Ask Jay Arthur to tell you about his bad luck with women, and this failed Casanova won't try to hide his pain.

“I don't know where I went wrong,” wails the lovelorn and endlessly frustrated Jayster, “but somehow, I *never* managed to figure women out. They've been a complete mystery to me from Day One. And heartless? Was it Keats who called his girlfriend *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*? I don't blame him a bit.”

Press Timer for an anecdote about the romantic heartbreak he's endured in his tormented life with women, and the fabled raconteur won't let you down.

“I think it started back when I was barely 18 years old,” he moans piteously, recalling one of the many traumatic nights in his love-life. “I got a call one evening from a gorgeous blonde I knew who lived on the other side of Kennett. I could hardly believe my ears when this beauty suddenly said: ‘Why don't you come on over, Jay - there's nobody home!’

“Well, I jumped in the pickup truck and raced halfway across the county. But when I finally reached her house, I got a nasty surprise - there was *nobody* home!”

The hurt! The sorrow! The pity!

Timer suffered . . . but he kept on trying. How well he remembers those nights in the Navy . . . nights when he struggled desperately to “score” with the opposite sex, and instead fouled out of the game. Take that Canadian trip, for example. Accompanied by a close friend, the Jayman put on his best white uniform and went bar-hopping while on liberty in Toronto. He couldn't believe the warm friendliness he and his buddy

experienced in a combination restaurant and country-western bar. After only a few minutes, in fact, a nice fellow came over and said he'd like to introduce them to some very pretty ladies who were "free" (meaning: "free right now, but quite expensive later in the evening!").

Jay's date was a cute little thing named Anne. Fran was Kaselbaum's consort.

The fellow accompanying these two lovelies wouldn't let the two sailors pay for a single drink (although he *did* allow them to buy dinner for everyone). During the meal, Jay kept gazing adoringly at Anne, who was really something.

But then a disturbing moment occurred. Raising one tiny, demure hand, Anne pointed out that she and Fran would have to "go to work" - unless Jay and Kaselbaum agreed to "contribute to our livelihood."

Hello? Like dawn breaking in the eastern tropics, a mighty realization swept the decks clean: *These girls are hookers!*

Jay and his pal stared at each other. They were out of cash. They were dead flat broke! Muttering and stammering a series of pathetically lame excuses, they fled unceremoniously from the restaurant, while the Ladies of the Evening giggled without mercy!

Hearts broken and disillusioned - *hookers, by cracky!* - the two men faced a grueling, 14-hour drive back to their base in Virginia. Too much! After scratching together their last few dollars, they were at least able to rent a room in a clean, low-cost hotel - where they slept the sleep of healthy (and chaste) infants throughout the night.

Whenever Jay Arthur looks back on those years of heartache, he finds himself asking a painful question: How many thousands of miles did I drive in my fruitless quest for *amour*?

Take Delaware, for instance. The Jay-man dearly loved the picturesque little towns of the Blue Hen State - and he got "shot down" in most of them. Example: One star-filled night, he and his loyal sidekick stopped in a little town somewhere along Highway 113. They soon noticed that the "sidewalks had been rolled up." While scouting around, however, they learned that all the young people were at a dance above the fire house. Jay peeked into the gathering, but pulled away: Neither he nor his *compadre* could dance a step. Imagine the young man's surprise, however, when three young lovelies followed the duo back downstairs and introduced themselves! Jay immediately made a date to come back and pick up his Delaware lass the following Saturday night to go to a movie.

It was a promising start, but the romance never blossomed. Instead, Timer fell head-over-heels in love while on a two-week leave over Xmas, at home in Missouri. His new flame - Delores - looked more like movie star Kathryn Grayson than Grayson did! She was indeed beautiful

and so sweet. They stayed out almost every night until three or four a.m., and sometimes until daylight - a practice that didn't seem to please either his parents or H.E., who was living at home again after serving his two years in the Army.

In spite of the friction, however, Jay was deliriously happy.
And then the ceiling caved in.

On New Year's Eve - two nights before Jay was to leave with some fellow sailors to return to Virginia - Delores explained that she couldn't go out with him that night. However, around two a.m., she called from outside his parents' home and woke him. When he joined her, she held up the remains of a fifth of whiskey - and she was certainly feeling no pain.

"Have a drink, Jay!"

As he tilted the bottle skyward, she announced that she was pregnant - and that Jay was the father!

Jay gagged . . . choked . . . and then spewed raw whiskey like a Yosemite geyser.

Stunned, staggered, he wandered around the yard, unable to think.

Which was a shame . . . because if he'd been rational in that moment, he'd have surely realized that the human fertility cycle takes a few months to get fully cranked up. How could Delores have known - only a week or so after their all-nighter - that she was going to have his baby?

Love is blind, and so was Jay. "We'll get married!" he brayed at the moon. "You know I love you very much, don't you?" Delores echoed these sentiments, then asked pathetically: "Can't I go back to the base with you tomorrow?"

But Jay knew that was impossible. He had no money, and neither did his folks. And he had already agreed to leave his car for Don.

Thoroughly confused and torn up inside, Jay returned to base. There he saved almost every nickel, bought a set of rings, sent them to her, and wrote often. He didn't leave the base for two months. Delores didn't write back often (maybe only once in three months), but Jay hardly noticed - he was too busy playing basketball. When he didn't hear for an especially long time, however, he became concerned and contacted H.E.

Reluctantly, H.E. reported that one of Jay's cousins had said Delores was "running around" with a married man with a reputation for "messing up girls." Jay wrote her and asked her to show she cared for him and still wanted to join him . . . but the young beauty never wrote back! What the heck was going on? Hoping to find out, he "hitchhiked" a Navy flight to St. Louis, had his mom to pick him up there in his '47 Dodge, and then drove to Kennett.

Later that evening, sad to say, he found Delores with another man.

She was still wearing his ring. He asked her if she was being true to him. She slipped the ring off, weeping hard. "No," she wailed, "but I still love you. I just don't know what to do!" And maybe she didn't. But Jay knew it was over. Pulling his imaginary shield about him, he told her goodbye and opened the door for her to leave, which she did.

Delores was 16. His mom had never had an engagement ring, so Jay asked his father if he (Jay) could give the set to her. Harold said okay. And then Lolah absolutely fell in love with the set and has worn them since 1952. And they still look great!

Heartsick and struggling, Jay went back to work. As the weeks and months passed, he began to feel a little better. And he started to get around a little bit - enough to see that Pocomoke was certainly an odd little town. Not a soul lived there (under 60, that is) who wasn't in the Navy. And yet the town featured some great night life!

Example: One night, Jay came out of a Pocomoke movie and was almost dragged into a car by three or four teenaged girls on the sidewalk. The oldest was still wearing braces on her teeth. Jay had never dated anyone with braces, and he thought she was too young. About six months later, however, he met her again. He couldn't believe the change! She was now very pretty and seemed to be really beautifully built. They dated a couple of times, but she turned out to be extremely unpredictable. She was a Waterman's daughter, living in a shack along Maryland's coast, and apparently wanted to get away from all that. She was a strong "teaser," but willing to go only so far. Frustrating, and different!

A few months later, he was told she had encouraged her date to drive faster and faster after he had been drinking heavily. He lost control, hit a tree, and she was killed. She was only 16.

Jay's heart was broken, and he had learned a bitter lesson about loving and losing the thing nearest to your heart.

In spite of his sorrows and his occasional loneliness, however, the Jay-man had a huge advantage going for him, and he knew it.

He was still alive - and still full of hope!

TWENTY-TWO: True Leaders Are Made, Not Born

“To get others to come into our ways of thinking, we must go over to theirs; and it is necessary to follow, in order to lead.”

William Hazlitt

Leadership.

In the beginning, Jay Arthur wanted no part of it.

What kid in his right mind would be interested in supervising boys of his own age? Certainly not the Jay-man - who simply could not endure the possibility that he might be perceived as “looking down” on the other guys in his unit! Through the years, our hero has learned from formal college courses and practical experience alike that leaders must lead by *example*. Although the leader of an organization may have different responsibilities and privileges than those under his or her command, a true leader will identify fully with the employees who are being supervised - and will supervise them on the basis of empathy and respect, and never on the basis of mere power.

In his youth, our friend Timer did everything he could to duck the responsibilities that went along with leadership. How well he remembers those agonizing moments when the Future Farmers of America would nominate him for an office in their local chapter - only to find Jay on his feet and arguing strenuously in favor of *another* candidate!

On one remarkable occasion, for example, Jay rose to the podium during a runoff election (for President) between himself and another nominee. Energized as never before, our hero delivered a persuasive, impassioned speech for the other candidate - and a speech that ultimately got the guy elected. Jay was then elected Vice President overwhelmingly. Our hero was pleased with this result . . . but he also knew in his heart that he was just as capable of serving as president as the winning candidate. For that reason, he decided that he would never intervene in an election again. And he kept his promise. From that moment on, he allowed the democratic process to work without his help!

Make no mistake: Timer liked to “get things done” through teamwork. He also enjoyed participating in the decision-making. While serving as an officer for two years in the Future Farmers and coaching the FFA basketball team after graduation, he was, without knowing it, honing his supervisory and leadership skills. Example: At one point, he set up baseball

“games” behind Friendly Church, where the fence was about 100 feet away from the backstop and he batted left handed and “coached” after a fashion. And other would-be coaches soon followed his lead. To this day, Jay still finds it easy to follow the lead of others (and especially in technical areas).

Jay learned the lessons of leadership very quickly during a tour of duty with Utility Squadrom Four (VU-4) – and especially after he hurt his knee. Because the injury prevented him from climbing ship ladders, he would be “doomed” to spend his four years of duty at Chincoteague. At first glance, the assignment looked like a prison sentence . . . and yet it actually turned out to be a blessing in disguise. As fate would have it, the supervisors of the Supply Office changed three or four times during his three-plus years in the office – and during those times, Jay was the “Lead Worker” and asked to “stand in” by the Lieutenant, and often for the chief who left.

Over time, the Jay-man carefully noted the goals desired for the supply shop. He also observed behaviors that he knew would have been unacceptable in the work place if a supervisor had been present. Yet he had no authority or responsibility to intercede, except in a dire emergency – a curious situation that ultimately tended to make him a more effective supervisor, he suspects.

Jay learned a great deal in the Navy, and frequently in situations that involved the availability and use of the Supply Jeep. On one occasion, for example, a newly promoted Chief Petty Officer asked to use the Jeep to pick up parts. He was informed that our unit had loaned it to Mac next door in Aviation Parts. Jay pointed out that Mac was picking up parts at the Main Supply Depot, and then suggested that the Chief return in a few minutes, which he did. And did. And did again! Mac was an Irishman from Detroit with rather feminine ways, which may have “blinded” Jay to the situation that later developed. It should also be noted that Mac had completed supply school, and the Jayster had not.

That incident set the stage for some difficulties that were to follow. For starters, Jay had been serving his second or third emergency appointment as acting supervisor of the Office – when Mac suddenly got a transfer to the office next door! It was obvious that Jay’s new neighbor had a grudge against him – probably because he, Mac, hadn’t been tapped for the acting supervisor duty. (There was no extra pay involved in the job, however – only additional responsibility for Jay.)

At any rate, Mac was gone a long time during the Jeep incident. Jay went next door and had the supervisor call the Main Supply, but Mac had left – probably for the “Gee-Dunk” (“Get your do-nut and dunk it in your coffee!”). By this time, the new Chief was beside himself. He threatened Jay with putting Mac “On Report,” but Jay knew he was “responsible”

for the Supply Office and didn't want to chastise Mac to the Chief, even if Mac was wrong, and neither were rated men. (Not being a rated man, Jay had no idea how you went about "putting someone on report," anyway.)

Although Jay was very fearful that he'd end up in "hot water," he wouldn't abandon Mac without allowing him to explain and work through the situation face to face. Jay tried to get Mac's supervisor to take responsibility for resolving the matter, but the "no-man's-land" lack of rules about regulating the movements of the Jeep allowed him to "bow out."

When Mac finally returned (after spending two hours on a 15-minute trip), Jay could only berate him and warn him not to do that again. He very angrily told him, "I will not loan you the Jeep again without your Supervisor specifically asking for it." Mac said, "Oh, I'm out on using the Jeep am I? Then you're out, too!"

Without further warning, Mac swung and slugged Jay in the jaw! Jay grabbed the maniac around the waist and held his arms down. He did not put Mac on report, however. The Chief did try and write Jay up for insubordination - but the Leading Chief and (Jay speculates) the Executive Officer (who was also Operations Officer) convinced the young chief that Jay had actually been carrying out his responsibilities the best he could under the circumstances.

Later, Jay was called into a neutral office and asked if he wished to apologize to the new Chief. And his response? "From a personal standpoint," he said calmly and clearly, "I am sorry I had to refuse your order. As you know, I flew to Norfolk with you the day you got the news of your promotion to Chief, and I shared your happiness over it. From an acting supervisory standpoint, however, I did not feel I could condemn another supervisor's staff member or the supervisor without more information or authority. Without physical or telephone contact, I could only promise the Jeep when it was available. You were demanding something I could not deliver."

The new Chief suggested that it was unfortunate the situation had occurred - and he also thought that the Jay-man's rank should have afforded him more protection than it did on this unpleasant occasion. But Jay felt otherwise; he knew that although he was "right," he had spoken in the wrong tone to Mac and probably deserved to get punched - especially since it wasn't a true emergency. Jay didn't have clear authority, and there was a supervisor between the two of them. Pride? Perhaps.

Looking back, Timer realizes that he probably spent the equivalent of one of his three years at VU-4 in the role of supervisor . . . and yet he still held the rank of a non-petty officer. This experience taught him how to ask questions, instead of giving orders. He learned to ask honestly: "Can we..." or "Could we..." He also became good at ways of saying: "Let's work

as a team to meet the objectives of the unit.” Timer proved that this leadership style would work in a four-person office – and years later, he watched it work in offices that contained 10, 25, 200 and even 400 employees.

The reason it works in government (or in business organizations) is simply that as a manager, Jay treats people the way he would like to be treated, while also making his expectations known.

In recent years, he operated at a high-enough management level that he expected his requests to be honored and he was only required to take disciplinary action in a few extreme cases. He also expected the work to be done right, and on a timely basis, because each staff member has a job description and was paid to carry it out. Surprisingly, elected officials often run political campaigns on platforms that openly state: “I know business. I get things done right and cut costs, etc., etc., etc.” When these politicians get elected, however, they look at their constituents and suddenly note the unions or associations or businesses they must please. Apparently, they immediately begin thinking about reelection – and forget that they were successful in business by “getting the right things done right and timely, through trained, committed people.”

Soon enough, they discover that they can’t just come in and say, “Do it” because they represent all the people—the rich, the middle income-earners, the poor, all races, colors, both genders, associations, businesses, other governments, and unions.

Successful business people who get elected often do make a positive improvement in government . . . *if* they ask hard questions such as, “Why are the managers setting goals to carry out the desires of we policy-makers – and then not meeting the deadlines or quality of outcomes expected?” An honest answer from the “generalist” governmental manager might reveal that the demands on the manager’s time simply spread him or her too thin. An honest answer might also reveal that the individual is incompetent, needs more training, etc.

The expectations of the public are usually much broader than those of most businesses, which specialize. If a less-than-accurate answer is given to the Board, Legislature or other policy-making body, the media will be sure to pick up on it and disseminate it widely. Not so with most businesses.

For example: in Lincoln, Neb., a successful electric motor company president was elected to the Lancaster County Board. Before the press, he was likely to blast a department manager in response to a complaint given to him, but in the final analysis, his swing vote would be the one to allow the manager what he or she explained they needed to get the job done. He was the “a’ginner” member of the board, and attracted those who “had a crow to pick” with the County.

Timer

The Board wouldn't have received those critical inputs without him and some of their concerns as expressed by him were very much on target. For young Jay Arthur, all these lessons about life and business and politics began back in the days when he was working for one of the greatest bosses he would ever serve: The United States Navy!

TWENTY-THREE: Marriage — One Era Ends, And Another Begins. . . .

“A man and woman marry because both of them don’t know what to do with themselves.”

Anton Chekhov

Here’s one you aren’t going to believe.

Jay Arthur met his future wife and eventually wound up marrying her because a Maryland State Trooper pulled him over one afternoon and gave him a speeding ticket!

(Quick: Somebody get the Guinness Book of Records on the horn. Question: Can you name the one man in America who got out of paying a traffic fine by agreeing to marry the ticket-writer’s sister?)

If you said, “Jay Arthur,” go immediately to the head of the Guinness Class - and buckle up for the amazing story of Timer’s first (and only!) marriage.

It happened like this . . .

A warm summer afternoon in rural Maryland, and here comes the Jayster, tooling down the highway in his brightly painted roadster.

Uh-oh: A siren suddenly splits the air!

A blue flasher!

Suddenly, our hero is handing the trooper his license and registration.

The cop leans into the window. He’s a pleasant looking fellow, and softspoken. He’s also quite large, and *very* Italian. “Where you goin’ in such a hurry, young man?”

“Well, sir,” croaks the Timer, “I was headed back to my naval base at Chincoteague. Was I driving too fast, officer?”

The officer remains poker-faced. “Does a wild turkey eat blueberries in the springtime, son?”

“I think I see your point,” says Jay.

“Listen,” says the State Cop. The way I see it, I have two choices. I can write you out a \$75 speeding ticket, or I can just issue you a warning.”

Jay nods enthusiastically. “I like the second option very much.”

The policeman smiles back at him. “Do you? Good. Because the way I see it, *you* have two choices. You can let me write you this ticket and

then drive away and you'll never see me again - at a cost of \$75."

Jay's face falls - all the way to his shoetops.

"Or you can agree to drop by my place and spend a few hours entertaining my 20-year-old old-maid sister from Baltimore. She's a great gal, and she's dying to meet some nice boys her own age. Her name is Bell, and I assure you that she will enchant you!

"And your total cost - should you choose Plan B - will be zero!"

Jay Arthur puts on his most brilliant smile. He positively blazes with cheerfulness. "Officer," he says joyfully, while pumping the factotum's hand, "this is clearly an offer I cannot refuse. What time is dinner, sir?"

Funny story, you say?

Too bad - the Jay-man made it up! And he has told it at least a thousand times in the presence of his lovely wife, Bell, who gets as much of a kick out of it as he does - although she pretends to be upset with him.

The truth, as always, is just a bit more pedestrian. But very beautiful - and even rather mysterious - in its own way, as you're about to discover.

The reality is that Jay met his wife on a blind date. It happened like this: Five sailors rented a room from two sweet spinster ladies in Pocomoke City, Md., in which to store and change their clothes. (There were no lockers at the Naval Base Gate for the purpose.) Well, as it turned out, Bell's brother's wife knew the ladies and asked them to "fix Bell up" with one of the sailors!

Jay had never enjoyed being around another person so much. Unfortunately, he mis-read the signals of a lady who had intended to "wait until marriage" for signals inviting him to intercourse. He became extremely insistent, and she has never forgiven him for that. Still, they did get married after a brief, breath-taking period that consisted of several weekends stretched over a three-month timeframe. And their best friends got married nine days after they did! Bell was pretty and fun-loving - a sweet-tempered, affectionate soul who was blessed with unlimited energy. And the best part of all was that Jay thought she enjoyed their new relationship as much as he did!

Bell was a bit naïve, perhaps. Yet she also displayed a swift, incisive analytical ability. (Her only dumb move, some said, was getting involved with Jay!) Bell also enjoyed some extremely strong bonding with her family: her mother, father, brothers, sisters . . . and then her *own* children and grandchildren, once they came along.

Bell was also a devoted churchgoer - a fact that Jay should have

paid more attention to in the early going! (When this lady said she wanted seven children, she *meant* it – and she never stopped reminding him that he'd “agreed” to have seven, as well. Maybe he had . . . but the guy was in *love!*)

Bell exhibited so much character and ethical sensitivity that Timer virtually idolized her. And he often wondered if could have held up his end of the relationship, had their roles been reversed. Her belief in the Catholic Catechism and God guided her life, giving her enormous stability and hope – even though it occasionally served to drive the two of them apart. For the grim truth is that the Jayster had no such strong attachment to his own Protestant upbringing, in spite of his respect for his father's and mother's beliefs and their 50 years in ministry.

In the end, Jay saw Bell's commitment to her faith as a strength for her and for their future family – but not for him, personally. Bell, in his opinion, ranked her Catechism and faith first, her family and children second, and her husband last! Jay respected her beliefs . . . but he was too honest with himself to pretend that it didn't hurt at times, to be ranked at the bottom of her totem pole. His opinions may not have been accurate, regarding her faith and catechism – but they were his, and he admits that he unintentionally hurt her many times throughout their married life. Bell and Jay were married in a Catholic church in Baltimore in 1953, after counseling by a priest. Bell was a beautiful bride, and our hero knew as they stood on the altar that he loved her very much. How frustrating it was, in later years, when she stated bluntly that she had never believed him on this point. Sad to say, Jay stopped trying to get the message across after a few years, and it's pretty hard to blame him. How long can a man continue banging his skull against a stack of bricks?

The Arthurian honeymoon was a wonder to behold, however – with the two lovebirds spending their wedding night in a motel in Delaware. Jay enjoyed the intimacy and couldn't have been happier. They were relaxed and playful with each other – just the way newlyweds should be. Tomorrow would take care of itself.

But the honeymoon ended all too quickly and then the serious work began.

From the beginning, Jay understood and accepted his responsibility to help her raise their children as Catholic. He posed no difficult barriers or objections to the process, though he questioned some aspects strongly – while assuming they could “work out” any disagreements in a rational manner. (*Lesson for those who are about to raise a family: Never assume anything!*)

It wasn't easy, but Jay kept everything moving. He learned how to hide behind his “invisible shield” – a detached state of mind in which he

refused to think more than a day or two ahead. As he told friends again and again: "I've made my bed and now I'll lie in it." Parochial schools were okay with him, provided they could pay the steep tuition.

More than once, he gently asked Bell: "Where does all the Catholic wealth go?" She explained that each parish had to stand pretty much on its own feet. For her, the key thing was to make sure the kids went trooping off to be taught by the nuns and contract teachers each day.

Bell was so proficient at achieving her goals in her faith that they always seemed to be able to find the money. Still, Jay had his doubts. Were they missing out on some of life's finer experiences - world travel, for example, or ballet or art lessons for the girls - because so much of their income went to the parish? It was hard to say.

One thing did seem clear, however: Bell had a real knack for setting aside money to pay for church-related expenses. Jay looked on from afar, and usually remained silent, after initially complaining that there didn't seem to be money for tuition, and that the public schools of Columbia, Lincoln and Baltimore County were excellent. He understood her commitment . . . but he often felt that her unswerving loyalty to Catholic doctrine needlessly made their marriage vulnerable to outside forces - and he resented that interference on many occasions.

Make no mistake: The early years were tough on the family. Money was in such short supply at the beginning that they had to move less than 30 days after their wedding. (They'd been paying out almost half their income as rent.) Baby-sitting helped some, and Bell did take a job for a few months before she had to quit to have their first child, and she was a magician at discovering ways to cook tasty food from hamburger meat — "101 Ways," per a magazine she bought! But with her folks living in Baltimore, and the base a 280-mile round-trip, even gas for the car was a stretch.

In spite of the problems, Jay reacted to most of these marriage-related changes with his usual enthusiasm. After all, what did *he* know about running a successful marriage and raising a happy family? Most of the time, he simply hung in there and did what he thought was required. He reveled in the intimacy of marriage, and he was sure he loved her. And yet the "invisible shield" remained in place, year after year.

There's no doubt that Timer was a very serious, dedicated husband and Navy man. He knew he would work hard to obtain the basics of food and shelter for his family - along with some of the good things he and Bell had missed during their own childhoods. Meanwhile, he did his best to ignore the things he disliked about the arrangement, such as:

—Bell's continuing veneration of statues, along with her insistence that one was sinning if he failed to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days;

—Her daily repetition of the rosary, which he soon came to regard as a mild form of torture;

—Being deprived of meat on Fridays and fast days (although that changed later);

—Being deprived of sex during those days in the reproductive cycle when it would have been most pleasurable (such deprivation just didn't seem "natural" to Jay);

—Being required to send the children to Catholic schools, even when the public schools they were taxed for were excellent.

These conflicts aside, the fact remained that Jay truly loved and respected Bell and her family and was determined to do "what was right" in carrying out his responsibilities. Perhaps his definition of his responsibilities was too narrow? Or perhaps Bell confused him early on, when she refused to believe that he loved her? It was strange, the way she kept saying that he would have to "prove" it. He didn't know how you *could* prove a feeling like love . . . and except in moments of passion, he never told her that again. (To what does one compare an "invisible feeling?")

Frustrating? You bet. Could a marriage survive between a Protestant farm boy with multiple lineage and a first-generation devout Italian Catholic? Would - *should* - it survive? Time would tell, said Jay . . . as he slipped for the ten thousandth time behind his "invisible shield."

The most difficult times came 20 years later - after Bell wrongly accused Jay of infidelity and demanded that he take a lie detector test. He did so, and it showed that he was truthful in the instance under scrutiny. Jay admitted he had strayed several times previously but was now attempting to fulfill his marriage vows. Bell wasn't satisfied, however, and pointed out that the technician running the test had said "Jay is guilty as sin." How could our hero win? Up to that point, most of the time he really had tried to be a good husband, although he had strayed a few times but had then promised himself that he would totally stop.

Now he continued to make the effort . . . even though his heart was no longer in the task. Even Pavlov's dog had been rewarded occasionally!

As the months passed, he did everything he could to keep the peace and his sanity. Example: He slept on a cot in their large bedroom for weeks at a time, so that the children wouldn't discover that their parents were having problems, and also so they wouldn't have to touch accidentally. At one point when Jay asked for a divorce because Bell seemed too unhappy and unforgiving, she said she'd run away and hide with the children, and Jay knew she would make good on the threat. Was she strong enough mentally to tackle this by herself? That was a possibility he couldn't accept . . . so he simply kept up his busy routine - a non-stop daily

schedule that kept him from thinking too deeply about his private life.

With so many children to feed, and a career spent in the “public fish bowl,” what other choice did he have? Jay didn’t contact a counselor for a temporary separation in preparation for a divorce and leave home until they’d been married 37 years. He felt he was being “smothered” every time Bell complained about his outdoor activities of hiking, backpacking, and canoeing. It didn’t occur to Bell that that the barrier she put up was one of the *major* reasons he did outdoor activities. Meanwhile, his daughter Karen was on and off medication and under-foot at every turn, echoing Bell. Son Jeff was also off and on medication, but he did give them some room to breathe.

At any rate, Jay finally decided to make a move. He packed his clothing, left his boat, hiking and backpacking equipment, and moved into a 3-room “shot-gun” apartment at \$300 per month. He deposited his entire check in Bell’s account – except for \$500 to pay for his room and food – although the attorney said he was being liberal. The Jay-man also attempted to get Bell to attend divorce mediation with him, but she refused. She could have gone through the mediation and had the divorce take effect in 12 months rather than two years, but she wouldn’t even consider the option.

After two months of this separate lifestyle, Bell rang his doorbell and asked him to examine the balky new air conditioner in her bedroom. There, she “threw off the roles” of mother, cook and breadwinner – and returned to being his intimate wife. Charmed and pleased, Jay moved back in after being out three months. Bell was fun again, as a wife – at least for a little while.

He soon returned to his separate bedroom, so that the two of them wouldn’t disturb each other with their differing daily schedules. After he returned home, however, things quickly returned to “normal.” Jay wasn’t interested in assigning blame. He simply decided that there was no way out – not until “death do us part.” After that, he entertained no more thoughts of leaving. It wasn’t a happy marriage – but that’s hardly a new story, is it? Timer would honor his vows and see it through.

He knew he would also take a lot of strength from remembering the early years of their union. Young and poor, they’d struggled hard! Financially stressed, how grateful Jay had been to find work as a high school basketball referee (through the Navy Recreation Office). During that period, he’d worked at least 15 games, and the windfall had been a lifesaver. He’d also enjoyed the task greatly – although calling a game of micro-inches while running isn’t that easy!

Example: One night, two rival high school teams were tied with two minutes and 20 seconds to go and the coaches met and canceled the

remainder of the game. They apparently felt it was getting ugly in the stands and outside the gym. Jay didn't agree; he thought the game on the floor had been rough but clean . . . even though his partner, a Navy lieutenant, blew his whistle only once the entire night - when he tripped!

Jay was sure he wouldn't get any more games, but that assumption proved wrong. (Both of the teams who'd been involved in the "canceled" game even called him back!) He also officiated a game or two between the Chincoteague Naval Air Station and two local colleges, and found them to be much easier to call because of the gym size and quality of play. The players were much more outspoken, however, in their criticism of the calls and were probably right a lot of the time. Unlike the Jayman, the LT was not called back for more refereeing.

After discharge and moving to the Midwest and entering the University of Missouri, Jay officiated high school and city and church league recreation basketball. There he witnessed open conflicts between blacks and whites for the first time. It was not a pretty scenario to behold. One of Timer's partners was a wonderful fellow who also happened to be an African American. And yet to this day, the Jay-man suspects that the poor guy was probably derided in his own community as a "a white man-lover."

Of course, our hero hadn't grown up with blacks - not in a Mississippi Delta region like the Kennett area. Still, he'd gotten to know a few of them in the Navy, at Buss Fuse and in college, and he'd never met one he didn't like.

Little did our hero suspect - as he meditated on the racial inequality he saw all around him - that the entire country was about to explode in an immense social upheaval that would eventually be known as the "Civil Rights Revolution."

TWENTY-FOUR: College Days . . . or “Thinking Can Be Dangerous!”

“You can lead a boy to college but you cannot make him think.”

Elbert Hubbard, 1856-1915

When President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his advisors decided to “downsize the armed forces” in the mid-1950s, they never imagined that they were going to change the life of a hard-charging sailor named Jay Arthur.

But that’s precisely what happened.

Because the “downsizing” program allowed many soldiers, sailors and pilots to obtain early discharges, the Jay-man suddenly found himself looking through an escape hatch in mid-1954. Why not take advantage of it? With their first baby due in November and only about \$250 a month in Navy income (plus Bell’s temporary work), it simply made good business sense to say goodbye to the swabbies and hello to the world of civilian work.

It wasn’t easy, however. Instead of staying on target to discharge early, the officers and chiefs at VU-4 fought a determined campaign to get their best workers to “ship over.” Jay was one of their prime targets. Having been awarded the “Blue Jacket of the Month” twice – and having qualified three times for Aviation Storekeeper 3rd Class before being appointed on his fourth attempt – he was precisely the kind of loyal staffer that the brass wanted to keep on board.

The pressure was fierce! Several talks took place between the Jayster and his superiors in Supply. He also talked with the Leading Chief and the Personnel and Executive Office.

Make no mistake:Timer felt a powerful attraction to the Navy, because he so heartily enjoyed the work and the people. And he might very well have stayed in – had he not been so convinced that he should go on to college. He was advised by friends to tell the superiors that he was going to college for sure – so they wouldn’t “drive him crazy” with their relentless campaign to ship him over.

And then an interesting thing happened. Once Timer explained

his inner drive to attend college to the brass, he began to believe in it, himself!

Obviously, some very good things were coming out of his marriage. Example: Bell was extremely supportive, and encouraged him to plan on going to college after the Navy. And she stood behind him foursquare, as he tried to put together a financial plan by negotiating with Missouri, Ohio State, and Maryland Universities. He soon discovered that the barriers were formidable, however. After all, he was poorly prepared - both financially and academically - and he also would have two children to support, since Bell was pregnant with Jeff at the time of his discharge.

Although he had visited and driven through several states, our valiant seeker after truth felt lost without something familiar in the neighborhood that would remind him of home and family. The University of Missouri - where his brother Don was then a sophomore in an agriculture fraternity - provided a feeling of belonging. Of course, the Jayman was also in love with agriculture: why not settle down and study the science of farming in earnest? The cost for the University of Missouri, where he was a resident, was negligible compared to out-of-state tuitions at Maryland and Ohio State.

At his Navy discharge ceremony and physical, Jay was asked if he wished to declare any physical or psychological disability. Although his knee was very painful and weak, he still entertained visions of being able to farm and engage in "normal" routines without a problem. He'd also been told by friends that if he declared the injury, the Navy would probably send him to Portsmouth or Norfolk for medical tests, before mustering him out. No thanks, said Jay; his plans had been made, and he wanted to move on!

He did so.

In the blazing-hot summer of '55, Jay and his pregnant Bell - along with little Karen - moved to St. Louis. First step: He returned to his job at Buss Fuse. There, with Bell working, they saved up the cash that would be required to move the 125 miles to Columbia and enter the University in January of 1956. Bell worked for a temporary agency as a secretary. She performed quite well . . . and was soon "bought out" from the temp agency by her employer - who got a surprise when he learned that Bell was expecting. Jay and his bride bought furniture but saved very little cash, in spite of Jay's working nights and baby-sitting Karen. All too soon, our hero was required to leave for Columbia, in order to attend the winter semester beginning in January.

Bell gave birth to Jeff that same month!

Right before that momentous event, Jay had enjoyed one of the most memorable evenings in his life - after he bought two tickets for an

Elvis Presley concert at the Paramount Theatre in St. Louis. Because she was eight months pregnant, Bell begged off – and Jay wound up taking Yale. They thoroughly enjoyed the gyrations and other antics of Elvis, who broke his guitar strings and tossed his sweaty neckerchiefs to the girls, hundreds of whom were dancing and fainting in the aisles.

The hip-thrusting Elvis was an astonishingly charismatic entertainer, and he sang a wide variety of songs with enormous power.

A few weeks after arriving in Columbia, Jay had started working two jobs. He made pizzas at night, then ground and mixed animal feeds for the University Animal Husbandry Department in the afternoons. After that, he was required to study until the wee hours of the morning. That schedule began just weeks after Bell, Kathy and Jeff joined him. The pizza job sometime required him to be at the restaurant until 1:30 or 2:00 a.m. And while he never missed class, he often found that working so late made it tough to stay alert during those 7:40 a.m. lectures!

One bright spot was Veterans' Housing, though. The units were contained in old one-story, connected barracks buildings and cost only \$33.50 per month. They provided clean quarters plus instant friends who lived on unpaved streets full of fellow-vets and spouses with kids about Jay's own family's ages. Each unit featured a 55-gallon oil barrel on a rack near the steps. There was only one entrance (unless you counted opening a bedroom window and crawling over some steps in order to reach the clothes lines – a frequent occurrence). Jay had obtained his two jobs through the University Student Services – after the manager took an obvious liking to him because of his drive and the quiet way he accepted his heavy family responsibilities.

When an opening came up with the City of Columbia Health Department, the University employment manager suggested Jay apply. Our hero didn't think he had a prayer, but after some procrastination (and while moaning that he was too ill to take an exam), he passed the tests, completed the interviews and got the job. Suddenly, the Jay-man was pulling down a whopping \$248 per month – the kind of money that would allow him to attend the university while working only 37 hours a week. Add in his \$120 a month from the VA, and the Jayster had a chance to *make* it . . . if only he could manage to pass his classes! Surprisingly, his grades the first semester were among the highest he achieved during his undergrad years.

After an orientation period, he was allowed to work those hours pretty much whenever he wanted to – provided he got the job done. And the people at the Health Department quickly learned that Jay was going to get the job done right, and quickly. He had already declared his major at the university by this time (animal husbandry). Imagine the excitement he

felt as he prepared himself to raise livestock – a vocation for which he'd yearned since childhood.

How could the Jay-guy have imagined that he was actually destined for a career in government that would span four decades?

After all, his family and friends hadn't exactly been "fans" of the government! Perhaps his own strong commitment to government service stemmed from the lessons he'd learned at home . . . while watching his father and mother work so hard for their church? Or maybe he could thank the U.S. Navy for it? Whatever the source of his *Semper Fidelis* approach to serving others through government, the fact remained: Jay Arthur owned the caring and the tenacity required to execute and manage government-funded programs – such as those found in public health, social services, housing, juvenile delinquency and care for injured workers. Somehow, he and his staff and other participating units always managed to "get the job done," as had been the case in the Navy. Many government workers seemed to prefer "coasting" on the job – but not our Jay-guy!

Over the years, Jay would learn about the danger to the public's health in many of the conditions he found, and he would slowly (or sometimes rapidly, depending on his findings) apply solutions to correct some of those conditions. Because the health departments he worked in were often small, all of the men and women had to participate in immunization clinics, and, at times, in the general clinic. There Jay saw disease, alcoholism, drug abuse, child and domestic abuse and much more. He and the nurses explained that parents were always responsible for the health of both their children and themselves. In this way, some folks were convinced to make necessary corrections – even when they didn't really care what neighbors or the City thought about them.

Jay's first responsibility was as an "environmental ombudsman." On this job, he answered and recorded phone calls involving nuisance complaints from citizens. He then drove or walked and personally investigated the complaints. Jay would take his clipboard and school books with him on his inspections, in order to be able to attend classes as well. He had to plan his driving or walking inspections to allow time. Later, he pointed out that it had been hard to keep focused on class work, because he so often had to pop in for class before or after making inspections. Then, the moment class ended, he would rush off to resume his inspections. After a while, he came to realize that the sooner he reviewed his notes, the more accurate they would be and the more likely it was that he would be able to recall the facts at test times! His poor hearing made the activity of correcting notes even more important.

Other students told him they believed the discussions they held over coffee after difficult classes helped them to understand the material

better (and thus improved their grades). After work and classes, the stressed-out Jay would take no more than a 30-minute post-supper nap, then study until midnight or 1 a.m. The next morning saw him marching into his next 7:40 a.m. class, before heading to work. It was a grind, all right . . . but our hero was accustomed to much worse. As he loved to point out: “Hey, if you’ve picked cotton, nothing is too hard!” (Scooping up hog manure for the university would run a close second, a few years later. Fortunately, the scoop sessions didn’t last nearly as long as a day in the cotton fields!)

Working as a neophyte ombudsman, Jay soon learned that the term “nuisance” can be interpreted in many ways. As a legal term, the word can include a host of entities, such as high weeds, flies, mosquitoes, rats, odors, livestock that wander too close to residences, spilled garbage that may contain rats, and raw sewage – which can easily pollute children’s play areas, streams, water supplies and other venues... could be deadly!

As you might expect, knowing the Jayster, he took sharp, aggressive action in satisfying the complaints. And because he was firm but fair, he wound up having to bring only a few violators to court. In most cases, he was convinced that a person causing a nuisance would willingly correct the problem if approached in a respectful, educational and thoughtful manner. Our friend Timer discovered early that authoritative research – based on the experience compiled by respected public health officials – was extremely important in establishing credibility. However, he *also* learned that the local citizens (including elected and appointed officials) were much more likely to accept such facts if they were presented by an enforcer with the kind of practical applied knowledge that Jay possessed.

Jay also learned during this period that prevention of minor diseases is quite different from working to control major outbreaks of polio, cholera, and other disease epidemics that can be traced to a specific virus or germ. Such preventive public health measures are very difficult to evaluate cost-effectively, with any certainty. But making the effort was deemed important, and our man Arthur certainly felt good about what he was doing!

One of the things Jay became good at was the process of “taking down the complaint.” Since he loved to listen to people’s stories (and the more outlandish, the better!), he got a real kick out of interviewing his subjects. One elderly lady, in particular, utterly fascinated him. An advocate of “free love,” she had a penchant for obtaining interviews with city officials by simply opening their car doors and climbing in with them! On several remarkable occasions, she jumped aboard vehicles carrying the city manager, the city attorney and other notables – while those cars were stopped at four-way traffic stops near her fine home. Those gentlemen, of course,

recommended she speak to Jay. This astonishing eccentric turned out to be an independently wealthy widow with two sons who were medical doctors. Over time, she had become convinced that she was being cheated by the City Water Department and the local garbage collectors, and had stopped paying for those services.

Interesting? You bet. This free spirit employed her beautiful but somewhat overgrown garden as an open toilet . . . while collecting her drinking water from a dripping leak on the City side of the water meter. As you might expect, the neighbors complained. When Jay sent her the usual notice of a “possible violation,” she visited him in his office. She was well dressed, articulate, and quiet.

Then she suddenly piped: “Do you see them?”

Jay thought it over, and came up with a blank.

“They follow me everywhere!”

“I see,” said Jay. Then he gently guided her by the elbow to the street and said, “Thank you for coming by, Ms. Baker.”

But her two sons, both Medical Doctors (psychiatrists) fretted that she would be locked up in a mental institution and begged Jay to be patient. He obliged them, of course. Still, it wasn’t easy. After a few exchanges of this kind, Timer realized that stress was taking its toll on him. When the medical boss suggested that he “do some outdoor things,” he bought a fishing rod and a Beagle puppy for rabbit hunting.

A new baby, Bertha, number three, also came along at about this time. Jay responded by taking on additional work-duties, which meant a small but vital increase in pay. He worked hard . . . and yet the problems seemed endless. Example: The morning after Bertha came home from the hospital, and while suffering with a fierce tension headache, Jay left a nearly full bottle of adult aspirin (200 pills) on the kitchen cabinet. Karen soon found it. She ate about 50, then shared the rest with Jeff. Karen became unconscious and Jeff threw up. After her stomach was pumped out, Karen seemed no worse for wear. However, her arms did have faint pocks from the “aspirin burn” for quite some time.

Live and learn, Jay-man!

After about a year and a half of working in the field of “general environmental problems,” our hero was tapped to manage the milk inspection process. This was a huge job – since there were approximately 70 dairy farms located in three contiguous counties, along with two dairy plants that by regulation had to be inspected at least once every six months.

As often happens in government, however, the reality was somewhat different. Indeed, some of the operations and equipment of the plants and some farms were actually inspected several times in any six-

month period. Jay's inspection duties included making sure that milkers - along with their equipment and their surroundings - remained clean and healthy at all times, and that there was good fly control, safe water supplies, proper manure and sewage disposal, healthy cows, hot water for cleaning, and good refrigeration for the milk.

Make no mistake: Our hero met and strongly respected really fine people who were milking cows for a living and doing regular farming. But a few had absolutely no business trying to produce the high-quality milk, given the stringent sanitation requirements. Jay was fairly patient . . . but when he saw repeated, unsanitary conditions and high bacterial counts, he always did his job. "Babies drink that milk," he was fond of saying. "We can't always be sure the dairy plants equipment will destroy all the disease germs, so it's important that both the farmer and the plant produce a clean product."

Along with these vital chores, our friend Timer collected milk and water samples from the farms and plants and returned them to a laboratory technician who ran tests to determine if bacterial count of milk and water met safety standards. Sometimes he even collected samples on Saturdays - a nice wrinkle that allowed him to rack up all of his required work-hours, while also keeping the dairy industry on its toes.

Technology in the dairy field was changing rapidly during these years, of course. Example: Back in the early 1900s, 90 percent of all U.S. dairy farmers had belonged to the U.S. agrarian population. But by the 1960s, that percentage would drop to about 10, as the big "agribusiness" companies rapidly drove out the family farmers in this country. When Jay started inspecting dairy farms, there were no fewer than 66 of them on his radar screen. Within a few months, however, that total was down to about 20.

All too quickly, the traditional ten-gallon milk cans were replaced by efficient large refrigerated farm tanks and milk was piped directly from the cows to these jumbo-sized vessels. At the same time, large milk-tank trucks were vacuum-pumping the milk from the farm tank and delivering the product from many farms directly to the plant. There, the milk was pumped from the truck's tank into larger tanks inside the dairy. Milk samples for butterfat and other contents - as well as for bacterial count - were collected at the farm by the driver before the farm milk mixed with the larger tank contents. The drivers had been given special training for that.

Among the Jayster's many assignments during this period was the responsibility for picking up refrigerated individual samples from the drivers and delivering them to the laboratory, along with a sample of the total *mixed* milk brought in. While learning the ropes, our hero visited the Springfield, Missouri, milkshed, where such operations had been on-going

for some time. There he saw first-hand how the bulk-tank system worked. He also observed the huge 18-wheelers and noticed how their big tanks were sealed with cables with certification proof of inspection and pasteurization. Some loads went as far as Boston – so these protections were certainly appropriate.

Jay worked hard, but he also found time for a bit of play. On one occasion, for example, a fellow sanitarian (although he worked for the State of Missouri) invited Timer to stay with him and go on his first “real” deer hunt in the Missouri Ozarks in November. Jay managed to scrape together enough finances to purchase an old high-powered deer rifle and some shells. But he became so excited that he was able to sleep only about an hour the night before the hunt.

The adventure began with a lot of walking, as the hunters did their best to startle the sleeping deer out of their beds. When that ploy didn’t work, they decided to split up and “take a deer stand.” (This fancy hunting term translated to: “Sit down, shut up, and watch for a deer!”)

Fair enough, said Jay. Eager to proceed, he cleared the fallen leaves away from a tree and then leaned against it. Squinting harder than Daniel Boone, he began to survey the woods in front of him. That is, he *intended* to survey the woods. All too soon, however, he was snoring harder than a Ukranian stevedore after a three-day drunk. This went on for at least an hour . . . before the Jay-man was summoned back to consciousness by the faint, rustling sound of a feeding squirrel.

Timer’s eyes snapped open and he drew a sharp breath.

The “squirrel” was actually a huge, beautiful buck deer with a lot of points on his antlers, looming only 30 feet away!

The buck didn’t see our hero, and for what seemed an eternity, Jay pointed the fully-loaded and cocked rifle at the head, then the chest, then the hindquarters. But he just couldn’t pull the trigger. All at once . . . everything felt surreal in the stillness of the forest. Where were the others? Was this really happening?

Yes! Suddenly, the buck was staring directly into Jay’s eyes. The hunter blinked, and the deer bounded away. Startled, Jay cranked off two blasters . . . and missed the deer by at least the length of a Greyhound bus.

If you know anything at all about Jay Arthur by now, you know that he dearly loves to make fun of himself. And the story of the 26-Pointer Who Got Away gave him enough material to last a year. When the warrior related the saga to his hunter-friends, they ribbed him with good-natured cries of “buck fever!”

Now Jay burned with a maniacal desire to redeem himself. And his obsession only deepened the next morning at five, when one of his new friends presented him with a muzzle-loading Civil War musket with a

bayonet attached, while pointing out: "This is to keep the deer off you, Jay!"

After enduring the hoots of merriment, Timer threw himself into the hunt with a vengeance. But after the next three days proved to be totally frustrating, he retired from active deer hunting for good – and never again got close enough to a deer to count the points. Too bad, too bad. And yet, way down deep, the Jay-guy remains pleased that he didn't shoot the buck. (Let's face it: He'd watched "Bambi" with his children far too often to really enjoy the "sport" of assassinating a deer in cold blood.)

Although our hard-luck hunter would never land his buck, things were definitely improving on the academic front. Take that heart-warming incident in Sheep Production – the only animal husbandry course in which Jay received less than a "B." Leo Lewis, a graduate student, was taking the course for some reason. Leo happened to be an African-American, and when Jay "buddied up" with him on a field trip to the university sheep farm, the complications began quickly. Of course, Leo didn't "look the part" of being an all-star running back he was in the Canadian Football League – he was actually very intelligent, articulate, mild-mannered, friendly and very attentive in class. A fine man, in short!

To understand the complications, you must first understand that when the "experts" neuter (or castrate) male lambs, they must do it while the lambs are very small. And, of course, the testes are *really* small. So here's the drill: A small cut is made in the lamb's scrotum and the testes are squeezed to the surface, where they are gripped by the cutter's *teeth*, and pulled out.

So far, so good. But then came the complications. Jay got through the procedure okay, while Leo held the lamb. Then it was Jay's turn to "hold" for Leo. But when Leo pulled the testes out, the sperm "cord" was left dangling from his chin, and poor Leo suspected that he might faint – or at least throw up. Jay swears Leo turned "green" that day, although it would have been hard to tell: the running back wasn't very dark-skinned.

Somehow, these two warriors managed to survive the experience . . . even as they discovered why millions of Americans have opted *against* becoming sheep farmers.

Another of Jay's favorite "college stories" involved a young student from northwestern Missouri who was enrolled in the same 1958 School of Journalism class as Jay. That class was quite small and like the rest, the young fellow (named Jerry) was required to stand up and read his essay on his "life goals." Jerry was running for President of the University of Missouri Student Council, and said, "I will win. My goal is to finish school, continue managing our farm of Angus and then Charlais cattle, then be elected governor of Missouri." The young man spoke so self-assuredly and

believably, that the class believed him. And indeed, Jay visited and toured his beautiful family ranch in northwest Missouri during the late summer of 1958.

Jerry was right and wrong in his speech. He did win the student council presidency, but he didn't run for governor. What he did instead was to become a Democratic Representative of the Congress of the United States, then run for the U.S. Senate in 1976. Apparently, he had the nomination sewed up. But then tragedy struck: on August 3, 1976, Jerry Litton, his wife, two children, and staff boarded a private plane in Northwest Missouri. The plane crashed shortly afterward, killing all aboard. You can be sure that Bill Clinton would have had stiff competition from Jerry.

After two and a half years of working full time and going to college about two-thirds full-time, year-round, Jay yearned to wrap up his degree. Thus he felt compelled to resign his position at the health department. With three children and another on the way, he had to work at part-time jobs until he gained his first degree in June, 1959.

After that giant step had been taken, the world began to look better and better.

Times were changing in the agriculture businesses, for one thing - and Jay was gradually beginning to look deeper into the future. He wanted to become a part of that business as soon as possible . . . and he feared that his work in public health might be diverting him from his true goal - to become a livestock farmer. Wearing a string tie and carrying a clipboard was not the image this man had shaped for himself! Instead, he had dreamed incessantly of becoming a hands-on farmer over the long haul, bad knee and all!

Indeed, all those university courses in genetics, nutrition and especially management of livestock operations had excited Jay to the point that he wondered if he still had the drive to be as innovative and competent in the environmental health arena as possible. Otherwise, why take it on? He sure as the dickens didn't want to waste himself in a half-hearted commitment to a career!

Questions, questions. But events were moving forward rapidly. And Jay and Bell were absolutely thrilled when the Jayster received that bachelor's degree in June of 1959. To make the day even better, Lolah and Teri drove up from Kennett - a 600-mile-round trip. Jay spent some of their tight funds to rent a cap and gown, and then sat proudly with the thousands of other grads through the ceremony, held in jumbo-sized Tiger Football Stadium. It was a great moment . . . but our hero vowed that he would never again wear a "gown" in public! Still, he felt quite proud of himself, and his life with Bell had never been better. After all, she had encouraged him on a hundred different occasions: "If you could pass chem-

Timer

istry, you can surely get through nutrition and math! If you need tutoring, we can find the money - somewhere.”

And they did. They had survived . . . and they had succeeded.
Together!

TWENTY-FIVE: Farewell To Campus Life - He's Back On The Farm!

"The college graduate is presented with a sheepskin to cover his intellectual nakedness."

Robert Maynard Hutchins, born 1899

Having educated himself silly, our super-smart hero was now fully prepared for a vocation that once upon a time had required no "higher education" at all: farming!

After several years of arduous study and attending hundreds of classes, Jay Arthur was about to become one of the most "book-learned" hands-on farmers in the entire State of Missouri. It happened like this:

During his last semester in college, Timer had noticed a posted ad from John Jarrett - made an attorney (no degree in law) by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s - an attorney in the Missouri Ozarks who wanted a farm manager for his 2700-acre beef and dairy operation, Jarrett Land & Cattle Co. Brain racing, Jay had jumped to answer the ad. After an interview and several letters, he landed the position - and was all set to become the attorney's first-ever "farm manager."

Jay couldn't wait. Pacing restlessly, he was feverish with impatience for graduation. Meanwhile, Bell was engaged in some serious waiting of her own . . . before giving birth to the lovely Jannell, their fourth child - who achieved the high honor of leaving the hospital after only three days and being escorted directly to the Ozark ranch.

As it turned out, the attorney had remodeled an old three-bedroom, wood-frame house - while also adding a new well. Obviously, this lawyer wanted things to be just right for Jay, Bell, Karen, Jeff, Bertha, and Jannell.

It was almost July 1 when Jay and family arrived, and the new boss immediately felt compelled to visit the fields and woods. Imagine his horror when he saw milk from the bulk tank being drained into a nearby gully! He soon learned that Sealtest Dairy in St. Louis had run a "solids-not-fat" test on the milk and had discovered an ugly fact: Jarrett Land & Cattle Company had been watering the milk. (That was *one* way to increase milk production, but it didn't quite wash with the people who bought it and drank it.)

Not good! But matters sorted themselves out after a bit, and the ranch was soon permitted to resume its milk sales.

Jay was given the use of a WWII-type Jeep to oversee the seven different farms operating under the Jarrett Land & Cattle Company (ranch). Although the region was dotted with rocks, its reputation for physical beauty had not been exaggerated. Driving across this gorgeous landscape, our friend Timer encountered deer every mile or two, or so it often seemed. After only a few days, in fact, he grew quite accustomed to coming upon a group of four or five cows with calves in the woods – and then immediately startling the half-dozen deer who'd been hovering near them.

Thrilled as never before, the amazed Jayster believed that his life's dream had finally come true. What a joy it was, to tool around the ranch on one of the Five-Gaited Saddle Horse mares or stallion . . . and then to come upon 80 or more white-faced Hereford beef cows with young calves by their sides! (And Jay wasn't the only one who had fallen in love with the animals: The dairyman's 16-year-old son hid a beautiful and healthy deer fawn for months in the chicken house until the game warden found out and came after it.)

Beautiful or not, however, this world contained some dangerous hazards. Jay learned that lesson early – when he nearly lost his life aboard one of Jarrett's 30-year-old Ferguson tractors. Unfortunately, this machine had no brakes, and they'd had no time to get it to the shop eighteen miles away. Alone, our hero was running the tractor back and forth on top of the corn silage in the trench silo, when it suddenly began rolling backwards, refused to heed the full brake pressure, and went off the end – a drop of at least eight feet. Jay managed to leap aside as the tractor went up and over!

Wow!

After a bad case of the shakes, he managed to return the tractor to an upright position and resumed his labors...this time back and forth *across* the silo. Almost as scary was the moment when his hair got parted – literally – by a huge steel maul being swung by one of the men driving sharpened posts into the rocky soil. The corn required watering, since the August “dog days” temperatures had too rapidly cured its stalks. Without moisture, it would not have been subject to the organic changes required for the transformation to ensilage – making it useless for dairy and beef food during the winter months.

Although Jay hung on at the ranch only six months, he never lost his enthusiasm for this way of life. If fate had permitted, he'd have dearly loved to have stayed on and bought the place. But this destiny was not to be his. Apparently, Jarrett had obtained most of the land during the Great Depression by trading services for it. Like some lawyers and other business professional before him, he'd unthinkingly taken advantage of the

owners' financial duress.

Quite frankly, the Jay-man wanted no part of cheating the farmers who showed up to buy calves. Jarrett told them anything they wanted to hear – and some of the “facts” he told them could have ruined the buyer's future in raising cattle.

For example: Jarrett “forgot” to tell them that they could identify the actual father and mother (sire and dam) of a young bull by merely looking at the tattoo in his ear. Instead, the unscrupulous cattleman simply pointed at the best looking cow and said, “That's his mother.” On one occasion, Jarrett bought a fine-looking bull – but an animal that Jay knew had dwarfism in its family history. Then, when the new land-manager advised the rancher against the purchase, Jarrett quickly snapped: “They'll never know where a dwarf calf comes from.”

Jay tried to explain to him that anyone familiar with bovine dwarfism would surely understand the obvious: the fact that a dwarf must receive a gene for the disorder from both the mother *and* father. In this situation, a lifetime of work could be wiped out for an unsuspecting cattle rancher.

But Jarrett didn't want to hear it. Once the old man's mind was made up, nothing could move him, and the “dwarf debacle” was no exception. Nor was it out of character. Irascible and easily angered, the ranch owner would fly off the handle at the slightest provocation. Example: On another occasion, Clyde, Elvis and Jay were moving cattle on horseback after a near-cloudburst. The ground was so slippery that it was foolishly dangerous to ride up and down on those hills and slopes. At one point, Clyde's horse fell, pinning his leg for only an instant – but leaving him in agonizing pain. Clyde called Jay from home the next day, and announced that he couldn't walk. Working was out of the question, at least for the next few days.

Jay felt bad for his top hand and – especially when the hired hand pointed out that the “Old Man” had refused to pay him for the time off from the fall, supposedly because Clyde's Workman's Compensation insurance wouldn't pay benefits until the injured worker's third consecutive day of absence from the job had passed.

Hoping to discuss the situation, Jay went to Jarrett's home at seven that evening and found him already in bed. As usual, the old man was peeved by the visit; hadn't he explained that he always “retired” immediately after supper? Jay politely reminded him that he – the Jayster, that is – couldn't go to bed so early . . . even though he was required to get up at before 5:00 a.m. to answer Jarrett's phone calls almost every morning!

Actually, the old man seemed to *enjoy* watching Jay get hot under the collar. Then he chuckled out loud. “I'm gonna make some money off

Clyde's injury," he croaked in his raspy baritone. "I'm goin' tell my Worker's Comp insurer he was off a week, so they'll pay from the beginning. But I won't pass the first three days' money on to Clyde. Shit, I'll just pay him for the fourth day on! He won't think anything of it. Why should he? In these mountains, they know if they don't work, they don't get paid."

Jay told him, "Jarrett, Clyde is the most dedicated and competent employee you have when it comes to operating the diesel and the trucks in hay and silage and other work and you can count on him coming to work every day. You either pay him for the time he's off, or I walk out of here and leave you with everything."

Our hero knew he was taking a risk at this moment. But what Jarrett *didn't* know was that that crafty old Timer had an ace up his sleeve - the knowledge that Jarrett was right then neck-deep in a major lawsuit involving the railroad. Jarrett couldn't afford to lose his ranch manager during the litigation - no way!

Jay's heart hammered painfully in his chest, while he waited to see if the old man would call his bluff.

He didn't. Jarrett looked hard at Timer for a few seconds . . . then announced that he would "go along" with him on "this important personnel matter."

Clyde called later to thank Jay, and from that moment on, both men knew that a bond had been forged between them.

Years later, when Jay recalled how his agreement with Jarrett had finally ended, he would *also* recall the truth of that ancient Chinese proverb: "The leopard never changes his spots!"

The old man was a double-dealer, plain and simple.

Their "gentlemen's agreement" had been that Jay would be paid a salary - while also receiving milk, meat and food for his laying hens until January. After that, an inventory would be conducted, and the attorney and his manager would be partners. Fat chance! Around the first of November, the 74-year old lawyer said, "I've decided not to set up a partnership. You made me too much money! The dairy is making money, and the calves really did the best ever. I'll keep you on salary another year, which will help you get your finances together, also."

Jay concedes now that the old man may have been right. On the other hand, our upright hero may have been too naïve (the product of his poor-but-honest up-bringing?) to match wits with a dyed-in-the-wool cheat. Jarrett made money from the farm, all right - but it was mainly because Jay did one heck of a job as a professional manager! For starters, he made sure his hands fed the dry dairy cows plenty of nutritious food, and that the beef cattle received adequate protein and iodized salt, water, were safely neutered, free of pink-eye and ticks. (These steps were elementary for

those who had studied agriculture.)

Jay also bought some of the finest hogs from the University of Missouri and raised some great money-making litters of pigs for the ranch. Clearly impressed by his expertise, Jarrett's wife tried to get Bell to talk Jay into staying. Bell did talk to Jarrett and Jay, but Timer had a better idea: In January, he took over as farm manager of the University of Missouri swine operations at more pay and with an honest boss.

As it turned out, the current manager was dying of cancer, and although he would still be there to help in the transition for a while - a courageous decision - Jay would take over immediately as actual manager.

About 13 months after Jay left the Jarrett Land & Cattle Co., Mr. Jarrett went on to his "heavenly" reward. The information he and Bell received was scant; apparently, the old man had sold the saddle horses and the beef cattle, around the time of Jay's departure. But the milking staff stayed on with the dairy until the old man died. Thirty years later, Timer would return to the old man's empire - to find that the house in which he and his family had lived a charred wreck. It had burned to the ground long ago.

Jay walked the weedy patch of ground where their house had stood in 1959. No cattle were to be seen. The empire seemed to be deserted. The Jayster drew his invisible shield around him and sadly walked to the car and drove away on the gravel road where Bell and the other wives had once stood - in order to form a "human wall" that would force more than eighty 1000-pound Hereford cows and their calves to turn in at the gate.

Driving away, Jay couldn't help but remember Shelley's famous lines, from *Ozymandias*, about what happens to every empire after a century or two:

*Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!
Around that colossal wreck,
The empty sands stretch level and bare. . . .*

That world was over now, gone without a trace.

But at least Jay still had the memories . . . his inner vision of all those very fine and honest human beings who'd worked the ranch or on neighboring farms during his time there. Jay's favorite was "Bear" - a 16-year-old American Indian fellow, and the son of Bert. Bear was already six feet tall, and had only one eye. But the handicap didn't seem to bother him . . . since he'd shot and killed a deer each year since he was 12 from the back of a horse!

What a world that had been! At times, Jay had found himself

supervising as many as 13 hired hands – along with three tractors and two large trucks. These hard-working men had put up 10,000 bales of alfalfa hay and 600 tons of corn silage that year. They'd also sold thousands more gallons of milk and 40 much heavier, weaned beef calves. Of course, they'd gone at it seven days a week! Cattle could be lost just about any-time because of the poorly maintained fences. Is it any wonder our hero's weight plummeted from 174 pounds to only 136 in six weeks, at the height of his labors?

According to the ancients, every cloud has a silver lining. (But it also has plenty of rain, hail, thunder and lightning!) Although the Jay-guy lost plenty of weight by working those 15-hour days bucking hay (balance the hay-bale on your knee and then *oooooff!* it onto the wagon) – while also building silos, cutting silage and wrestling hogs – he doesn't recommend his program as a weigh-loss system for most folks. How hard was he working? Answer: So hard that he couldn't even get to town for a haircut. Solution: Bell purchased a Sears Roebuck haircutting kit and began cutting his (and Jeff's) hair . . . in a pleasing ritual that continued for many years.

During those amazing six months, he earned the equivalent of several years of experience. And although he was sad to leave, he never questioned his decision – based on everything he had known at the time he made it. Had he been able to predict that the old man would be gone in a few months, he might have reconsidered. But he owned no crystal ball. One regret that *did* rankle at times: He always wished he'd been able to install weatherproof automatic-watering facilities, because when the ponds froze, the 100 cattle went without water – unless he or his employees broke the ice with axes. And when it was zero degrees in November, 1959 that was a problem.

Another interesting ritual occurred each time they brought hay out of the "Big Valley." This procedure called for loading it into the 20-year old, two-ton flat-bed International dump truck. The job seemed to last forever, and the last load was always brought out in the moonlight. The brakes didn't seem poor on the flat while the truck was unloaded . . . but when they ascended the steep limestone valley, Jay and the men had to chock the wheels when the truck stalled out. The driver also sat in the truck, keeping his foot on the brake. Made it, but close!

As a nine-to-16-year-old kid, Jay had loved riding Dan and Posey. But herding those half-wild Hereford cattle while bouncing along on the purebred saddle horses was a brutal experience . . . and the Jay-man decided that he could live without horseback-riding in the future. In most cases, the fancy saddle horses required a full quarter-mile to reach a gallop – and by that time, the cow had escaped into the brush and Jay and his other riders had to go after it. Without chaps, their legs took a severe beat-

ing.

Flica, our hero's noble steed on the ranch, was almost always accompanied by her frisky six-month-old colt, Star. (Clyde's mount, the stallion Jeopardy, had sired Star.) Of course, the horses often seemed to make their *own* decisions - whether in favor of trotting, pacing, or cantering. On the other hand, Dan or Posey would have been reached top speed in little more than two jumps and would have headed the cows quickly.

The weather presented all sorts of headaches. For one thing, it seemed that every time it rained, the old man wanted Jay to move cattle from one part of the ranch to another. Through the woods. Along public roads. Rumor had it that the crusty Jarrett knew there were lost cattle or broken fences out there during the work week, but waited for the salaried people like Jay, Clyde and Elvis to round them up and repair fences on holidays, weekends or when it rained!

On one infuriating occasion, 100 or more cattle were moved down the county road, stopping all traffic for miles. Bell and the other hands' wives blockaded the road at the gate, and headed the cattle on through. Somehow, they got the job done . . . even without using the "Walkie-Talkies" that would be standard operating procedure (SOP) today.

Problem solved! But Jay's brainstorm didn't always produce results. On another stressful occasion, for example, he wanted to remove a dead tree located near the center of the corral, and not too far from the loading chute. "Get it out of there!" barked the fastidious Jayman. But his dairy foreman - Bert, aka the "Cattle Expert" - did not agree with this recommendation. "Wait and see," muttered the laconic American-Indian, Bert.

Our hero got an education in a hurry. Each time the herd entered the corral, he soon noticed, they were ruthlessly bullied by the old "cancer-eyed" cow (she was blind in one eye). This bovine Cyclops was a tad slow on her hooves . . . but she had a horn-spread of about five feet. For reasons that remained her own, Lady Cyclops would chase after anyone who entered the corral in order to move the cows. And make no mistake: that tyrant was fully intent on "horning" everything in her path!

Thank God for the tree! By slipping behind it, a cowpoke could instantly make himself invisible to the Horned Marauder. More than once, Jay laughed out loud to see one of his hands hanging onto that old tree - and then swinging around it - with the old lady-cow in hot pursuit! Indeed, so many of the cows had wide-spread horns that Jay and his men had to scatter large protein pellets on the hard ground of the pastures to make sure that every cow obtained essential nutrients, and without getting gored.

Can you believe that our bold warrior actually wanted to cut *down* that saving tree?

Another difficult scenario occurred soon after the Jayster arrived at the ranch and discovered that it was time to castrate (neuter) the 150-pound, Hereford beef bull calves.

Jay's reaction: *Gulp!* Upon further inquiry, he learned from the dairy foreman that the Manager was expected to wield the knife and to personally castrate all the calves. Jay knew he was being initiated, but he was too proud to show it. Poker-faced, he reached for the razor as the first calf was thrown and held on the ground. What a day! Working like a manic, he castrated more than 20 bull calves with a straight razor - and could scarcely straighten out his right hand for several days from completing the ordeal. (Later he learned that his stature had increased - significantly - after the men saw him finishing the job, regardless of the intense pain. Jay's degree didn't give him integrity.)

Another stern challenge took place each year with the arrival of "pink eye," a hereditary trait carried by some (brown with white-faces) Herefords. Unfortunately, the ailment could not be ignored - because the calves' growth-rate would decline significantly, if it went untreated. Tormented by flies, the calves with pink eye wouldn't eat enough, which accounted for the weight-loss. The solution? Jay prepared a tank of liquid copper sulphate, then had the cattle rounded up in the corral and single-hand sprayed (all but the Cyclops, that is) directly into their open eyes.

The results spoke for themselves. With "weaning weights" soaring an average of 50 pounds (compared to previous years), these cows were making the old man a bundle of money! At 50 cents per pound times 50 calves, the take amounted to a cool \$1250. Was it any wonder that Old Man Jarrett cavorted through a merry jig as he eyeballed the livestock scales?

Another incident also helped to increase Timer's stature on the ranch.

One blazing-hot afternoon in August of 1959, the hay baler was disabled by a flat tire. Responding, our subject drove the Jeep to a wood-pile a quarter-mile distant, in order to obtain some logs with which to prop up the machine for a wheel-change. It was an unbelievably hot, dusty day. Moving quickly, Jay began stacking logs in the back of the Jeep. Within a few seconds, his shirt was drenched with sweat from such activity.

Ignoring the discomfort, he reached for the next chunk of wood. And froze.

Suddenly, with his hand glued to the block of wood, he was staring into the unblinking, beady eyes of a coiled, hissing timber rattlesnake!

Wide-bodied and at least three feet long, the reptile did not seem pleased to be in Jay's company. His tongue licked the air, and his nearly-

blind eyes were fixed on the soft flesh at the base of the Jay-man's throat. With growing concern, our hero noted that the reptile's head hovered no more than 12 to 18 inches from his bare arm.

Not good, Jay-guy!

He was afraid to move, yet afraid *not* to. So he froze. Unable to move a muscle, he remained utterly paralyzed. Like a wooden Indian (or a U.S. congressman listening to a political speech by a member of the opposition), he seemed to have gone completely comatose. What he *didn't* know, of course, was that rattlesnakes are always "blind" during the Dog Days of July and August.

Holding his breath, and with his eyes the size of pie plates, the transfixed Jayster waited for the slashing horror of poison-fangs ripping through his arm. But nothing happened. After what seemed like an eternity, and with sweat now pouring down into his eyes and off the end of his nose, he finally realized that he had to act.

He nearly tripped as he lunged away toward the Jeep.

Frantically, without thinking, he grabbed the axe from the Jeep and flailed at the monster for all he was worth. He missed him entirely two or three times, then through sheer luck managed to land a deadly blow. The viper struck at the axe and writhed on the grass and weeds around him, biting until he died.

When the snake was clearly dead and Jay had stopped shaking, his devilish side took over. He placed the 34-inch poisonous rattler in a large paper bag and drove it over to Elvis, one of the permanent ranch hands. He told him, "Your beautiful and thoughtful wife, Donna, gave me your huge lunch this morning and I forgot to tell you. She said you should share the cantaloupe with the rest of us."

Elvis opened the sack . . . then closed it again.

The grizzled little ranch hand gave Jay a wide, toothless grin. "Come to think of it," he said in his lazy drawl, "I already done *ate* my lunch!"

Roaring with laughter, the Jay-man walked away from the sack - without realizing that one of his "hired hands" (to say nothing of many other Ozark residents) considered rattlesnake meat a great delicacy. Foolishly, our snake-fighter then left the rattler steaks to spoil in the heat - a misstep that ticked off that worker to the max. Ah, well: another lesson learned the hard way!

Later, after Jay's adrenalin-level had returned to normal, a longtime resident of the area pointed out that he should have been careful to keep the length of a snake's body between himself and the angry reptile. Most snakes can leap their length - which meant that Mr. Arthur could easily have been bitten on that sweltering July day. (The axe handle was less

than three feet long, after all.)

What a battle! But it need not have taken place. During the next few decades, as Jay became a seasoned outdoorsman who understood the “balance of nature,” he would change his thinking completely. If he’d come across such a snake in the 1990s, he would have simply departed the scene or pushed the monster out of the way. Why kill a creature when there was no compelling need to do so?

The following January, Jay was required to proceed alone to his new job as Farm Manager of the University’s Swine Research Farm. Bell would join him with the four children – just as soon as Jay could find suitable temporary housing. (The university-provided residence wouldn’t be available until April.) Fortunately, he soon managed to locate a remodeled poultry house that was perfectly suitable. The owners – friends of Bell’s – agreed to rent them the place for \$50 per month. Best of all, the spacious new pad was located only 6 miles from Jay’s work.

The only trouble was the snow and cold. More than 80 inches of snow fell within 30 days, and for 29 days the temperature didn’t go above freezing. Cars had to be abandoned at roadside, as the weary residents shoveled themselves head-high paths leading to their houses. Many fine hogs belonging to the University died from pneumonia and influenza, after becoming chilled by blowing and thawing snow while they slept.

Jay’s new boss, Dr. Lin Harper, turned out to be the same instructor who had taught him so well in college. The pressure was on Harper to raise more pigs to weaning, and the hard-working Jayman accomplished that for him. Until our subject’s arrival, the farm had been raising only 5.5 pigs per litter, on average. Jay boosted that average to 8.0, out of 9.0 farrowed (born). He did it by taking a personal, hands-on approach to the farrowing, and by replacing the straw with ground cobs as bedding to keep the area dry.

If the sow was clearly ready but could not complete her labor, he would often inject pitocin . . . but only if so advised by the veterinarian. When the beautiful little pig leaves the warm body of its mother and slides out into the cold world, it has a membrane covering its mouth. In most cases, the new arrival successfully sheds the membrane by snorting and shaking its head.

The umbilical cord comes loose from the after-birth membrane by itself, but Jay would clip off and treat the cord with iodine to protect against disease germs. If the little rascal had trouble getting the membrane off its nose and mouth, however, Jay would remove it manually. Invariably, the little pig then staggered immediately toward the sow’s teats and attempted to nurse. Long beforehand, of course, Jay had thoroughly cleaned the farrowing pens with steam, killing the bacteria from previous

farrowings, while also eradicating dust and other impurities. (Such bacteria grew rapidly in the presence of moisture and then infected the pig's umbilical cord or scraped skin with deadly germs, causing either death or swollen joints that resulted in poor growth.)

After moving into the University house, Jay spent long hours working and couldn't bear to be away from the barns during the sow's farrowing times. But that life wasn't easy: The stench from the manure in the barns was overwhelming to the family at times. The income was also insufficient and this line of work didn't seem to have much future. The work was also very heavy – especially when it involved lifting sacks of corn that weighed well over 100 pounds. Jay's weak knee made the job even tougher.

He was quite interested in some of the research, however . . . and especially in some medical experiments that involved tying off the fallopian tubes of the females and reconnecting the vas deferens in male pigs after vasectomies. But the stress that went with caring for 50 to 60 sows was slowly devouring young Mr. Arthur. How could he not become “personally involved” in the farrowing process, each time one of his charges gave birth to nine or more piglets?

In many ways, the birthing of the piglets symbolized the story of Jay's life. How often he had helped to bring new animal life into the world . . . and how often he had found himself working for months at a time to sustain it – whether that new life came in the form of pigs, calves, foals, turkeys, guineas, chicks, ducks, puppies or kittens. Indeed, Jay's love of animals was so great that it's sometimes difficult to understand how he eventually became a skilled manager of human beings!

Because he loved farm creatures so much, our hero always found it difficult to castrate (or “neuter”) them. At the university, this challenge seemed especially daunting – since the rules prohibited castration until the male pigs had grown to at least 200 pounds. (Their testes reached the size of Jay's fist.) Imagine Jay's horror when one of his assistants asked for a platter of “mountain oysters” – and eventually convinced Jay to fry a few of them up for supper. But they tasted fine – a bit like chicken gizzards, in fact.

Jay looked forward to showing the best pigs at the Kansas City Royal Livestock Show. But his hopes were dashed when many of his pigs were felled by an undiagnosed disease, forcing a cancellation of the trip.

Probably the most onerous task of all was scooping hog manure from the concrete pens into manure spreaders for fertilizing the fields. This task was supposed to be handled by a drainage system in which manure and urine flowed into ponds, where it would be filtered back to simple water. Fat chance!

Timer

The odor-causing microorganisms won that battle . . . and the Jayster discovered that there are times in life when you just have to grit your teeth and endure the overwhelming aroma of hog shit.

During the long years ahead - as he became increasingly caught up in both local and federal politics - Jay's talent for olfactory endurance would prove to be an enormously valuable asset.

TWENTY-SIX: The Government Man

“I don’t make jokes; I just watch the government and report the facts.”

Will Rogers, 1879-1935

With his farming years and the Great Rattlesnake Adventure now well behind him, the still youthful and eternally upbeat Jay Arthur was ready to settle down and become a polished professional manager of people and resources.

His first real opportunity came as a result of his returning to the Columbia City Health Department, during a period in which he would also earn his master’s degree in public health and environmental science. With a growing family to raise, he and Bell rented an old Civil War home a few miles north of Columbia. The house featured a deep, private well powered by a windmill that pumped the water into an uncovered holding tank.

Unfortunately, our hero only noticed the lack of a cover several months into their stay – and noticed at the same time a profusion of bird droppings, leaves, small birds and other detritus swirling merrily about in the tank. Ah, well: Which one of us can claim to be perfect? Somehow, the Jayman overcame his gagging reflex and managed to go on drinking the h2o – after the tank was thoroughly cleaned, then chlorinated and covered.

What an impressive house they had chosen! Jay spent the first few months there marveling at the majestic roof timbers, the glorious 15-foot-high ceilings and the elegant woodworking that graced this Missouri mansion. But when the snows of winter arrived, he made a discovery even more appalling than the discovery of the missing tank-cover.

They’d rented the Ice Palace!

This windy, slant-roofed pile of weathered timbers was colder than a well-digger’s *tookus* in darkest January.

“What have you done, Bell?” Jay roared at his startled spouse. “Who rented you this glacier – Nikki, Dog of the North?”

Shivering furiously, Bell roared right back at him: “*You’re* the one who chose this igloo, not me. Shut up and pass me another slab of blubber!”

It took some doing, but they managed to survive the permafrost by keeping a permanent blaze going in the fireplace, while also stoking the

coal furnace to the max. When Spring arrived, they raised a slew of chickens, then planted peas in the garden and nursed 20 pigs to outstanding health and fast weight gains in the barn. Happiness! To celebrate the fecundity, Harman Taylor even presented them with a beautiful baby milk goat.

They didn't stay at this address long, however. Bell was thoroughly pregnant with their next son (Merle, child number five), and the tainted water supply and sewage disposal simply didn't cut it. Nor did the prospect of another brutal winter at 20 below. But the stair-step kids loved that flawed house! Day after day, they played with the goat, chased the chickens and pigs, and trespassed all over poor Bell's garden, eating every pea.

As Jay gained experience and advanced toward his master's degree, he worked on education programs with department staff, and also put out a newsletter. At least one of the daily newspaper reporters visited almost daily, and Jay presented many of his preventive ideas to these wandering scribes. Their published articles were later picked up by TV and radio stations. Whenever he could, Jay urged the use of biological means of controlling mosquitoes. His solution: release lots of martin birds to hawk the adult skeeters, and distribute tanks of tiny mosquito-fish to cut down the ranks of the wigglers in bodies of water. The community supported his approach and he was often invited to speak before local organizations and school children.

Because of his training, Jay understood the immense importance of taking the kinds of practical, preventive actions that can shut down most illnesses triggered by consumption of food and drink. As a professional, he understands the bottom line on safety: If we select meat, poultry, milk, and eggs from healthy animals and keep it clean and cold enough (or hot enough, in some cases) to retard growth of bacteria and viruses, the body will usually be able to reduce the power of the invading microorganism and thus prevent the illness.

Education is great, says Jay, but it doesn't always go far enough. In some situations during his long career, he found it necessary to play the role of "policeman" in order to prevent the sale of suspect foods. In one situation, for example, his own Medical Director's church turkey bazaar became a "ham bazaar" - after Jay was made aware that church officials made the mistake of leaving several huge, stuffed, cooked turkeys out overnight at about human body temperature. Knowing that Salmonella, Staphylococcus and other disease microorganisms thrive in poultry, milk, and meats under these conditions (and thus can set off foodborne outbreaks), Jay was required to condemn the turkeys for selling. The story soon hit the front page: TURKEY BAZAAR BECOMES HAM DINNER!

The newspapers, TV and radio stations interviewed both the Medical Director and the Director of the Dairy-Public Health-Department where he was then working on his masters in public health and environmental science. Both officials supported him, even though both were also members of the huge church. Amusingly enough, the incident was even written up in a national environmental periodical! The irony of the whole thing was that our noble inspector had earlier visited the small farm-plant where the turkeys were raised and processed - and had declared this outstanding farm family to be doing an excellent job.

But Jay Arthur believed - and rightly so - that you can't be too careful, when it comes to food safety. His philosophical position, in a phrase: "You can't see if the Salmonella or Staphylococcal bacteria are there or not. You just have to assume they *are* present and either keep the food hot or cold - or throw it out."

Make no mistake: Our friend Timer had personally investigated, including laboratory testing of several foodborne disease outbreaks, and the foods involved had spent less time sitting out of refrigeration or in high temperatures than was the case with the turkeys.

Burning with zeal, the youthful Jay Arthur beat the drums everywhere he could for food safety.

In 1966, for example, the journal *Cooking For Profit* published his article, "Food Poisoning Powderkeg." There, Jay described several personal experiences of his shoe-leather-based, scientific investigations of foodborne diseases in Columbia, Missouri. He also detailed how the lack of thorough cooking or foods left un-refrigerated (or poorly refrigerated) could easily produce disease outbreaks.

Another interesting chapter in Jay's food safety adventures occurred when he inspected a fledgling fast food restaurant that featured a "Golden Arch." It happened back in the early 1960s, and the chain was of course named "McDonald's." In those halcyon days, the marquee above the Columbia, Mo., franchise read: 700,000 SOLD!

By 2002, similar marquees around the country would boast of hamburger sales topping 100 *billion*. And indeed, the growth of Ronald McDonald's favorite restaurant would eventually become one of the most astonishing sagas in the history of modern business - as the fast food chain leapfrogged from only a few thousand units in the mid-1960s to more than 34,000 restaurants, worldwide. (Today more than 3.5 million Americans work in fast food restaurants - an astonishing number when you consider that the immense, worldwide empire of the Ford Motor Company includes only 355,000 workers!)

Back in 1962, however, it was a very different story. When Jay inspected Ronald's headquarters in Columbia, he found the restaurant to

be a leader in the campaign to keep surfaces clean and foods properly heated or chilled. Food that failed to meet these high standards was instantly discarded, and customers there could literally have eaten their supper off the floors, almost without fear of contamination.

Whenever a harried restaurateur announced that he couldn't keep his place clean because of the "fast pace" of business, Jay would sometimes point to the example of McDonald's. But some restaurant managers just didn't seem to "get it." In one classy, expensive joint, the staff had reduced kitchen lighting down to five foot-candles of illumination, as measured by Jay's light meter. (About equal to a sulfur match being held. Offices for reading need from 50 to 70 candles.) How could a busy chef hope to see hair, mouse droppings, dirt, etc., in light so dim? As Jay pointed out: "I needed a match to read my light meter!"

On another horrific inspection, our germ-fighter walked into a bar (The Shack) near the university campus early one evening - and quickly spotted a bleeding rat undergoing his death throes behind the counter. The stunned creature was still quivering from the blow he'd taken from the owner's broom handle!

Jay didn't hesitate. But when he closed the restaurant and ordered immediate closure, followed by a thorough cleaning and sanitizing and pest control, the owner cried out in anguish: "Why? This rat is dead!" As patiently as possible, Jay explained that if rats were running loose in daylight at the bar, they were probably getting caught in freeway backups after closing hours! In most cases, noted the patient inspector, rats prefer concealment. They emerge to gambol in the light only in conditions of starvation or disease.

While Jay's career began to pick up steam in earnest, his blossoming children were also stretching their wings. Karen, the oldest, was becoming skilled in art with paints and had begun taking some classes. A few years later she would graduate from the University of Nebraska with a major in art, but has never employed those talents - much to the disappointment of her father and her many other fans.

As the years passed at the University of Missouri, our friend Timer was applying himself furiously in seminars and on numerous research projects. And these experiences would teach him volumes about the importance of timely and competent medical and preventive care. Among the key factors in achieving such care were immunization, good nutrition, good sanitation, rest, exercise, emergency health services, good planning, and many other strategies designed to accompany good environmental practices in maintaining and improving the health of a population.

It didn't take the Jay-man long to discover that the movement from the scattered farms into the crowded cities sometimes resulted in

poor health practices. There were documented cases in Columbia and Independence of situations in which families filled their bath tubs with wastes from leaking sewer pipes. They said they took “sponge baths,” instead – and the stench from the sewage was almost unbearable! After a few incidents of this kind, our subject was happy to share his knowledge and experience with medical and nursing students . . . and he did exactly that while serving as a guest instructor in Public Health Management at the University of Missouri Medical School.

As a healthcare professional, Jay discovered early that “involving the people” was the most efficient way to control disease and disabilities. Hoping to learn more about that very topic, he enrolled in a special program – known as the Community Health Survey – offered by the U.S. Public Health Service in Atlanta. Timer spent two weeks in Georgia’s capital city of Atlanta, where he studied executive administration and returned with a plan that called for a “windshield survey” of every lot in the City. He and his assistant noted every deficiency involving standing stagnant water, sewage, trash, weeds, clogged creeks, housing conditions, dilapidated buildings, dogs and other animals, along with areas blighted by garbage. And that survey marked a turning point in his career.

While alternating shifts behind the wheel with his assistant, Sanitarian Myron Sandall, Jay and Myron logged deficiency findings on *every single property* – then transferred the information to maps of the city. Jay and Myron would agree on pictures “that would tell a story,” after which the talented Myron (a first-class photog) snapped away furiously. Later they made slides of what they saw: everything from piles of garbage and roaming dogs fighting over the scraps to dilapidated shacks, sewage in roadside ditches, frost-proof toilets spilling over and dozens of “WBOs.”

Later, Jay was challenged to the max as a tactful diplomat, when he found it necessary to bludgeon Sandall into removing the pictures of WBOs – aka “Women Bending Over” – from the portfolio of images they were assembling. (Let’s face it: Eyeballing 20,000 pieces of property can become somewhat boring, even for two supremely dedicated government employees.)

But what a job they did! In the end, they prepared color-coded maps of the city showing conditions, both bad and good. And their package included slides and overhead projector prints. Disease, infant death rates, fire calls, and accidents were noted. When the city manager learned that Jay was going to present the slides with the overheads to the Columbia Board of Health, one of whose members also served as Managing Editor of the Columbia Tribune, he directed that the presentation be shown to the City Council and be open to the public and the media. There was a full house. Fortunately, the startling information about

controlling disease was welcomed by the citizens, the press, TV, radio, and even the elected officials.

One slender, intense fellow at the presentation turned out to be a youthful investigative reporter. He circled the proceedings like a hawk, then caught Jay on the way out the door: "You presented eye-witness, statistical and pictorial evidence for your conclusions, didn't you?" Jay nodded affirmatively. He didn't see the KFRU Radio News Director for several years after that, however . . . not until he began to appear regularly on Dan Rather's nightly CBS newscast as a crackerjack investigator. His name: Eric Engberg. No longer slender, but an outstanding professional journalist.

Jay's report made front-page news in the region for weeks, and was supported by editorials about the importance of protecting public health. And indeed, it gradually became clear that the threats to the people's health were very real. Example: One plumber told Jay that he'd actually witnessed toilet tissue escaping from an outside water hydrant near a frost-free toilet that was clogged. A comical headline on Page 1 read: TOILET TISSUE BEFORE CITY COUNCIL. Was that missing space between the words "toilet" and "issue" really a "typo?" Or had some waggish headline writer enjoyed one beer too many on his dinner break?

As our hero grew on the job, he became convinced that some people and families needed help with health issues because of the changing social structure around them. Make no mistake, the social transformation of 20th-Century America - as the nation went from 90 percent farm families to 90 percent urban dwellers - caused severe physical and mental health and social problems, including but not restricted to disease, overcrowded and unsanitary housing, crime, inferior education, environmental pollution and breakdown in the family structure, itself, with child and spousal abuse too frequently the result.

There was no question but that the population density of America's new cities exacerbated public health problems. When garbage piled up on crowded city blocks, it provided a safe haven for rats, flies and roaches. Sewage backups often triggered contamination of water supplies and streams. Trash incineration in back yards caused air pollution and left unburned and odorous remnants to breed flies and as food for stray dogs, cats and rats. These were authentic public health hazards. Convinced of this fact, the City Council took immediate action to provide twice-weekly, tax-supported, no-cost garbage and trash pickups.

By now the Jayster was sold on the idea that government should provide enough structure and laws and regulations to respond to the "desires of the governed." Insofar as possible, the people creating the problems should also be made responsible for solving them. Was it acceptable for citizens to leave uncovered garbage or toss it in vacant lots, streets, alleys or creeks, or out their back doors? Of course not. Nor was it

acceptable to allow raw sewage to stand in pools or run into the streets or creeks. Back on the farm, these thoughtless residents might have gotten away with such thoughtless behavior – because the much greater distance between people helped reduce the health risk. But those days were over now.

Nonetheless, some of the most intelligent citizens in Jay’s community just couldn’t “get it” – they couldn’t understand why they couldn’t live “like they used to!”

Of course, Jay soon learned that much of the housing in his region was deeply flawed. All too often, it was difficult to obtain. And those who *did* manage to find living space frequently encountered existing structures in very poor condition. Some lacked floors and many were without indoor plumbing. Acting with the authority of the Director of Health and joined by the plumbing inspector, our friend Timer condemned more than 100 dilapidated houses and the City Council supported him. The houses were removed and were replaced by clean, sanitary housing and streets with new curbs and gutters. The scene had changed dramatically – compared to the filthy, garbage-strewn, rat-infested, open-sewage streets Jay had walked just a few years before. Perhaps the reduction in dysentery in the community came about in no small part because low-income employees now had sanitary facilities, including food and sewage waste disposal and safe water supplies. Developing the habit of hand-washing can be accomplished with running water, but not with outdoor faucets that don’t work or when the water is ice-cold.

The City Council also supported compulsory, mixed-refuse (garbage) collection twice each week, as Jay strongly recommended. His name appeared in the news columns almost daily, and the coverage was all positive. As one editorial pointed out: “He [trod] where angels feared to tread. . . .” In the years since those early struggles, of course, the City of Columbia has grown from less than 40,000 to more than 100,000. No longer is the town a mere “stage setting” for the University.

Although he was always willing to teach good health to others, Jay Arthur never asked his students to tackle an assignment he hadn’t already mastered. Smoking was a good example. Convinced that “puffing the weed” is a nasty, unhealthy and expensive enterprise, our hero kicked the habit, himself! Until that brutal confrontation, of course, he’d always been content to echo Mark Twain: “It’s the easiest thing in the world to stop smoking – I’ve done it a hundred times.” And indeed, the Jay-man did quit 40 to 50 times, before finally making good on his resolution, starting in August of 1963.

Five months later, the U.S. Surgeon General released *Smoking and Health* and cigarettes have been “playing defense” ever since.

Jay remembers his battle to give up the demon-weed clearly, because it has always been linked in his mind with an event that followed only a few months later. In November of 1963, an ex-Marine sharpshooter named Lee Harvey Oswald reportedly shot the popular and handsome President John F. Kennedy in the back of the head. Kennedy was riding in a Dallas, Texas, motorcade at the time - while being cheered by hundreds of thousands. He was the youngest man ever elected president and the youngest president to die in office. Timer and all of his friends were extremely distraught over Kennedy's assassination and the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby only two days later. It seemed "the world was spinning out of control!" Jay's stomach was literally in knots. In the past, he'd thought of the "enemy" as an outside force, alien to the land he loved. But now the enemy seemed to be very much within.

A few years after the Kennedy trauma, blind violence struck again. In 1968, two more popular national figures - U.S. Senator Robert F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a courageous civil rights leader - were also gunned down in public and killed.

Some psychologists have theorized that the increase in American mental illnesses was triggered in part by the stressful times of the 1960s. And it does seem, in hindsight, as if the "social controls" U.S. citizens had come to expect within the boundaries of this nation became increasingly tenuous and fragile during this era.

Not everything Jay entered into was serious, however. He played in a strong church softball and basketball league, for example, and even served as Commissioner. He also appeared on University of Missouri KOMU-TV, accompanied by the medical-doctor chairman of the Board of Health, where he discussed health issues. One question presented by the moderator asked: "Jay and Doctor, what can be done to prevent deaths and heart attacks to men shoveling snow in such as we have now?"

Leaping in ahead of the thoughtful doctor, Jay joked: "We *could* let the women shovel it!"

The moderator laughed . . . but it should be pointed out that this salvo occurred before the women's movement took off in earnest.

The area in Central Missouri turned out to be a godsend for Jay! Because he suffered so badly from headaches, the Public Health Nurse once again recommended that he go fishing to relieve stress. He did, and caught a trophy, a five-and-one-quarter-pound largemouth bass on the Harman and Dorcas Taylor farm . . . the same farm, as it turned out, where he and his family had lived in the "chicken house" during the snowy winter of 1959-1960. Bell had him clean the bass and they ate it, without having it officially weighed in for a trophy citation!

What a life. Jay and his family fished in the 12 ponds on the 100-

acre farm for free during the next 15 years. These waters were open for them to use any time. Jay liked the fishing so much, in fact, that in later years he sometimes drove 300 miles from Lincoln, Nebraska, in order to camp out here while catching coolers full of bass and other pan fish.

Our hero found it almost impossible to describe his elation when he was fishing at the Taylors' farm. He dearly loved wading through the tall grass and the mud along the edge of the ponds, and he loved tossing his lures next to a stump or a tree where he was "sure" a trophy largemouth lurked in the shadows. This fanatical fisherman couldn't get enough of the whistling meadowlarks, the eerie cooing of the turtle doves and even the crowing of an occasional pheasant. These sounds brought on an almost euphoric enjoyment that few experience and which he will never forget.

Jay visited those ponds off and on from 1961 to about 1975.

During that time, the owner's youngest son, Bryan, went from kindergarten through a masters degree in engineering, then married and moved to Seattle to work for Boeing Aircraft! He is a renowned computer expert and will provide advice to the planned Home Security Department in a discussion in Washington, DC in November, 2002.

Jeff and Bryan especially loved to chase frogs, tadpoles and bumble bees. Jay fished with night crawlers, crayfish, minnows, small blue gills and artificial bait to catch largemouth bass, three types of catfish, walleye, blue gills, and red-eared sunfish. He also giggered frogs from a boat. On some occasions, he even bought a fly rod and enjoyed many hours of wading thigh-deep along the ponds, while catching small bass and large blue gills with wet and dry flies. A half-pound blue gill felt like a lunker when it struck the lure. Great fun! Great fishing!

Years later, after they moved to Kansas City and Lincoln, Harman put two boats in the largest pond and mowed the high grass so that they could erect tents for overnights. This setting gave Jay a "thinking environment" to roam with his two oldest sons, Jeff and Merle, and many hours spent developing motor skills and appreciating the outdoors. Wearing old jeans and a long-sleeved shirt, and with a slouch hat to protect him from the hot sun, the Jay-man needed only to spray around his ankles and legs with "Off" in order to keep the ticks away. This was the life of a king, and he often asked: "What better vacation could one want?"

Jay also had several other farm ponds to fish and caught two crappie weighing two and one-half pounds each. Both trophies! But, of course, he didn't take them for official weighing for trophy citations. Bell baked them, instead. Soon after they'd been digested, he discovered that both were about two pounds larger than the usual "big" crappie. He also caught several four-plus-pound largemouths in the Columbia area and east of Kansas City. Bell really knew how to bake those big bass, while adding

herbs, side dishes of peas, fresh garden salad, mashed potatoes or rice, tomatoes, hot coffee, and milk or water. Good eating!

In June of 1962, Jay received his first master's degree, this one in Public Health and Environmental Science. Although he was happy to finish, he did not rent a cap and gown and, did not sit with the graduates. He was content to watch from the stands. Later, in Nebraska, he joined the graduates marching across the stage and proudly accepted his hard-earned Masters in Business Administration (MBA) diploma. It took six years (part-time) to finish that struggle!

Make no mistake: Our subject thoroughly enjoyed his University of Missouri masters research in practical microbiology and his testing of foods that the average family might pick up in the meat market or supermarket. He sometimes wishes he'd gone on to earn a doctorate in Public Health in that field, but he was stopped short by lack of cash and lack of computer skills.

Busy, busy. Along with working on his master's, earning a living, fishing, team sports and being involved in family activities, Jay led his crew on several forays throughout the region. They traveled to Southeast Missouri to his family and to Bell's in Baltimore as often as they could finance the trips or find time. In the four and half years after he returned from the farms, he and Bell also did their part in repopulating the earth - not that it needed it. Merle (1961), Joyce (1963) and Sarah (1965) brought endless joy and lots of work along with them. (Mind you, the Jayster was undergoing great peer pressures and daily exposures to medical and environmental philosophies regarding the need to "plan" families more carefully.)

The only "family planning" Jay did, he often pointed out, occurred when Bell was asleep after he returned from studying, working, ball games or fishing. He avoided the intense discussions because he felt he needed to reduce, stress outside of work and school and such discussions wouldn't do that. If Timer dared to discuss the methods of "spacing the family" by "controlling" the size of the family, Bell would quickly condemn such talk. And there was such a "wall of silence" around them whenever he used prophylactics that he often felt like skipping the intimacy altogether. He was always careful to skirt issues of family sizes and housing as they related to his family. (More of his invisible shield.)

Certainly, he loved each child as it came, but then he became frustrated and depressed with his own inability to cope with the situation. He felt he was poorly prepared, scientifically and socially, for even a cursory personal discussion of birth control with Bell, who became verbally chastising, abusive and withdrawn from him. Because of the ever-increasing size of the family, they had barely enough income to do anything except

pay for rent, food, work expenses and travel, and education and they had to share the same bed.

Years later in their marriage, he forced the issue by moving out of the bedroom, then out of the home . . . before returning to take a single room in the house. By that time, however, additional children were not a possibility. And Bell soon came to enjoy the peace of being able to sleep through the night without Jay waking her, as he had often done when he wanted to write or study or pace the floor because he couldn't rest.

Seeking a more positive way to practice "family birth control" and reduce stress by having fun, he played and coached softball and basketball and officiated high school, City Rec and Church League basketball. He was also the Church League Basketball Commissioner and his church's Recreation Director. All this while nailing down his masters degree and working full time!

It wasn't perfect and the two of them often struggled. But they hung on through the storm. Looking back, the Jay-man often wonders how they did it. Were they "heroes of marriage," or were they simply unable to end their stormy but always intense relationship?

Ask Jay for his opinion on that question and he'll dodge the emotional pain with a typical joke. "Marriage?" he'll tell you with a wry grin. "Why, marriage is nothing but a state of mind.

"You know - like psychosis!"

Twenty-Seven: Fighting The Good Fight For Public Health

"In America, the President reigns for four years, and journalism governs forever and ever."

Oscar Wilde, 1856-1900

As the years passed and the Arthur household rapidly expanded, one ironclad fact never seemed to change.

This growing family needed a larger income!

Fortunately, Jay's extensive education and his ever-increasing experience as a public health official had made him much more valuable to local and regional governments. Even as he was inquiring about jobs, emissaries were arriving to gauge his interest in changing positions. At the time, he was earning about \$8,000 per year, with a family of nine who depended on him for their sole support. (The kids now ranged in age from 10 to infancy.) Of course, the government paid steadily and provided pretty good benefits. But how could he meet the leapfrogging expenses of raising his large family with the smallish, incremental raises handed out every year by the bureaucracy?

It's interesting how Jay and Bell differed in their understanding of his vocation. Bell has never understood why the Jayman wouldn't wait for pay scales and job fulfillment alike to rise gradually in Columbia. She didn't seem to understand that Jay wanted a challenging assignment (and that he wanted to provide excellent citizen-*services*), along with dragging down that that weekly check! He also knew from his studies that the cost of living would strangle them pretty soon, if they didn't act quickly. Another factor: He greatly enjoyed outdoor activities, which cost some money - because he certainly wasn't a "couch potato." At one point, they tried to improve matters by purchasing a small house, but the income and size of the little home made it a short-lived choice.

Three months after Sarah was born and after moving into the little house, Jay accepted the top job as Director of Health in the Independence City Health Department - at a 20 percent increase in pay. In addition, the City paid all moving expenses.

Jay thoroughly enjoyed this new role and felt that he made a positive contribution during his two plus years on the job in Independence. A

new charter had established a City Manager-City Council form of government. The entire area, including Independence, was essentially a “bedroom city” of 107,000 residents who worked all day in Kansas City . . . even if most of the managers who ran the town refused to accept the fact. Meanwhile, the residents were grumpily voting down bond issues aimed at improving administration buildings, curbs and gutters for the streets and even for sewers.

Still, the Jayster’s annual departmental budget zoomed from \$80,000 to \$200,000 within the first year, mainly because he was able to show the citizen-needs for services, based on facts.

Harry Truman, who was greatly loved by the citizens of the Kansas City area, lived just about half a mile from the “temporary” City Hall and the Health Department where Jay’s office was located. (Harry’s old Jackson County Democratic Machine still controlled a lot of what happened in Independence.)

In 1965, President Lyndon Baines Johnson – flanked by Harry Truman – signed the twin acts that became known as Medicare and Medicaid (Title 18 and 19 of the Social Security Act). The package of new laws included a “Partnership for Health Act” and the “Community Action Act,” as it was then called by most of the bureaucrats. The legislation included requirements that those receiving the services would be involved in planning for the dissemination of those same services. That made sense – and yet there are still millions today who still believe that the upper-income people know best, and do not respect those aspects of the programs.

Our friend Timer would experience first-hand the effects of such programs signed into law during their stay in Independence. In the years ahead, he would also witness the powerful impact of the legislation – while working for the Nebraska State Health system and for Social Services Medicaid and County Social Services. (As a matter of fact, one of his proudest accomplishments in Independence was developing home nursing services in coordination with the Missouri State Health Department.) Make no mistake: Our hero is convinced that the changes brought about in the 1960s will be with us forever. (Bell actually witnessed President Johnson’s signing of that part of his “Great Society” legislation . . . all of which had emerged as a follow-up to his State of The Union Address to Congress in January, 1965.)

Bell began her work toward her own college degree, earning nine college hours over two semesters. She was not able to continue work on her degree for another nine years, however. But there was no “quit” in this lady, and she finally nailed down her degree – exactly 12 years after her start near Independence.

Jay did not imagine, meanwhile, that in just three short years, the administration of the new Medicaid program for the entire State of Nebraska would be his own heavy responsibility!

In those days, Medicare - medical insurance for those 65 and older - was administered by the federal government through contracts with private non-profit organizations. Medicaid, meanwhile, is a federal-state-local medical program for the poor. As such, the latter system includes only those who meet financial requirements - senior citizens on Social Security, for example, along with the blind, the disabled, dependent children with loss of parental support and people living in nursing homes. Although the Nebraska and other state medical associations - which represent doctors - many times voted against working with Medicare and fought Medicaid, most eventually relented and began accepting and enjoying the money, if not the horrendous mountains of paperwork.

Medicaid was intended to be "mainstream medicine," but the program may never become truly ubiquitous, because of the resentment that it so often triggers, and also because of funding limitations and the attitudes of medical providers.

During his day, Timer saw both the upside and downside of the system. Fortunately, he was usually urged to process the billings from providers quickly - which meant that he could keep a tight handle on the monies involved. Fraud was popping up all too often in other parts of the U.S., however, and he often saw its ugly head in Nebraska as well.

In spite of these problems, Jay-the-optimist continued to believe that rational people, doing their best, would overcome even the most incompetent, most criminal actions of the crooked . . . and even of politicians with their own agendas! As the first full-time Independence health director, he was given almost totally free rein (if not the necessary staffers and budget) to improve the public health through prevention programs.

Some real breakthroughs had been occurring in the space technology over the past several years, climaxing in the 1960s. Most of these improvements took place after Jay and his family moved to Lincoln, but the subject deserves at least a cursory review in this space.

Some background, first: In 1965, Astronauts James Lovell and Frank Borman spent 334 hours in orbit (almost 14 days), providing medical data for the 10-day Apollo lunar mission to come. Then tragedy struck. On the 27th of January, 1967, a fire broke out in an Apollo spacecraft engaged in testing on the ground. That blaze killed Gus Grissom, Ed White and John Chaffee - and delayed the Apollo program for more than a year.

A little later, Borman, Lovell and another astronaut circled the moon 10 times in Apollo Eight and then returned to earth safely. Apollo 9 and 10 continued to refine maneuvers, the latter during a 151-orbit mission which involved 31 orbits around the moon on which the crew rehearsed

for a landing.

Apollo 11 was launched on July 16, 1969. Astronauts Edwin E. (Buzz) Aldrin, Jr. of the Air Force and Neil A. Armstrong actually descended to the surface, while Lt. Colonel Michael Collins of the Air Force remained in lunar orbit. On July 20, the landing was made onto the surface of the moon. At 10:56 p.m. (EDT), when Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon from the ladder and said, "One small step for man - one giant leap for mankind," Jay thought, "... and I used to ride in a wagon pulled by mules in the swamps and hills of Southeast Missouri, and I'm still only 37!"

Apollo 12 followed on November 14, 1969, with Conrad Gordon and a co-pilot taking pictures, along with soil samples. Apollo 13 landed in April 1970 and Apollo 14 in February 1971. After a decade of social violence, it made Jay proud to be an American, as millions and millions of people from all over the world watched the landing and moon-walks on live television from their living rooms.

Back at the Independence Health Department, meanwhile, our friend Timer was caught up in a series of more earthbound struggles. His job: Administer programs in housing inspection; in general environmental quality (including such longtime hassles as solid waste, rat and mosquito control); in air pollution, restaurant and milk inspection and animal control.

These battles were not easy to win ... but housing was the arena that triggered the most anger and frustration among the citizenry. In this part of city governance, almost everything was controversial! Example: Although the laws required condemned - and especially vacant - houses to be removed, Jay had to officially, and specifically, order more than 100 of them to be torn down and removed. At the same time, his staff was for the most part untrained and non-directed.

Hoping to overcome these deficiencies, he immediately began his own training program within the Department. This program included the engineer, sanitarians, housing inspectors, animal control officers and secretaries or clerks who answered the phones. Jay recommended and gained promotions for all of his now-well-trained staff. He also obtained new and more sophisticated equipment after approximately one year of showing "professional services."

Although most of the citizenry applauded these efforts, a few citizens objected. And some were truly peeved. Timer has never forgotten the unsigned postcard he received at one point in the campaign. It read: "The cross-hairs of my rifle may be trained on the back of your head if you keep doing what you're doing," or words to that effect.

So how did our hero react?

Did he race into the nearest police station, while bellowing franti-

cally: "They've put the *cross-hairs* on the back of my head?"

Nope. He just chuckled, and tossed the card. Didn't even report it to the authorities. Why waste his valuable time reporting a raving fruit-cake? (To this day, he suspects that the nasty card came from the "Minutemen," a group of right-wing zanies who were active in the K.C./Independence area.)

On another adrenalin-soaked occasion, a brassy lady shouldered her way into Jay's office after an election and growled: "Now we'll get the rest of you out of here!" Imagine her discomfiture when the Jay-guy announced that everyone in the office had actually been *appointed* to his or her post. The voters couldn't touch 'em! (The brassy lady turned on her heel and snapped three or four epigrams that would have left George S. Patton blushing with embarrassment.)

Jay got a kick out of these kinds of exchanges, but most of the time his job was just plain hard work. Example: At one point, a city-wide survey of each plot of ground in Independence (similar to the survey he'd launched in Columbia) uncovered significant pockets of disease and disability. After many phone calls, Timer managed to orchestrate some cooperation (along with some funding) between the State of Missouri and the Jackson County Health Departments. And this joint effort resulted in his creation of a small public health nursing staff that was able to respond to requests for in-home health services for the poor with small children, as well as for the aged, blind and disabled.

Led by Commander Arthur, the health brigades were also able to pinpoint a typhoid carrier and reduce stream pollution - while improving the milk and restaurant sanitation programs. In order to accomplish these important goals, the Jay-man found himself standing in front of the City Council almost every session, where he would explain work that was underway to eliminate or alleviate problems he'd been asked to correct.

During this period, Jay also served on the Kansas City, Mo.-Kansas City, Kan. Air Pollution Advisory Commission - a nonprofit pollution-fighting organization that included representatives from 66 governmental organizations and was chaired by a U.S. Public Health Service official. Independence was a "bedroom city" that included many nice homes; however, it was located down-wind from the major polluting industries in the metropolitan Kansas City Missouri-Kansas region. From their sampling stations, Jay's engineer and he were able to determine that Independence had the highest amount of visible and, at least partially breathable particulate matter pollution of any town or city in the area.

In addition to the air pollution, Jay had to confront another serious political issue related to the environment. In the end, he was required to condemn 21 different areas of the city because of the stench generated by

hundreds of homes outfitted with overflowing septic tanks. Those homes were required to be hooked into the city's existing sanitary sewer lines, and this serious health hazard could not be permitted to continue.

In addition, city ordinances required the Director of Health to condemn such practices and allowed him or her to halt construction of homes unless it was done.

Because of Jay's courage and ability - along with his use of professional planners and the commitment of all parties to sit down together with him (including engineers, the city manager, attorneys, developers, city council members and others), the City made available low-interest tax bills so people could hook up to the sewer. And the results were nothing less than spectacular: Fully \$1 million was provided for this purpose by the second year of the program. Looking back, Timer realizes that this was quite an achievement. Sure, it was difficult to accomplish at the time - but the results literally changed the lives of hundreds of residents. Property values also increased greatly as a result of reducing the stench and the standing water in street-side ditches.

The Jayster had made a *difference* - and the Independence Jaycees were quick to recognize that fact. In 1966, they made him their "Man of the Year" and presented his resume to the National Jaycees for the U.S. Award. There was a presentation with the TV and press media at the Jaycees Annual Banquet, and our warrior was presented with a plaque that he still displays on his office wall, 30 years later. In part, the presentation said, "Through his loyal, faithful and unselfish efforts, he has made a great contribution to his community, state and nation."

Jay Arthur never made a lot of money in his profession, but so what? He says he will never forget receiving that award . . . or the fact that when he left Independence for his next professional post, the 80-year old former mayor of Independence, the Presidents of the Jaycees and Jaycee Wives and many others wrote letters expressing regret at his departure. But they also wished him well, and vowed eternal friendship.

Timer was also quite proud of a letter from a senior reporter for the Kansas City Star/Times, in which the correspondent noted: "I'm writing this to let you know how much I appreciated working with you. I let you get away without saying this to your face. You showed me that honesty, decency and competency pay off, not only in professionalism but in character. It was refreshing to know and work with a man who was not afraid to be directed by high ideals and the finest motivations. I regret that your kind comes along too infrequently. But when you do, it is more than just a pleasure to become acquainted. I hope our paths cross again."

The Jaycee Wives joined the brilliant and popular mayor - 80-year-old L.F.P. Curry - in sending Jay a neat, hand-written letter that pointed out:

Timer

“I am truly sorry you are leaving your city post here. You have given us a competent, professional administration; the city is the better for your service. All success in your new work. You deserve the opportunity. Sincerely, LFP Curry.”

Of course, Jay didn't tell these ardent supporters how the constant stress and fear for the livelihood of his family caused by local politics had kept his internal organs in a state of turmoil! He knew he could have been fired without reason at any time – a fate that had struck many others. And what about the legions of public employees who had “resigned under pressure” during Jay's years of service?

Ann Rich, the president of the Jaycee Wives, said in part, “The Jaycees and Wives have long admired you as one of our ‘men of action,’ and we know what frustrations you have faced in carrying out your ideas. But carry them out you did, and hopefully, the foundation on which you have built the Health Department will remain as firm after you leave. Keep up the good work and Nebraska will soon be the healthiest state in the nation. Sincerely, Independence Jaycee Wives, Ann Rich, President.”

Wow! For a public servant like Jay Arthur, receiving a letter of that kind wasn't just pleasing – it was *nirvana*!

The Kansas City Star/Times and Independence Examiner newspapers were very supportive of Timer and his public health programs. They said he was easy to approach, and that he always spoke in a practical but knowledgeable manner – not only about improving conditions, but also about doing it in a permanent and financially feasible way in order to gain the understanding and acceptance of the people.

During Jay's time on the job, he and his assistant spoke to more than 5,000 citizens in groups over noon and evening meals. They also addressed groups of nursing students and other students during the last 12 months he was there. In addition, Jay had groomed his top assistant, Wade Sterling, to take over when he left. The latter remained on the job 11 years and then retired. Later, Sterling wrote that Jay had set up such a good program that he – Wade – could follow it quite easily. (Not so, replied Jay: after all, Wade's sagacious counsel had been one of the key factors in the success of the Health Department in the first place!)

Wade had been a teacher and a realtor and had taught evening adult education classes while employed with Independence. His approach to education was highly original. On one occasion, for example, he responded to inattention in the classroom by walking into a crowded session, then vaulting to the top of a desk. He then conducted to class as if nothing out of the ordinary were occurring! As you might imagine, all eyes were glued on him – and the members of that particular class passed their realtors' exams handily.

In 1987, after Wade had retired, he described Jay Arthur's impact on his world in a moving letter: "In an atmosphere of `heavy politics,' Jay's primary challenge was to commence progress toward professionalism, improve morale, promote training for all staff members and establish rates of pay that would attract and hold trainable and teachable staff personnel. Jay accomplished these self-set goals. When Jay left Independence for a greater challenge, he left a yearly budget of \$200,000, an unheard of figure for the fledgling City department.

"This beginning was eventually responsible - many years later - for a department staff of 70, a budget of over \$1,200,000 and public health and other health funding of well over \$2,000,000 in mental, dental and other federal, state and regional grants. None of this could have occurred without the beginning Jay provided."

Our man Timer knew he was going to miss the people of Independence - to say nothing of the fishing holes he'd found through some of his staff! Jay had caught several largemouth bass that weighed in at between 3.5 and 4.5 pounds. And were they ever fighters! These hard-hitters did lots of "tail-walking" and "head-shaking," while putting the Jayster through his paces out there on the water. And in far too many cases, they prevailed . . . leaving our fishing expert to wail: "How the heck did *that* one get away?"

When he wasn't chasing the bass and the bluegill, however, Jay Arthur spent a fair amount of time at work. There he and his engineer set up six sites to collect samples that showed how air pollution was, indeed, a problem for Independence citizens. The city clearly qualified as a member of the Kansas City Metropolitan Air Pollution Control Region, and Jay's crew made that point with compelling force. As a result, backyard burning of garbage and trash was banned by the City Council in order to decrease air pollution locally.

On one occasion, Jay was asked pointedly by a Councilman representing the power of the new City Council to be patient with the new administration and not resign his post, as most other professionals had. But the situation was certainly difficult. For one thing the political chicanery verged on the criminal. (Nonetheless, Jay earnestly believed this councilman to be honest and forthright.) The charter government owned a 6-1 majority on Council when Jay arrived, but the Jackson County Democrats reportedly delivered 2000 "block votes" to turn that around to 4-3 for those who wanted the old political machine.

While he struggled to bring better health care to local residents, Timer also managed to keep up a lively interest in youth sports. Although his son Jeff had played softball as a shortstop in Columbia, the boy's baseball career began at age 11, when Jay served as the manager of an

Independence Jaycees team. His coach discovered that Jeff had a “loose arm” and could “thread a fastball through the eye of a needle” – in addition to being a good shortstop and hitter. Jeff was cautioned not to throw curves and to let the coach or Jay know if his arm hurt.

Wouldn't you know it? Soon after that warning, Jay was called by Jeff to the mound in the middle of a game. His team was leading only by a couple of runs. “My arm hurts, Dad,” he said. Timer didn't hesitate. Turning to the coach, he said, “Warm up Robbie.” Then, playing a hunch, he asked Jeff where it hurt. Jeff indicated above his left elbow. But Jeff was a *right-handed* pitcher, so the change in pitchers was canceled, and the kid easily finished and won the game.

That year, Jeff made the Jaycees' baseball all-stars and played left field for a couple of innings. Jay was disappointed because it looked as if Jeff might not pitch. But after the boy's team took the field for the last inning, the all-star coach motioned for him to come in from left field to pitch. Jeff looked up at Jay and Bell and gave a quick wave of the hand. He then strode to the mound and “dug a hole”. Tears of pride filled Jay's eyes – and they flowed even faster when the kid fanned two batters and coaxed a third to hit an easy grounder back to him. End of inning!

Rick Sutcliff – who would later star in the major leagues – also played in that all-star game. Probably already more than six feet tall and 180 pounds of power-packed muscle, Sutcliff opposed Jeff in a game that year. (It was a low-scoring, well-pitched contest, but the Jayman can't remember who prevailed.)

Years later, when Sutcliff was pitching for the Baltimore Orioles, Jay wrote him and told him about those encounters, but he received no response. Too bad. Still, nothing could dim the shining memory of that year in which Dad managed the team and son Jeff handled the major pitching chores.

Father and son, talking strategy on the mound during a big game: Was there any joy on Planet Earth quite like it?

Twenty-Eight: Westward Ho . . . To Fair Nebraska!

“In our age there is no such thing as `keeping out of politics.’ All issues are political issues.”

George Orwell

During four decades of public service, Jay Arthur never got used to being in the limelight.

He knew it was necessary, however. Like paying your federal income taxes or swallowing down a dose of castor oil to ease a stomach ache, being scrutinized by the news media was an imperative - if highly unpleasant - ingredient in any successful public health program.

But Timer didn't have to like it. And in spite of his many victories on the job in Independence, he never found a way to get comfortable on the 6 O'Clock News or on the front page of the morning newspaper. And his media misery was only compounded by the harsh partisan politics at work daily in Independence during the mid-1960s.

What if he changed jobs? Again and again he asked himself: If he took his skills to a new setting and made a fresh start, would there be less of the bitter political in-fighting that had marred his otherwise rewarding years in Harry Truman's neck of the woods?

When Timer learned that the Iowa, South Dakota and Nebraska State Health Departments were seeking executive leadership, he jumped right on the telephone and started making inquiries.

Of course, it was critical that he prevent the City of Independence Acting City Manager's Office from hearing about the possibility of his leaving - which meant that he had to take great pains to set up interviews in these three states. As it turned out, Iowa was unable to respond in time, and there was a mix up with South Dakota. As a result, he interviewed only with Nebraska.

And he got lucky!

The leadership in the Cornhusker State was quite excited about the prospect of his coming to Lincoln, and so they increased the duties, responsibilities and pay to make sure he took the job. The process took a full three months, but in October of 1967, Jay Arthur became Deputy Director of the State Health Department in Lincoln, Nebraska. And he would go on to work in that department for approximately four and a half years (over two separate stints).

His overall assessment of the Nebraska years: "Stormy times early; fun times later!"

Jay loved Lincoln – this capital city of (then) 190,000 – and he especially enjoyed walking up and down the self-proclaimed “longest divided main street in the U.S.” (aka “O” Street). But his greatest admiration was reserved for the gorgeous State of Nebraska, itself, with its rich farmland and majestic wide-open spaces. Corn, milo, wheat, herds of cattle and pens of hogs: What could you say about a cornucopia like this? Jay loved to wander the prairie, which rustled endlessly with pheasant and quail. And he *really* dug the Sandhills region of the western part of the state, with its brightly hued waterfowl, prairiefowl and its Sandhill Cranes . . . to say nothing of the myriad small lakes that punctuated the landscape. Most beautiful of all, perhaps, was the cobalt-blue, 25-mile-long Lake McConaughy – a paradise for sport fishermen in pursuit of a dozen different species.

Most of all, Jay loved Nebraska’s warm, wonderful, friendly people.

Nebraskans (as can be seen in their elected officials and appointed committees) are so fiscally conservative that, after a fashion, they can even work together as city, state and county governments. Their only U.S. State with a one-house legislature is a model of friendly cooperation, and the few Democrats in the region seem to work happily with the Republicans without blinking an eye – and this was true even back in the politically volatile 1970s! State senators don’t run as Democrat or Republican, just as a district senator.

Of course, Lincoln had its violent side as well. These days, it’s difficult to imagine the city in 1957 . . . or to picture the random murders by 21-year old Charles Starkweather and his 14-year old girl friend, Caril Ann Fugate. These two Nebraskans murdered 11 people in cold blood, with shotguns and knives. Starkweather got the electric chair and Fugate served several years in prison – even though she said she had feared for her own life from her garbage-collector boyfriend and was innocent.

Nightmarish? You bet. Like millions of other Americans, Timer sought refuge from the dark side of American life by heading for the great outdoors. In his lifetime, the Jayman owned two 14-foot runabout motorboats for fishing and water-skiing with his family. Each October, he would take a week’s vacation and go to Lake McConaughy. There, during the chill of early morning, he’d load a stick of *braunsweiger* lunchmeat and a quart of Pepsi or Coke, (or a couple of beers) into a cooler. Then he’d toss in a bag of chips, some night crawlers, some minnows, fishing rods and tackle, life jackets, extra gas, and a good book. After that, he’d motor to the center of the big lake. After killing the engine, he’d bait up, hang the lines over the side and relax. One by one, he’d peel off layers of clothing as the ever-shining sun warmed him.

No phone calls, no meetings. Such peace and quiet. Could anything mar the splendor of this idle, sun-washed hour? “Dear Lord,” he often

prayed in these sublimely restful moments, “please don’t let a fish bite!”

POW!

Wouldn’t you know it? All at once he was fighting a “lunker” for all he was worth, and wrestling the deep fighter furiously toward the boat. Say goodbye to that nap, Timer!

One October, he bought some “chub” minnows and took his heavier rods outfitted with heavy line. The stripers (rockfish) were biting! In recent years, many 40-pounders (and over) had been caught in McConaughy. Jay made some friends where he camped, which kept him out of trouble – since they quickly drank up the excess hooch in his cooler, so that he couldn’t!

After the “ice” melted away from his lips and fingers on this unforgettable day, Jay parked his boat and put out the two rods with baited hooks that were permitted under the fishing regulations. Then he made an attempt to drink his Coke, eat his chips and read his book, as in years past. *Wham! Wham! Zing!* The two rods almost went into the lake, as a school of six-to-seven-pound fish dove under his boat. Timer scrambled to his knees to grab both rods. They had crossed, however, so one line broke. Luckily, the other managed to stay in one piece.

What a heavy fish! Even with 30-pound test line, Jay knew he was doomed to watching this monster break free, then paddle merrily away, while laughing in the fisherman’s face. The adrenalin in Timer’s veins would have stunned a Missouri mule, and his heart was racing like a runaway jackhammer. His hands shook so badly that he nearly dropped the dip net. This was no joking matter: If he fell overboard, who could be sure of the outcome?

But disaster wasn’t in the cards on this day.

Somehow, Jay got the striper in the boat, then sat staring at him. He was gasping for breath, and talking to him, and thanking him for his generosity. Since the dock where his friend was staying was within a few minutes boat ride, he motored over and gave the fish to the woman who managed the scales. The brute weighed six and one-half pounds. Then Jay roared back to the same area. Within an hour, he’d caught another, even larger bruiser that weighed in at seven pounds!

He returned again to the dock and arranged to give his fish to someone else, if he should land another monster the next day. (Only one fish could be “in possession” – which made things mighty tough on a single fisherman!) The next day, he did nail another beauty of about six pounds. Gave it away. He caught one more, then drove the 300-plus miles back to Lincoln, because there was no way he could improve on his two days!

Ah, the joys of angling. Looking back, Jay can recall only two

other fishing moments in which he felt more excitement. The first occurred in August of 1963, when he caught a five-and-one-quarter-pound black bass after dark on a top-water hula-popper lure in one of the 12 ponds at Harman Taylor's place near Columbia, Missouri. When that lunker hit, Timer at first imagined that a log had been thrown into the pond, only about 10 feet from his feet. *Ker-SPLOOSH!*

If the bank hadn't been level, he would never have gotten that brute out of the drink on that eight-pound-test fishing line. The large white side of the bass shone in the moonlight, and Jay hugged him to keep him from flopping back into the water. The largest sporting fish he'd caught previously in the same pond would not have gone over two pounds. Was our friend the Jayster fired up? Do Mexicans eat jumping beans under the moonlight? Hugging the dripping bass, he tried to call seven-year-old Jeff, who was playing with Bryan Taylor over by the next pond. But poor Jay could only croak like an addled bullfrog.

The other biggest-ever fishing thrill took place in October, 1976, when the Jay-guy was trolling a red, shallow-running plug over the stern of his 14-foot runabout on Lake McConaughy. On that wild-eyed occasion, he hooked a six-and-one-quarter-pound rainbow trout and wasn't sure for 30 minutes that he would actually land him on a mere 10-pound-test line. Unlike the stripers - who contented themselves with breaking the surface and shaking their heads violently - the trout would jump high into the bright October sunlight, in an attempt to throw the lure at the boat. Again and again, Jay managed to reel the colorful, sleek lunker in close to the boat, only to have him turn and dive deeply into the blue-green waters . . . then surface several yards out and repeat the leaps and violent shaking.

When the big trout finally came in on his side, Jay held his breath. Would this Goliath of the Deep actually fit in his dip net? Yes! Once the monolith was safely landed, Timer had to fight back tears of happiness. Life was beautiful! Today that trout salutes visitors from Jay's office wall, wherever the man may be working. Actually, he tried to station him on the *living* room wall, but Bell wouldn't allow it . . . probably because she was still smarting over the fact that the meat had been removed by the taxidermist, who also received \$56 for the job. "They probably ate it," wailed Bell. "Why didn't you bring it home?"

Regardless of her disappointment, Jay considers that \$56 to be some of the finest money he ever spent.

Seven years later, in a Dale Carnegie class, Jay won his only class prize for extemporaneous speaking by relating the Saga of the Mighty Trout . . . and by demonstrating how he kept the moving boat straight by sitting on the steering wheel and guiding it with his butt. Strange but true. The excitement of that long-ago fishing victory came back and the stu-

dents caught it - and then voted his the best talk of the night.

Our pal Jay spent many days and nights camping, boating, and fishing, alone. But he also made many friends while enjoying the great outdoors. He bought an old 14-foot runabout motorboat, then taught all nine of his children and many of their friends to water-ski. He also used the craft to fish in the small Nebraska lakes and 25-mile-long Lake McConaughy in the Western Panhandle. The skills he learned later transferred to his backpacking and canoeing in the East.

Interestingly enough, Timer's Independence staff had given him a 12-gauge automatic shotgun as a going-away gift when he left in 1967. He had it re-bored and refurbished after 15 years, and it worked like new in 1995. Timer enjoys the hunt as much as any man - but he says it can't match sport fishing. Why not? It's simple. Although most hunters find it breathtakingly startling when they flush a pheasant rooster or a quail right at their feet, the excitement is over in seconds. However, a big bass, trout or striper can test your ability (and have your blood pumping wildly) for several *minutes* before you either land him or lose him. Jay, for several years, preferred fishing over any other outdoor sport. Crowds turn him off, however.

Of course, our subject also got enormous satisfaction out of playing games with his kids. The children were like small "stair-steps" during the early Lincoln years. They and their friends from both sides of the street always found fun things to do at "Jay and Bell's." Jannell established a "Lucy Psychiatry Office" in the front yard and tried to collect five cents from her patients, just like Lucy in "Peanuts." These bright kids really attracted attention - and the front yard often hosted entire conventions of the "Little People."

Bertha and her friend Julie across the street, at age 11, actually published the "N-Street Moon," after gathering news door-to-door. They sold ads and pedaled the mimeographed sheets for 10 cents an issue. The local paper was quite popular during the several weeks they published it, and they actually paid for a manual mimeograph machine they set up in Jay's basement.

Here's a good example of their excellent coverage. A friend of Bell's - an unmarried female exec with a Ph. D. who worked in the Nebraska State Department of Education - often traveled to Washington, D.C., on business. Jay and the doctor had never met. But when the "N-Street Moon" reported that "Dr. Withers went to Washington, D.C. last week; Jay Arthur also went to Washington last week," the entire street had a good laugh. (A year or two later, Jay and Ms. Withers finally met at a farewell party for one of the neighbors.)

As you might expect, the kids soon grew tired of the grueling

work required to put out a newspaper. But Jay and Bell still have a copy of the “N-Street Moon,” co-published by their daughter - who’s now a 45-year-old mother of five children, herself!

When the time came for the move, Bell proved to be surprisingly adept at the business. For starters, she handled the sale of their home in Independence with an attorney-friend’s assistance, and thus saved the 7 percent charged by realtors. The Arthurs then rented a big old house for six months upon their arrival in Lincoln. In the spring of 1968, they found and bought a rather large, older English Colonial home, located only a block from a large city park that featured a rose garden, tennis courts, soft-ball and baseball diamonds, an Olympic-sized swimming pool, and lots of open spaces.

The setting for their new lives together was magnificent, but Jay had precious little time to enjoy it. Once again, he had succeeded in “jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire!”

Some background, first. Nebraska had constructed its capitol building in the same way that it made all its capital improvements (such as buildings and roads) - by proceeding with the construction only as it obtained the monies required. For this reason, several starts and stops were necessary, in order to complete the 14-story structure with the “Sower of Seeds” on top. The four elevators were extremely small . . . even before their operators took up their posts. The story goes that one unfortunate man had died of a heart attack on the 14th Floor, and the emergency medical technicians had been forced by the smallness of the elevator to “bring him out standing up!” (No one has ever been sure whether he remained upright due to *rigor mortis* - or to mere overcrowding.)

The Monday in October when Jay first reported to work was an unforgettable moment. He arrived before the Health Department offices had opened up. When the Vital Statistics Director arrived, she invited him in for coffee. She startled our hero by asking him what he thought of Dr. Reynolds’ resignation the previous Thursday. Poor Jay, who knew nothing about the matter, did his best to appear knowledgeable and unconcerned about the sudden shift. What was going on here? Worried, he decided to find out.

When Dr. Reynolds arrived, the Jay-man sought clarification. But the good doctor was under such stress, that he simply clutched the back of his head: “Jay, I just can’t talk. Maybe when I come back from a month on my Florida vacation, I’ll be able to. But tight now, I just can’t.” He told Jay this after the latter had followed him into the men’s room, trying to get a fix on his plans.

Dr. Reynolds stayed for the Board of Health meeting on the ninth of the month, then left for four weeks of vacation. Jay became “Acting

Director of the State Health Department” within one week, and the Doctor was there for very little of that period. His secretary, who knew the ropes, left the same day the Doctor left on his vacation – never to return. How could a doctor and his secretary abandon their longtime health posts? Jay knew how. Having survived the monster-stress he’d faced as Independence Health Director, the Jay-guy understood fully why some health workers froze after a while, and could no longer bear the agony of coming to work each day. It never happened to him – but the thought did cross his mind a time or two.

Jay was able to get some secretarial help from the Personnel Unit and then located and took 27 hours of recorded minutes home to listen to and read over the next few days. He also read the written minutes. These were the “official” record of the proceedings; however, just listening to the “give and take” arguing that took place was critical to his understanding. He had news stories given to him, also. The Omaha World Herald and Lincoln Journal and Star had published several articles about the problems.

There was serious dissension among the Board of Health members. Some wanted to replace the medical director with an administrative director, such as Jay. (Iowa would take that step within a couple of years.) The wrangling on the Board became especially ugly when some members learned that one member had approached members of the public health service in Kansas City and elsewhere in an attempt to assess Jay’s competence as an executive who could effectively administer the Nebraska State Department of Health.

In his new job, Jay worked daily with the Nebraska governor’s office, and that relationship went quite smoothly. Clayton Yeutter, Governor Norbert Tieman’s liaison with the Health Department (he later became the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and International Monetary Manager for the President of the U.S.) was a joy to work with. Jay enjoyed several friendly chats with Clayton on commercial airlines between Washington and Lincoln.

In the end, it was apparently the intent of the majority of the Board that Jay serve as the Acting Director for the next 19 months, until legislation could be passed to make the position permanent for a lay administrator, rather than a medical doctor as director of health. (There were obviously a couple of “empires” in the Department that didn’t “cot-ton” to that.)

Internally, the Department was in serious conflict, with the environmental and water pollution units vying for control of the programs, and working directly and separately with political figures in federal, state and local governments. Meanwhile, Hill-Burton Hospital construction funds were influencing all other programs; the nursing program was nearly stag-

nant, and local health departments were being ignored, or had ceased to even exist. Unfortunately, the staff had little voice and little training, except in the areas of Water Pollution and Hill-Burton, because that's where the money and political pressures were in 1967!

Luckily for Jay, the operation at that time included a VIP - a health care expert who'd been temporarily assigned by the U.S. Public Health Service for the Medicare Program. John Nieman immediately sought out Jay and told him his superiors in K.C. had directed him to "provide [me] with any appropriate advice" I could use in getting on board involving the U.S. Public Health Service. John also had been in the Navy and could mix a mean Martini. He was a over six feet tall and tipped the scales at about 300 pounds. Like John, there were several others anxious to welcome Jay to Nebraska Public Health.

As a result of his research and "ear to the ground," our embattled warrior hit the ground running. He called all 22 of the directors together in one meeting and introduced himself and described his basic mode of operation. He then met with each director individually. Although he detected a strong undercurrent of animosity, most of the staffers were willing to give him a chance. One division director remained openly opposed to him, however, in spite of the clear legislative intent that had been codified in recent law. Timer was forced to make a difficult decision, after giving this director two weeks to consider how he wanted to approach the restructuring of his division. When the manager said he *couldn't* decide, Jay did it for him. And the consequences were not pleasant: The director waited until Jay was attending the Health Directors' Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., then complained to the Chairman of the Board. The latter rescinded Jay's order.

Jay received a phone call from his new acting secretary, who informed him of the rescinding action. He immediately flew home and called the Board members in for an emergency meeting. The just-departed Director of Health had placed the board table next to his huge and beautiful desk, apparently in an attempt to provide himself some much-needed power. (He probably needed all the help he could get!) Jay chose not to occupy that seat; he felt confident that he had enough personal power to carry out his desires. But he did settle in at the end of the board table, in order to chair and control the discussion of the meeting.

With his jaw set firmly, and gazing calmly at each of the nine board-members, he said: "I just returned from Washington and called you here to tell you that I will *not* be your Acting Director of Health for the next 18 months." The silence in the room was deafening. Then, the "consumer" member said to the others, "I told you this would happen if we weren't open and honest with him. We should have met with him and

told him face-to-face what we wanted to do.”

Jay went on: “I was hired by the former director, supposedly as Assistant Director. Without you, the Board, discussing your expectations with me, you assumed I would quietly provide the management and leadership you so vitally needed. I certainly know I’m capable of providing the direction this Board said it desires, but I am a single professional manager and there are nine of you. I will admit, I’ve been excited from the very beginning at the prospect of leading this agency to become the quality organization it should be – and with your full support.

“However, within the first 30 days, I was not given support in what I considered a routine internal decision, after adequate notice, in a matter that involved only the one Division Director and myself. [The Unicameral legislation mandated a Department of Pollution Control. Jay had asked the director to take over either the Pollution Control or stay as Director of Environmental Health.] A few hours later, that director saw fit to contact the Chairman of the Board, who rescinded my directive without the Chairman discussing with me. I consider that a ‘test’ and you failed. If this sort of thing happens in such a small matter, how can I count on the really tough day-to-day decisions being mine to make?

“Gentlemen and lady, I will continue as Acting Director only as long as it takes you to bring on a medical doctor as your director of health. Then, I will continue as Assistant Director of Health, the position I was hired for. And while I have your attention, I shall give you a thumbnail sketch of the challenges you and I face over the next few years in the department. As you will see, there are some extremely serious weaknesses in staff, communication, funding and organizational structure, just to touch on a few areas.”

Jay then gave them a short sketch of the 22-division management problems and positive attributes he saw. Those problems stemmed from the fact that many staffers were nearing retirement age – along with other changes that loomed directly up ahead. But the new Assistant Director told them he had already visited each of the 22 directors and reviewed and discussed their budget and plans. He said he had analyzed them to the point where he could help the new director when hired. A major problem existed due to the fact that the budgeting process, in effect, would not allow funds to be shared by any one of the divisions with any of the other 21. But if a new director could work with the division heads in a positive way, most could be salvaged. The board members were very quiet and reflective as he spoke.

Then things got better. Some members apologetically admitted that they’d been wrong and asked if Jay would accept their apology and continue as acting director. Jay refused – which was probably a mistake

influenced by his own misplaced pride. He'd had a chance to personally shape the Department the way he thought it should be, and he blew it! During the next few years, things seemed to work out. Still, an older and wiser Timer occasionally feels a bit of heartache over this event, because his relationship to the board could have been "a marriage made in heaven."

After his talk, Jay excused himself to allow the board to begin their replacement recruitment planning. He also volunteered to acquaint any applicant with the department if they so desired.

For the next two or three months, things were rather quiet, politically, although quite busy and hectic. Jay was given free rein in day-to-day administration matters, however, and his knowledge of public health - along with his basic belief in delegating responsibility to trusted, trained staff - paid off handsomely for him and the Department.

While the Board searched for a medical doctor to be the director, Jay met with the members of the board as requested, and worked closely as needed with the 22 supervisors. He also frequently explained the Department to applicants for the position of director.

The Board had a stormy time in selecting the director: they chose to ignore trained doctors in public health and hired a Dr. Thayer, an Omaha M.D. - the cousin to a politician who later became the governor and a U.S. Senator. The new director was a funny and crusty old guy, but he was like a "duck out of water." One of his major goals, it seemed, was to get Hill-Burton Hospital Funds for Omaha hospitals.

It was about this time that the public and government alike began to respond to changes in citizens' wishes in the public health sector. Demands for cleaner rivers, lakes and streams escalated rapidly, and air pollution was not to be tolerated. Concerns over noise pollution and pollution in parks and recreation facilities were changing the makeup of the governmental agencies. Environmental health was breaking away from the traditional Public Health Departments into such areas as air pollution and water pollution. In addition, entirely new areas were opening up in health planning, health facilities, community health, recreation, etc.

The Board was made up of nine persons: two M.D.s, a dentist, an osteopathic physician, an optometrist, a pharmacist, a consumer and a registered nurse. To please their constituents, Dr. Thayer would have to act circumspectly. But that simply wasn't in his character! Indeed, this physician even seemed to have little use for nurses, or medical doctors who were on the university staff. He espoused "the private practice of medicine" *ad nauseam*.

Like Governor William Donald Schaefer in Maryland (where Jay would work years later), Dr. Thayer "wanted to get it done now!" His strategy: Don't plan and never involve more than the minimum number of peo-

ple required to push a project to completion. Keep it going . . . *somewhere*. After a really enjoyable orientation period in which Dr. Thayer seemed to relish learning the ropes, the new boss began “rattling cages.”

Example: He didn’t allow talented managers or supervisors to carry out his new directions. He would “leap over” them many times, by making phone calls, setting meetings without their knowledge, and giving orders as to how the program or programs worked without knowledge of policies in place, many times. And yet he had very little real understanding of the programs, and the Department was risking audit exceptions from the Federal Government.

His coarse language also grated on the gentle ladies of the Statehouse. Though only 51, he had already seriously lost his hearing to the point that he required a hearing aid. And indeed, he told one of the more reserved secretaries that his telephone reception was so bad, it “ . . . sounded like a fart in a churn.” When he invited a “Woman of the Street” from Omaha to visit him in his office for a penicillin shot, some were very upset. He also kept a fifth of bourbon in his roll-top desk, and frequently offered it to visitors and Jay. Though mightily tempted at times, Jay nonetheless refused to imbibe.

At one point, Dr. Thayer and Jay held a meeting with the directors of Comprehensive Health Planning, Radiological Health, Division of Retardation, Environmental Health Division Director, and Jay. In the middle of the meeting, Dr. Thayer walked to his beautiful dark mahogany floor-to-ceiling cabinet, opened the door, and said, “It’s a hell of a doctor’s sink if you can’t piss in it!” He proceeded to do just that - with the door open. Even Jay was surprised . . . but he has laughed about that experience many times. Yet he couldn’t help wondering: *How did I ever get from that devout minister’s family on the little cotton farm to this?*

In spite of these grotesqueries, however, Dr. Thayer did a great job as a manager in some areas. He understood that his workers needed typewriters that typed, chairs that rolled and desks with working drawers. He also provided some comfortable staff cars and decent pay for staffers. His dislike for bureaucracy probably did a lot for the department and the State; however, it was probably *wasn’t* by his design.

The record shows clearly that in one particular area of management, Jay and Dr. Thayer achieved some unforgettable victories.

The Department had stagnated with 22 different (and mostly) small divisions (or units), each controlling its own budget and expenditures from year to year, as approved specifically by the Unicameral Legislature. Of course, Nebraska is the only State in the Union with a single-house legislature. It is called the Senate. It works surprisingly well and certainly can get things done with only 49 Senators for the state’s 1.5 mil-

lion citizens. But several of the small Health Division units wanted to keep things safely within the “status quo.” Meanwhile, some other hard-chargers who because of recent legislation and mandates wanted to “make things happen” couldn’t do so – because the budgets were approved on a two-year basis, and funds couldn’t be transferred between units without approval of the Senate Budget Committee and the governor’s office.

Dr. Thayer found this state of affairs to be ridiculous and appointed Jay and several managers (all quite new to Nebraska public health) to recommend an organizational structure that would make Nebraska Public Health what “it ought to be.” Although he probably never knew what that was, himself, he staunchly supported Jay and the other members of the study group! When they reported out, he ordered that an overhead projector be purchased and a program be pulled together. He then enthusiastically presented these near-draft recommendations to the Board, the governor’s office, citizens’ groups, the legislators and anyone else within earshot. And the board adopted his ambitious program . . . if for no other reason than to shut him up! There was little or no discussion before release to refine the approach within the department with affected divisions – not at all to Jay’s liking!

Essentially, the board agreed to keep most of the 22 units intact; however, this new organizational scheme also created four umbrella structures, called “bureaus.” Each bureau was given control over its own budget, and could move funds to the units as needed and approved by the Director and Budget Office. Although it was possible to misuse such power, Jay was never aware that it happened during his four and a half years of leadership. Nor has he seen such autonomy violated elsewhere, which tells him something important about leading others: Delegating responsibility and authority, with knowledgeable and strong oversight, works!

Under this ambitious new plan, the units were able to hire a limited number of new and qualified doctors, dentists, engineers, sanitarians, nurses, inspectors, health educators, secretaries, professional field, and laboratory staff. The Department also discovered that it needed new quarters to relieve severe cramping. And because the units now *needed* each other, they would work hard together to make it happen, and without undue delay.

So far, so good. But just when the organizational changes seemed to be gathering momentum, Dr. Thayer startled everyone by writing a series of derogatory letters about State Senators to the governor. Fed up, the Board tried to get rid of him. One Board member asked Jay “off the record” if he would contact a physician on the staff. Timer’s assignment: Find out if the doctor would agree to serve on an interim basis if they

replaced Thayer. But this physician soon spilled the beans to another Board member – and in the end, Thayer came after Jay. As you might expect, the independent-minded Arthur didn't like getting caught in the middle – and began setting the wheels in motion for a switch that would make him an employee of the Department of Social Services.

The Board member was able to stop him, however, by noting that they had enough votes to oust Thayer. Wrong! Once the handwriting was on the wall, the Jay-man read it . . . and quickly signed on as Director of Medical Assistance (Social Security Act Title 19, also known as Medicaid). He had managed to keep things together for 13 months, and an unbelievable amount of positive change had taken place, with many saying it was made possible by Jay's enthusiastic leadership. In all fairness, his working with Dr. Thayer and many others did result in many positive accomplishments.

Before the Board's interference in the admittedly shaky relationship between Jay and Dr. Thayer, the doctor had earlier written the following on Jay's evaluation:

“This man has been with the Department of Health for six months. He has done the work of six people during this period of time without the benefit of a Director of Health for the most part. He has an excellent educational background for his job and has applied it very well. I shall be frank in stating that it would be next to impossible for me as the Director of Health to function without him as my administrative assistant [sic]. I am at this time recommending him for permanent assignment to the Department with the first pay elevation commensurate with his position.”

While Jay struggled to sort out his job possibilities, life at home was picking up speed. He soon discovered that teaching the nine children to drive a car with a stick shift was a highly effective way to create some humorous memories for the scrapbook. His daughter Karen, especially, seemed to have a difficult time. Example: The driveway between Jay's home and his policeman neighbor's was cut quite deeply. When Karen tried to back out, as she insisted on doing herself, the VW van nearly rolled over – not once, but three times! Finally, Jay loudly demanded that she stop. Ablaze with frustration, she abandoned him with the car still rolling, and slammed the door until the window might have broken. Excruciating? You bet. For her part, Jannell seemed determined to find out how close she could drive the van to telephone poles along 33rd Street near Woods Park. Our hero feels sure that his hair turned gray (or fell out, or both) during these Adventures in Reckless Living.

Son Merle was also struggling a bit, it seemed. The kid resembled a fireplug with hair, and played both football and baseball with total aban-

don. Was he tough? Hey, this young man was Clint *Eastwood*-tough! But that didn't prevent him from being robbed in February of 1975. The youngster lost more than \$100 in cash and checks from his paper route that day. Later, Jay and Bell surveyed the area where he'd been attacked, and noted for the record: "There were several square yards of packed snow, showing imprints of wrestling."

The Lincoln Journal described the incident this way:

Merle had apparently been held from behind by one boy, while the other took the collection bag and ran into an alley. Merle held onto the one holding him, and may have almost subdued him. According to descriptions he gave police, the robbery took place during daylight, in a police sergeant's yard, and in a single-family neighborhood. Both youths were about 16 or 17, and one was about six feet tall. The other was shorter.

Merle wasn't frightened by the crime - only enraged. The police did find the checks along a major street about a mile away, but apparently they never solved the crime.

These weren't the only problems that Merle would face. He experimented with "substances," like most kids . . . and even grew some "grass" in the basement. Jay and Bell didn't even know what it was. Later Merle took some harder stuff and had to be hospitalized before he was able to get hold of himself. By then he'd completed about half a diploma in auto-body mechanics at the local junior college, but he had to drop out for a couple of years. Eventually he "kicked the habit" and finished the degree.

A naive, but well-meaning attempt to help kids turned out sour for Jay and Bell. Bell volunteered to work with abused children and their families under the supervision of social workers. Somehow, she convinced Jay to take in Bret, an abused 12-year-old boy who'd been in trouble with the law. He and Merle shared the same room. The boy stayed with them for about 14 months, until he was 14. He tried to act like a "toughie" . . . yet he wet the bed every night for a year, and when Jay would try and stop him from some mischief, he would cower as though he'd been hurt badly.

He was a handsome child, but very street-wise. He stole everything he could get his hands on in the house from the other kids. At school, he was accused of threatening to burn down the schoolhouse. Bell tutored him in reading and brought his reading skills from a second-grade level to sixth-grade level within a few months. This kid was so savvy he even tried to get in the bed with one of the Arthur children. At age 12 he knew the score, apparently!

The Lincoln paper in 1976 reported that Bret and two other 17-year-olds had robbed the West O Drive In Theater. Bret had been living in

a youth home operated by the State and was convicted of the armed robbery. Jay and Bell and Bret's girl friend - the mother of his child - visited him often in the minimum security penitentiary. He served his time and then traveled to Florida and Colorado and to Minnesota to avoid paying child support.

Bret later met another young lady and fathered another child in Minnesota. Apparently, she quieted him down somewhat. He tried to call Jay long-distance, collect, but after Timer refused the charges a few times, Bret never called again.

And what about the lovely Jannell? She was a really cute kid, loved to dance to Lawrence Welk music and became an excellent jitterbugger. Jay could almost keep up with her on the dance floor. Jannell also learned to play the guitar and sing, "Hey, Jude!" She would probably have liked to go into acting, but seemingly on the "spur of the moment," entered the convent, instead.

Jannell's biggest claim to fame, however, came about because she went out for the Piux X High School baseball team in her senior year with two of her girl friends. She didn't make the team, but the three of them became the first bat girls in Lincoln history. Also an "ultimate" Frank Sinatra fan, she and one of her girl friends flew to Cincinnati to see him in concert. While there, she went to a Reds game and saw Tom Seaver pitch a no-hitter. Jay had never seen a no-hitter in the majors, except on the tube.

Bertha was an outstanding entrepreneur. At one point, she phoned the Lincoln Star and signed up to deliver the morning newspaper. They wouldn't allow girls to deliver the morning route, so she told them her name was "Bob" and put her hair up under a baseball cap. Harold had given three rabbits to the kids: one each to Bertha, Jannell and Merle. But that wasn't good enough for Bertha: she wanted to breed her rabbit and bought a buck rabbit with money from her paper route. She succeeded, and the rabbits arrived in droves! Kevin Costner's famous line - "Build it, and they will come!"... apparently applied even more to rabbit hutches than to baseball parks. Jay built about 10 hutches from new 2-inch by 4-inch lumber Bertha bought. Rabbits were even burrowing into the ground, and she had about 60 of them.

Suddenly, Bertha's interest cooled, however. She'd had it up to "here" in rabbits! She sold all of them and Jay's hard-labor hutches for \$25, even though she knew - but refused to admit to herself - that the people buying planned to sell the animals for slaughter. She paid \$100 for the lumber for the hutches. She still had her dog, after all!

Joyce, at age nine, rode her bike eight miles to Jay's office, and home again, one afternoon in 95-degree weather. She wanted to give him her note to express just how badly she wanted a kitten, and how happy

she would be. Bell derided Jay, but Jay let her have the kitten, which she named "Blackjack." What else could he do? The poor girl was as red as a beet in that weather! Such commitment to any goal always swayed Jay. (Of course, Sarah had been raising a cat for some time, so now they had two cats and two dogs, but NO rabbits!)

Jeff continued to provide a lot of entertainment for Jay, Bell and the other children, who watched him play baseball and basketball until he met his match in high school basketball. His basketball junior varsity teammates went on to win the state high school championship. Jeff was about six feet tall and very good for several years, but he lacked the quickness and strength of the first 10 or 12 lads. In baseball, he continued to strike out 8-10 each game and won the majority of his games with a team with a poor win-loss record. One Lincoln Journal article Jay has stated that Jeff struck out 11 and went 2 for 3 at the plate.

The years of building a pitcher's mound and backstop, then squatting 60.5 feet from Jeff in the back yard and saying "Keep it down" paid off when Jeff was a senior in high school and pitched in the American Legion baseball program. In his heart, Jay "was always on the mound with Jeff," and died a little with a walk or two and a couple of errors. His heart swelled with each strikeout.

In one summer American Legion game against boys from Class-A Lincoln High School, Jay must have yelled to Jeff, "Keep it down," about a thousand times, Jeff said. The ball darted in and out and rose and fell so much, even the catcher had trouble holding it. When a ground ball in the 7th became the final out, Jeff had pitched a no-hitter and won 3-2.

During Spring Baseball, Jay had written the Cincinnati Reds scout and asked him to come to a game when Pat Alderson, a pitching prospect on Jeff's high school team, was to throw. The kid "could really bring it," and Jay felt he might be a prospect. The area scout, Fred Uhlman, not only came, but brought the Cincinnati Reds' Chief Scout, Joe Bolen. Jay couldn't believe his good fortune. But then Jay couldn't believe Jeff's coach: he didn't pitch Alderson, but started Jeff! The opposing pitcher? It was Mick, a former teammate of Jeff's from grade school and a Little League when they were 12, who had since moved to Omaha.

The exciting game ended at 4-2, with Jeff the winner, but it was obvious Jeff did not have the 85-mile-an-hour fastball Cincy was looking for. Both Jay and Jeff were extremely nervous, but Jeff struck out a bunch. Alderson did throw about 50 pitches for them afterward, but they said the ball didn't move the way they wanted. Jeff's pitches did. Alderson was recommended to the University of Arkansas, where he pitched for four years, graduated in finance, and then met and happily married a banker's daughter.

Karen had become a beautiful young lady and was chosen Homecoming Queen her senior year at Pius X High School. In attempting to become “competent” operating machinery, she asked Jay if she could take about five of her girl friends boat-riding in the first boat Jay bought. The motor would sometimes just quit. It had done so with Jay in Lake McConaughy in the dark, at least half a mile from shore. So, he advised her against it.

Not to worry, she said, and off they roared, laughing gaily.

Then it happened. When they were half a mile out, the motor just quit. By the time Jay hailed someone to take him out for a rescue, it had started again. Then it quit. And started again. And quit.

By now, Jay had torn out most of his nearly snow-white hair.

Kids, he told himself. Can't live with 'em . . . can't live *without* 'em!

Eventually, Karen and her friends made it back to the dock. In spite of the hassle, Jay took one look at her bright smile and repeated his favorite prayer for the thousandth time:

“Dear Lord, thank You for making me a family man!”

TWENTY-NINE: Meet Your New Medical-Assistance Administrator

“The child was diseased at birth - stricken with an hereditary ill that only the most vital men are able to shake off. I mean poverty - the most deadly and prevalent of all diseases.”

Eugene O'Neill

Say what you will about Jay Arthur: You can't deny that this man dearly loves a challenge!

And that's exactly what he found during the next two years, as he settled in to run a major federal program in Nebraska.

Although the Cornhusker State had a smaller percentage of “welfare clients” than most states, there were still some really hard-core problems to be confronted there. Thankfully, however, the landscape on which Jay's next struggles would unfold could not have been more beautiful.

Essentially, Nebraska is an agricultural state that features mile after mile of gently rolling farmland, punctuated by trees that cluster near streams, or in areas where they were planted by hand. The soil is quite fertile, and much of the state is planted in corn, milo, and much native grassland. Of course, Nebraska also contains a great deal of water - a fact that surprises most of its visitors. And finally, this state is one of the leading “feedlot” states - a region dominated by areas, whether earthen or concrete, where hogs and cattle are fattened for market.

Another interesting Nebraska fact: Two-thirds of the state's 1.5 million residents live on only one-third of its land area (the eastern section) . . . while the other third inhabits the vast prairies west of Lincoln. (Omaha and Lincoln make up most of that eastern two-thirds.) And make no mistake: This is a *big* state, with east-west travelers (and vice versa) required to cover more than 400 miles in order to move from one end of the jurisdiction to the other.

The place is *so* darn big, in fact, that thousands of western residents (those who live in Scottsbluff and beyond) have signed petitions in recent years aimed at allowing them to “secede” from the rest of the state and then join nearby Wyoming or Colorado. And Jay Arthur soon understood why: Whenever he fished the west (usually in October), he invariably

bumped into more visiting Coloradoans than native Nebraskans!

Physically charming, the great State of Nebraska is unique in another way: Its residents absolutely *bate* the thought of their governments borrowing money. Unlike most of the other 49 states, this one operates strictly on a “pay as you go” basis. Buildings and roads get built only when the money for them has already been deposited safely in the bank. And that’s precisely why the State Capitol Building took 10 years to construct. The job lasted awhile – but the graceful building remains a solid and attractive landmark on the Lincoln scene, 60 years after the last board was nailed into place.

Here, then, was the setting for Jay Arthur’s Next Marvelous Adventure. As administrator of the Social Security Law Title 19 Program, our friend Timer was responsible for planning, implementing and directing a program of medical care for welfare recipients and the medically needy. True to character, Jay’s first move after taking the reins was to invite his staff to join him in meeting the goals of the program. On his staff he had two physical medical doctors, a psychiatrist, two dentists, a nurse, several pharmacists and pharmacy students, a medical social worker, a medical claims investigator, a medical claims caseworker, several claims reviewers and an excellent secretary. And he soon realized that he would need every one of them! Why? It was simple: His survey of 4,900 nursing home patients quickly revealed that the payments for their care were “opposite to a good utilization review program dictated by Federal law.”

Not good, Jay-man!

But the process of reversing this trend began promptly, under our hero’s bold leadership.

The task would not be easy, of course – especially in cases where ethnic minorities were struggling. Although only 2 percent of Lincoln was minority (mostly Native American), Omaha actually boasted a fair percentage of African-Americans and had even elected one black State Senator. But everywhere else in the state, successful politicians had to be farmers – or else intimately familiar with process of farming – in order to get re-elected.

At a hearing Jay chaired on Medicaid in Lincoln, an Omaha inner-city black doctor faced a sobering accusation. Specifically, he was charged by “a sister” with making a false diagnosis. Her contention: The good doctor had recommended that she undergo a hysterectomy. The problem? That same doctor had removed her uterus already! This doctor had called Jay after the latter’s medical consultant had denied reimbursement for daily office visits (which were probably for venereal disease, rather than the flu). The good doctor had challenged Jay on this occasion, by snapping: “You want to tell me how to practice medicine? You want to explain to

the black people of Omaha how you deprived them of medical services?" Jay's reply, "No, I just tell you what services we can or cannot pay."

Later, federal investigators brought charges against the practitioner for seeing a patient, then calling his pharmacy on the intercom for a pre-prescription. His income during the year in question: \$240,000! He didn't stop his practice.

Meanwhile, the state's first-term governor, Norbert Tieman, a Northeast Nebraskan banker, became a *one*-term governor, political observers speculated, because he uttered eight terrible words during a speech: "I've never seen a happy farmer or rancher." Also, by the time the election came around, the senior citizen groups had assembled a rallying cry: "Governor Tieman hates old people!" How could he possibly hope to win in the face of such ghastly public relations?

But while I'm at it, Jay wants to set the record straight about Nebraska's refusal to borrow cash. Nebraska's attitude wasn't born out of poverty, but out of a kind of native stinginess. The blunt truth is that the citizenry didn't want to spend a single State dollar, if some other agency - whether federal, state or private - could be coerced into putting up the matching bucks. Still, once the Cornhuskers *did* commit themselves to spending a few dollars, they insisted on doing the job right. As a result, their medical assistance program for the poor on Medicaid or Medical Assistance ranked as one of the broadest and most liberal in the nation.

Cheerful and remarkably hard-working, the upbeat Jay Arthur felt supremely confident about his new job. And so what if the first Medical Assistance Chief in the history of Nebraska (Jay's immediate predecessor) hadn't even survived his six-month probation?

Timer refused to fret. And his determination paid off. He stayed in the job for two years - and was asked to remain when he decided to move on . . . even though he lacked in-depth knowledge of medical services at the beginning of his tenure. What he knew, he had learned from sharing offices and assisting, minimally, in public health clinics and community health nursing. But our pal Timer had something important going for him - and something that was much more important than mere medical knowledge.

In a phrase: He understood how to get people to work together and with him as a team toward the common goal of providing services to their clients and to the citizens!

Jay also had a knack for involving state and local politicians in his struggle for top-notch medical care. The governor's office was continuously involved in the battle, as was the unicameral legislature. During the first legislative session, Jay and the Directors of Social Services were called to appear before the Budget Committee nine different times! The

Administration and the Unicameral were frantic to understand and control expenditures, while also hoping to nail down the maximum amount of federal money. Federal monies required matching at some level, in addition to providing minimum services set out in federal regulations.

These appearances proved to be extremely stressful. The annual expenditures was \$32 million the first year, of which more than 50 percent consisted of federal funds. When Jay looked at the figure again, 20 years later, it had reached \$150 million annually, and was still climbing.

How tough was the political infighting on the job? This tough: The Director of Social Services, Hillard Kirby (he hired our hero) was himself fired within 30 days after Jay came on board! Nonetheless, the Jayster was sent off to a two-week training course at the University of Michigan Medical School, in order to become acquainted with Title 19 of the Social Security Act, or Medical Assistance. Bob Erskine then became acting director.

The name of this game was *Revolving Door*. Three more directors and one acting director of Social Services would be appointed during Jay's two-year stint with the Department of Social Services as Medicaid Administrator. Apparently, the governor gave only lip-service support to his directors, after appointing them without listening to the concerns of the Unicameral and the media. Jay became quite frustrated with the process of continuously orienting new directors with new staff in the process of carrying out the program. He also found it increasingly difficult to explain to them which services Nebraska had promised the Federal Government it would provide, in return for 57% of the cost.

Within a matter of weeks, Jay Arthur had become the "Travelin' Man." There were numerous trips to Washington and Kansas City; others found him in Chicago, New York, Denver, New Orleans and other locations where people were meeting to try and take some organized and standardized strategies in the Medicaid Program. What they refused to accept was, that, unlike Medicare, which was strictly a Federal Program, Medicaid was a Federal-State-Local enterprise (and in many situations, as in Nebraska, it included local funding). The States were given broad latitude in choosing which medical services they wished to provide and the fees they would pay, etc. Jay nearly wore out his Title 19 Regulations Manual, but he learned the process well.

From the very beginning of his professional career, Jay Arthur understood the vital importance of surrounding himself with the very best personnel. In Nebraska, he made sure the medical doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists and medical social workers on staff were kept informed and commended for good work. He had to take the questions and answers to national and statewide meetings, but he went with knowledge provided

by his staff and his review of the Medicaid Program. Written agreements had to be negotiated with all committees representing each (17) separate medical disciplines, and that wasn't easy. At times, there were angry dentists, pharmacists, medical doctors, chiropractors, nurses, nursing home and hospital administrators to contend with, but for the most part, they worked within the system - if one could actually call Medicaid "a system."

Explaining Jay's job was one activity that our subject thoroughly enjoyed. He traveled quite often and spoke to professional and administrative employees and health providers. He told them what the Medicaid Program was and how best to utilize it as resources for the poor. On one occasion, a team from the Department held workshops for three straight days in the northeast, central and western sections of Nebraska. This schedule required them to fly in the official Nebraska aircraft - a small twin-engine job. Jay reveled in the physical beauty of it all - flying after dark over the prairie, with the stars shining so brightly and just the sound of the engines and thinking about the next day's presentation.

Jay was also very active in observing and coaching baseball, mainly because of his son Jeff's skill as a pitcher. Timer had built a pitcher's mound and a backstop in their back yard. He also devised a "stick man" to play the part of the left- or right-handed batter, with an appropriate "knee location" mark. At first Jay would catch Jeff with just a mitt - but before very long, he found it necessary to put on the full catcher's gear - mask, chest and shin protector and cup - because the kid's fastball "darted and dipped" so much. On many Saturday and Sunday mornings, Jay would take Merle and Jeff to the local baseball park, where he would pitch to them for their batting practice and hit them grounders and fly balls. When Jeff was 15, he earned a 6-0 record with the midget American Legion, and later he pitched a no-hitter for the American Legion and was a star on his high school team.

Only recently, Jeff told Jay that he could remember clearly hearing Jay say several times during each game from the stands, "Keep the ball down, Jeff." Usually Jeff did just that - and the strategy usually paid off in strikeouts or ground balls to an infielder.

Jay coached Jeff and Merle when they were nine or ten and played on neighborhood teams. Several years later, he coached American Legion midget boys after Jeff moved up to the senior American Legion team. Jeff tried out for the University of Nebraska baseball team; however, they had no baseball facilities on campus and the four-mile bike ride (each way) from the campus to practice, was just too much. So he pitched sandlot until he went into the seminary.

“Prisons don’t rehabilitate, they don’t punish, they don’t protect, so what the hell do they do?”

Former California Governor Jerry Brown

Jeff even pitched against prison inmates inside the prison, and Jay accompanied Jeff’s team to the games. The Nebraska prison was a maximum security facility. As they passed through different areas of the complex en route to the ball field, the clanging of opening and closing gates nearly provoked feelings of panic in Jay. But Jeff didn’t seem to be affected; he struck out almost every prisoner he faced, although one player hit the baseball out of sight over the left field prison wall.

Later, when Jeff entered a seminary near Cincinnati, the young men were given a send-off party. Jay was forced to return to the car to endure one of the very few weeping sessions he’d experienced since childhood. He was happy for Jeff; however, he would miss him. He felt sure Jeff would make a good priest.

Hoping to overcome the loss of his wonderful pal, our hero threw himself into work. Jay had to study on his own time, away from the office, to understand the changes continuously being made to the Medicaid program. There wasn’t a quiet moment in which to study at work. Some of the more knotty situations involved financial sharing among the federal, state and local governments. The local people were very cordial to Jay – although they would argue vehemently when they disagreed, which was a healthy reaction and certainly a benefit to Jay. They needed to know the facts and how the state was to administer the programs . . . and *he* needed to be able to interpret the laws and regulations to get the most benefit for the citizens.

Jay’s division included a unit that processed billings from providers. At one point, Herbert Sutton (the permanent Social Services director) blatantly moved Jay’s payment processing staff to the fiscal division to justify hiring a qualified administrator for the fiscal division at a higher grade. Once that step had been accomplished, he moved the staff back under Jay. In the mid nineties, Jay was again the recipient of the reorganization of staff, which Jay believed was done strictly to raise pay grades for “yes” people. Such moves are dishonest and staff see it for exactly for what it is.

Sutton was later convicted of stealing at least \$85,000 from the state, federal and local Medicaid program, by virtue of fraud. He served one year in the Federal Penitentiary. Jay testified against him for the prosecution.

It seemed surreal to be testifying against a person he had consid-

ered a friend at one time. But hindsight told him that Herbert had been up to no good with a veterinarian from the Washington Office of Medicaid. However, Jay was so busy just trying to direct the operations of the (then) huge \$52 million program - while working with providers, county social service directors, state fiscal administrators and the feds - that he hadn't seen the situation developing.

On the very day the media broke the story that Sutton was missing and charges of fraud had been brought against him by the State Attorney General, Jay was in Central Nebraska making an unexpected speech to 150 nursing home administrators and their staffs for the director. At about 7 a.m. that morning, the director had begun trying to reach Jay at home. By 8 a.m., he was calling the office. He said "something has come up in the governor's office" and that he couldn't make the speech. He suggested Jay take a secretary with him so he could dictate while driving the 130 miles. Jay asked a few questions as to the purpose of his speech.

After that discussion, Jay knew he could make the talk without a "canned speech," so he declined to take a secretary but felt sure he'd be able to make the speech. He did deliver the talk - to a very hostile group. They were not angry at Jay, however, but at the director and the governor, who they said had lied to them. They showed Jay a huge sign that read "Governor Tieman hates old people," which they intended to display to the media. Jay asked that he be allowed to speak to the governor's office before they did so. They didn't sound as though they were conciliatory. Driving home, he heard the news on the radio about Sutton being charged and missing. Sutton wasn't captured until a year later in Denver where he was working as a "pitch man" for a carnival.

He had known Herbert since playing church league basketball against him in Columbia about 1963; Jay had nominated the man for Church Basketball League Commissioner and served on the board with him. Herbert's son played baseball in Lincoln against Jay's son, Jeff, the next summer after they arrived. Sutton, who'd been a co-manager of Jay's, had also served as the supervisor of the fiscal division of the Social Services Department. He was a likeable, extremely smooth-talking individual. After his conviction, his wife worked in Jay's department for quite some time and was a good caseworker. After serving his sentence, Sutton came in to bring his wife's forgotten desk keys and sat down and chatted with Jay about non-work-related matters as though nothing had happened.

Bob McManus earlier been appointed acting director, after Hillard Kirby was fired. After the warrant was issued for Sutton, Bob was appointed the "permanent" director by Governor Tieman. He had been the Chief

of Administrative Services for the governor, which was clearly the most powerful administrative post in the executive branch. This action indicated just how important the Social Services Department – and the issue of replacing state money with the Medical Assistance Program funds – was to state government. For Jay, it was another lesson learned. Bob was a competent and honest and completely Irish administrator from another state and city (Boston, Jay recalls). He died soon after the new governor took office.

Another administrator was brought in from near Washington to be director, just before the election. However, he was too late to smooth things over after the fiasco of the fraudulent Sutton. After the election, a good man Jay had known for some time became the director and urged Jay to change his mind and stay, but Jay wouldn't and returned to the State Health Department.

During this period, he frequently met with the State Medical Association, the State Pharmaceutical Associations, the State Chiropractic Associations, The Podiatry Association, The Dental Association, The Hospital Association and other staffs representing these and other providers under the program. Probably if he'd had time, he would have enjoyed the respect and prestige of his position!

“First learn the meaning of what you say, and then speak.”

Epictetus

“He rose without a friend, and sat down without an enemy.”

Henry Grattan

Most enjoyable for Jay were the seminars, during which there was good discussion on the pro and cons of the program and how to improve it. His two-week seminar at the University of Michigan at about the beginning of his appointment helped tremendously in “hitting the ground running.” He tried hard to make those programs more effective in a chaotic environment, in which the legislature and the governor's staff were attempting to get maximum federal dollars to replace state and local dollars, with little, if any, regard for the authenticity of the program. Yet, the auditors and program people from Kansas City and Washington were physically active in Jay's Division, where they audited the records almost constantly, or spent hours talking on the phone.

“Our doctor would never really operate unless it was necessary. He was just that way. If he didn’t need the money, he wouldn’t lay a hand on you.”

Herb Shriner, humorist.

In late February of 1969, Jay attended a national Social Services and Medicaid conference in New Orleans. The theme of the discussions was, essentially, how to get a handle on the costs of the program; these seemed to be soaring out of control. There was almost no discussion of their stated goal - shifting the sick and poor into mainstream medicine - as had been formulated and signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson at the Truman Library in 1965.

The Director of Omaha Social Services, Marion Hewett, and Jay spent a lot of time together in New Orleans. He took advantage of the locale and managed to eat his first-ever raw oysters on the half-shell. The jelly-like animals were surprisingly good. Marion, however, over-indulged and was ill for much of the week. Hot chocolate and benays were also introduced to Jay by Marion. Jay had an enjoyable time with his new pal, who seemed far less stuffy and self-important than most other administrators Jay knew.

They also attended a course for executives in data processing in California and at the University of Michigan. Marion introduced Jay to Irish Coffee in San Francisco. They rode the cable cars and really had an enjoyable and relaxing time. They walked the quiet streets from one Irish Coffee shop to another. Observing Marion, it seemed clear that successfully working as an administrator in the effervescent city and area around Omaha would require one to be “different.”

The Big Easy had been good to Jay - except for a moment when he was nearly struck and killed by a car that was burning and out of control, as he walked along a thoroughfare around the corner from Bourbon Street. The young man driving couldn’t see because of the thick smoke, which billowed everywhere when the guy opened the door. Jay’s clothing was actually touched by the car and he at first thought the driver had tried to hit him.

Bourbon Street . . . was fantastic! Jay dug the jazz and the outstanding food and the pretty “ladies” (although you could never be sure the beautiful dancers in the bars were actually of the female gender). Chicory coffee just didn’t cut it with Timer, however; the damn stuff had to be eaten with a spoon, so thick did it feel against the palate!

Jay felt quite proud of his country during the 1960s, in spite of the numerous assassinations. Even now when the colors are raised and the

Star Spangled Banner or taps are played as colors are lowered, he swells with pride and places his hand over his heart. He was deeply offended in the sixties by the burning and looting of hundreds of acres of businesses and homes in cities across the U.S. To make matters worse, many of the businesses and homes actually belonged to business owned or serving the lower income and minority people.

In May of 1970, another beautiful girl was born to Jay and Bell. They named the number-six daughter and number-eight child, Emily. She was a joy and has continued to be so over the years.

Emily also served as the “trumpet” for the ninth and last child, Carl, who also turned out to be a major winner as a child. Loquacious and effervescent, the easygoing Carl was born in 1972.

Jay Arthur’s family was now complete - along with his joy!

THIRTY: Back To Nebraska For Round Number Two

“Sickness is felt, but health not at all.”

Thomas Fuller

“Health is the thing that makes you feel that now is the best time of the year.”

Franklin Pierce Adams, American journalist,
poet, and humorous writer

According to that world-famous American novelist, Thomas Wolfe, “You can’t go home again.”

Wolfe was a terrific writer of prose – but on this particular issue, he turned out to be dead-wrong.

After two tumultuous years at Social Services, Jay returned to the Nebraska State Health Department and filled the same position he had been recruited for from Independence. And he loved the challenge. The Deputy Director position had been vacant for the full two years – almost as if the folks in state government had been waiting for his return. When it was suggested to him by a friend that the new Health Director, Dr. Hollis Shaw, thought Mr. Arthur could provide a powerful spark in the Department, Jay called him for an interview.

Dr. Shaw offered him the position and he immediately accepted.

And when he stepped into the job two weeks later, it was almost two years to the day from his departure in 1968. What followed was a “love affair” between Jay and the Health Department for the next three-plus years. Then our hero departed once again . . . this time for an opportunity that both he and Dr. Shaw knew he just couldn’t refuse. Timer and the doc have remained professional friends through all the years since – especially since the physician used to visit Jay regularly over the next seven years, after their offices turned out to be within walking distance.

As you might expect, Dr. Shaw was intent on making sure that Jay’s approach to working with Medicaid dovetailed with his own public health goals for the State Health Department. For that reason, he sent Jay to New Orleans in 1971 to a Medicaid conference. Jay drove so that he

could take his two older daughters, Karen and Bertha, who were 17 and 14 at the time. The girls stayed free in his hotel room and ate black beans and rice and had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

Another highlight occurred when two of our hero's professional acquaintances - one an African-American woman from New York City - accompanied him in sightseeing all around the Mississippi River levee in the New Orleans area. They really enjoyed experiencing the different culture there, along with their own differing cultures. On that trip they drove Jay's car with its Nebraska license plate on a single dirt road lane atop the levee. The New York lady sat in the middle between the lady from Nebraska and Jay.

Coming down the lane to meet them, was a pickup truck with two white men in it, and Jay thought, "Uh Oh!" A gun rack loomed above the rear window. Jay clearly recalled an image from a scant few years before when some civil rights workers had been found buried in a levee. However, each auto took one rut and each driver waved a friendly greeting. Jay didn't mention his concern to the ladies - but it was easy to see from their hushed demeanor that they shared his fear.

In working with Dr. Shaw, Jay learned how to involve appropriate supervisors and managers and how to communicate to the remainder of the staff in a meaningful way the decisions that were made involving those individuals' assignments and recommendations. In addition, he learned how to insulate himself from offhand criticisms from individuals who were not seated at the table. Jay and Dr. Shaw developed the "Cabinet," which included the three other Bureau Chiefs. At these meetings, they refined their thinking about decisions and analyzed the ramifications in enormous detail.

Try as he might, the Jayster was never able to emulate his mentor in one way: For the life of him, he couldn't figure out how to file important documents with the system Dr. Shaw used. The doctor had a huge desk, but never sat at it - he used it as his file! In two rows, three deep on top (and the same under the desk), he kept voluminous stacks of correspondence and documents. Barely 5 feet 4 inches tall, Dr. Shaw sat at a neat four-place, square table, located only a few feet from the door connecting to Jay and the secretarial office.

When Jay would ask about a matter, Dr. Shaw would walk over to the "filing desk," study it a few seconds, then reach in and retrieve the desired information, although it might be several months old. As far as Jay can remember, Dr. Shaw never missed a deadline imposed on them by the governor, the legislature or other outside organizations. Internally? Well, things often seemed different, because the director liked to see if a project proposal had "settled to the bottom," after being introduced by one of his

staff.

As Chief Deputy to the Director, Jay essentially wore two hats: one as Bureau Chief responsible for operations in several divisions; the other, of course, as a manager who continuously participated with Dr. Shaw and other professionals and citizen groups in administering the Department State-Wide. In reality, Jay was in a very powerful position. He remained unchanged, and except for a time shortage, was as approachable and attentive as ever. According to most reports, he also provided the same quality of leadership he'd displayed at his first governmental position in Columbia. Jay knew that the soundness of government comes from the people governed! He also understood that the ones closest to them are the staffs who travel and work with them.

Researching the records, Jay discovered that local health departments had been dynamic forces for leadership, at one time. Indeed, their nursing services, maternal and child health, and sanitation services had done a terrific job of leading the way in public health. But these units had disbanded after the U.S. Army and Air Force bases in Nebraska closed in the late 1940s. Apparently, such local health facilities had to be set up all over the U.S. to protect the health of the servicemen. In 1970, there were only four local organizations: Omaha-Douglas County, Lincoln-Lancaster County, Grand Island-Hall County, and Scottsbluff County.

The State Department of Agriculture inspected restaurants outside of those counties and cities listed above, and, some believed that they were not as professionally attuned to the central importance of environment as a key factor in overall safety in everything from food protection, to water, air, nursing services and beyond. When the State Health Department made it known that it would assist in developing new local health services, there were several requests from local governments to do so. Jay assigned that outreach to his Health Education Division.

As director of Health Education, John Hemphill and his top assistant, Fred Dolan, had both been recruited from the "public health-rich" Missouri Division of Health - and both men fully understood the nature of the services usually requested by local citizens. Along with Ms. Dale Simmons, R.N., B.S., a Nebraska-trained public health nurse, the locals received the expertise that was required to help them get going. Here Jay proved especially useful; he seemed to have a knack for setting up discussions that would allow for wide-ranging dialogue about responding to requests for help from the Health Department. The credit for the successes were mostly due to those three individuals.

The results were heartening, to say the least; in later years, Jay was thrilled to discover that by 1995, there were local health services within reach of almost every citizen of the state.

One of the Jayman's major responsibilities was to step in and fill in for the Director at any time he was absent from the office - a scenario that took place about two months out of the year. Things went very well, most of the time, and there was only one major breakdown in communication between them. In an effort to overcome it, they agreed to meet at the office on a Saturday morning and talk through their concerns. Although Jay had "butterflies" and fretted that he might be "shooting himself in the foot" by questioning a person of Dr. Shaw's status, the meeting went very well. Within two hours, the two of them understood and respected each other's positions.

Reflecting on their meeting, Jay had to ask himself: Maybe he was spending so much time and energy on the Bureau operations that he wasn't providing the support Dr. Shaw needed? Jay accepted what Dr. Shaw had said at their confab, and he learned an appreciation for just what a CEO has to shoulder.

The good doctor reminded Jay that he, Dr. Shaw, bore a heavy responsibility to the Board and to the outside public. He also agreed that Jay, basically, was to be his administrator over the entire Department, and that this arrangement required them to work as a team to accomplish the goals of the people. Such sharing of responsibilities would give Dr. Shaw time to interact with the Board of Health, the Professional Licensing Boards, the medical doctors and other health professionals clamoring for his attention - while still leaving him some time in which to address Jay's and others' concerns.

Dr. Shaw also needed to keep himself informed about legislation that was either being discussed or actively considered for introduction to the Unicameral. Because of the demands on the Director, Jay employed a very effective and efficient "lean-in" type of communication. Although he copied the good doctor on important memos and letters, he would very briefly stick his head in the door of his huge office near where Dr. Shaw maintained his small, square table and let him know that specific "matters are proceeding well," or "there are some glitches" in what we have been discussing about such items.

A few times each week, it was necessary that they sit down together and put their thoughts "on the table" for mutual benefit. This process usually required Jay - or sometimes the two of them, together - to sit in dialogue with other managers or supervisors, while devising strategies or clarifying the issues as to urgency, political impact, etc.

During this period, the Governor appointed Jay to the Nebraska State Comprehensive Health Planning Council and he served two years. In that role, he brought his knowledge of both state-wide and local public health needs as he understood them to the Council. Fortunately, he had

attended and actively participated in three weeks of Public Health Officers Management Conferences at the University of Oklahoma in 1967 and 1968 and previously one week of Communicable Disease Control in the Community - Administrative - at the Communicable Disease Center in Atlanta, Georgia.

He had also attended courses in vector control (mosquitos, flies, fleas, rodents, etc.), sewage and air pollution control, and prevention and control of food-borne and milk-borne diseases. While in Chicago as Missouri Association of Sanitarians' representative, he had received brief training in Administration of Injury Control Programming, later called Emergency Medical Management, from accidents or disasters. That training came in very handy in Nebraska, where they were setting up a state-wide communications network with "dishpans" or satellite dishes.

The Emergency Medical Services programs were set up to alert National Guard helicopters to pick up critically injured patients from anywhere in the broad (500 miles Southeast to Northwest) state, and transport them to appropriate medical facilities. The Governor also appointed Jay to serve on the Nebraska Advisory Committee to the Office of the State Fire Marshal in 1972. That appointment resulted in a real understanding of the subject of resources required for preventing fires.

In retrospect, Jay realized that his ability to face and recommend changes probably came about because of practical applications that flowed from performing his surveys of Columbia and Independence. His subsequent presentations to and dialogue with citizen groups gave him a broad and deep understanding of the "state of the art" known at that time, and also of the attitudes of the citizens. Even before Independence, his ideas and approaches to public health had already been "tested" in Columbia over the radio and by his "Sanitation Newsletter" (which he edited). The publication became popular over a wide area of the State.

Perhaps an overriding impetus was his belief that, with the tremendous technology and educational improvements the U.S. had accomplished, there shouldn't be easily preventable diseases, poverty or filth in this country's neighborhoods.

Beginning in 1962, Timer took the microphone in hand over a three-year period, while hosting a once-a-week, 15-minute local radio show. According to the pollsters, his performances received a high-listener ratio. He began bringing on guests to discuss such controversial areas as the need for passage of curbs and gutters and sewer bond issues and universal garbage and trash collection. Together, he and his guests tried to show that in order to reduce flies, rats, odors, and improve the beauty of the City, such trash and garbage collections should be paid for from general revenues. At that time there was a cost of only \$1 each month; however, it

was by voluntary request and many were not requesting. Sewer and water improvements, extremely important to protect the health of all, were generally accepted if the homeowners could finance them over long enough period.

Some of the people Jay met were quite instrumental in shaping his career, and certainly carried over to Independence and Lincoln. One such person was Larry Zimmer of KFRU Radio in Columbia. He introduced Jay on the radio show each week for about three years. Later, Larry became the University of Michigan Sports Publicity Director – before signing on as the voice of the Denver Broncos football team and the Nuggets Basketball Team.

Jay visited the Zimmers in Ann Arbor and spoke to Larry in Denver, but his pal Larry was about to go on the air, and they didn't get together. By this time, Larry was the station's sports director. In Columbia, Zimmer had great respect for Jay's knowledge and ability in the public health field, and, of course, Jay felt the same way about Larry's competence on the sports airways. Coincidentally, they later became next door neighbors in Columbia before they both left for "greener pastures."

As an executive, Jay no longer had the "luxury" of visiting the small cities and villages throughout Nebraska. However, he found he could comfortably meet and discuss the needs of Nebraskans in very practical terms. There were only small differences to understand between the worlds of Nebraska and Missouri as he had lived and worked in both the city and on the farm in both states.

One of the highlights of this period occurred when Dr. Shaw designated Jay to serve on the four-State (Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Nebraska) review panel of federal grant requests. That assignment entailed meetings in Kansas City with federal officials to clarify expectations in such reviews.

After being elected President-Elect of the Nebraska Public Health Association (which included responsibility for planning the program for the annual meeting), Jay served as President of the Association in 1972-73. He was able to provide the leadership required to "clear up" a number of knotty issues . . . mainly because of his understanding of broad aspects of public health and his ability to convey such knowledge in practical presentations. He had previously served as President-Elect and program chairman of the Missouri Association of Sanitarians in 1966-1967, before moving to Nebraska. His broad knowledge now included an understanding of social service problems in both inner cities and rural areas, based on his work in both Columbia and Independence.

Next Jay was invited to Washington to participate in citizen-needs workshops because of his positions as President-Elect and President. The

idea was to prioritize “perceived” needs of the 50 states by using the Nominal Group Technique, a process of guaranteeing that all participants’ ideas were put forth. As soon as Jay got off the plane, the workshop began and continued until 10 p.m. Tired as he was, he found new strength and stamina when he began discussing important issues facing the nation in public health. Just as he’d discovered in the Midwest, Timer soon saw that the basic problems of public health differed only in the ways they were assessed and then treated via local political processes. Jay learned that intimate citizen involvement – although sometimes quite inefficient – is necessary for positive and lasting improvements.

Our hero also felt that it was sad that some high-level and powerful politicians, after being given the authority and responsibility to provide positive leadership, sometimes failed miserably to connect competence of their administrations with citizen involvement. In such cases, the number of “less-than-satisfied” constituents simply grows and grows. Jay often asked himself: “Could it be that some of the anger shown elected officials, doctors, other health professionals, engineers, etc., can be traced back to lack of consideration of meaningful citizen involvement?”

About this time, on June 17, 1972, the break-in at the Democratic National Headquarters at the Watergate Hotel in Washington, DC occurred, and some of the Nixon administration programs were slowed badly as a result. After months of denial and unbelievable cover-ups, President Richard M. Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974. Nixon had been a good president in many ways, especially in foreign policy, and there was simply no reason on earth for him to have slipped up as he did. Jay’s melancholy take on the problem: “Apparently, power breeds power.” Timer felt some of the same gut-wrenching sorrow he’d experienced in the 1960s, when the assassinations, torching of communities, and flag-burnings were taking place.

Another challenging incident occurred about two and a half years after Jay had taken over as Deputy Director of the State Health Department. The incident began when a male registered nurse – he was then the administrator of the large Lancaster County Nursing Home – came to see Jay at the latter’s home. Jay had hired Gino Glenn while serving as Chief of Medical Assistance for the Department of Social Services. Gino was the key individual in conducting medical reviews of the 4,900 nursing home patients being financed, in part, by medical assistance. This same Gino had later proven to be a competent, if supposedly a somewhat controversial, nursing home administrator for the County.

Gino had been hired by the Lancaster County Board Representative to administer the large county nursing home. His task on this day: to see if Jay would be interested in becoming the County Social Services

Director. A couple of years before, the hard-charger had been involved in an intense discussion with a powerful board member when Jay was Chief of Medical Services. Although Jay wasn't aware of it at the time, the Board Member had been very impressed with Jay's ability to deny the county request, but handle the situation professionally and yet, politically acceptable.

Jay had little appreciation of just how difficult the administration of a county department of social services for 200,000 people could be. Gino wasn't very knowledgeable about the Social Services Department and couldn't point out the pluses and minuses of Jay accepting the position. As a result, Timer concluded: "No, Gino. Although I certainly feel honored to be considered, I believe I have the ideal job for me where I am." Yet the offer had touched him. Almost without thinking about it, Jay began paying attention to news articles and other media coverage of the troubled social services department. It had been the subject of several recent articles in the Lincoln Journal. The hook had been taken...somewhat.

It seemed that the present director was 72 years old and had resigned several months before - but had then given his superiors an open-ended departure date in order to allow the County Board of Commissioners to fill the position. Two of the top staff had applied, and, although this fact was not made public, they were apparently unacceptable to the County Board. A top candidate from Omaha had been approached, but he had declined to even let his name be submitted. A couple of other potential candidates (Jay considered them capable of the task) weren't regarded as competent enough by the Board.

Nearly six months later, Jorge Hollis, a member of the county selection committee for the Director of Social Services who'd worked with Jay previously, came to see him. This time, Jorge asked permission of Dr. Shaw to discuss the position with Jay. Shaw, of course, found out enough about the position, and felt Jay would receive proper remuneration - the kind of richly deserved dollars that he could not provide. He also knew Jay would be more challenged by the difficulties and could handle them.

Jay repeated to Jorge that he felt his present position offered him plenty of satisfaction and challenge. He figured there were about 75 persons in the county department and it was pretty much restricted to Federal and State regulations. Jorge listened attentively, while posing some questions for clarification, and then asked if he could have some time to put together a response.

Apparently, Jorge went back to the majority of the Board and reported to them and was given as much authority as they could give in such a situation to win Jay over. When he returned, he told Jay there were 142 persons in the social services department, and that it was expected to

increase by 50% within just months - when the new social services measure (Title 20) was signed into law. (The signing took place in January of 1974). Jorge further explained the difficulties confronting the Board, with two top staffers competing for the position. He also noted that the department was in almost complete disarray. The citizen groups, and especially the low-income groups and the State Merit System, were pressuring the Board to "bring in a competent person now!"

The disarray apparently caused Jay to become interested. He asked many questions, then called Gino back and made further inquiries of his perception of working for the Board "at their pleasure." When he was assured that he, Gino, was quite comfortable in working with the Board, and that with the more extensive qualifications Jay had, there shouldn't ever be a problem getting support from them, the Jay-man knew in his heart that he could correct most of the problems. He needed challenges in order to thrive!

Jay then discussed the situation in depth with Dr. Shaw and let him know he would take the position, because he felt the Health Department was in excellent condition, administratively as well as structurally and financially. He truly felt, he told Shaw, that it was just a matter of time before he would have to move on for more challenging and financial reasons. Dr. Shaw expressed a heartfelt thanks for all he had done and wished him the best. In addition, he promised to keep in touch and asked Jay to do so, as well. They agreed. Dr. Shaw visited Jay quite often at the Social Services Department and they have indeed kept in touch all these years.

Ten years after leaving the State Health Department, when Jay was in Baltimore passionately seeking a management position, Dr. Shaw wrote: "To Whom It May Concern: . . . Jay's personal attributes include: absolute integrity, good abilities at dealing with all manners of people in diverse circumstances, high degree of animation and infectious enthusiasm, systematic approach to administration, direct manner in interpersonal relations, flexibility of mind with discernment of good ideas as presented by others, cheerful and constructive mood, capacity to maintain composure under pressure...is an experienced administrator with a proven record which indicates that he will be effective in helping an administrative organization achieve its goals while personally carrying out his assigned responsibilities in a superior fashion."

In 1987, John Hemphill wrote: ". . . I have known Jay for 27 years. While with the Missouri Division of Health in 1965, I saw him develop the Independence Mo. Health Department from a limited motley array of activities into a professional organization that the City of Independence and the Mo. Division of Health could be proud of. When I began my position with

the Nebraska Department of Health in 1968, I found Jay very much in control in establishing new and progressive management techniques. Through his leadership the Department developed into a cohesive organization that was progressive and accountable. From this revitalization, designed and inspired by Jay, the Department has continued to be a vital link of state government and for the people of the State of Nebraska.”

It’s easy to see why Jay is so proud of the accomplishments that he and his fellow employees attained during this highly productive period.

It’s also easy to see why - starting in mid-January of 1974 - the Jayster joined the Lancaster County Social Services Department as their director.

Almost overnight, Timer and his peripatetic family would be launched on a brand-new adventure - while confronting a set of challenges that would test him to the max!

THIRTY-ONE: There's No Place Like Home

"People have more fun than anybody!"

Jay Arthur

Remember that glorious moment at the end of *The Wizard of Oz* . . . that moment when Dorothy awakens from a phantasmagoric nightmare to find herself repeating the same phrase over and over again:

"There's no place like home!"

It's true.

One reason our dear friend Jay Arthur didn't mind switching administrative posts in Lincoln was because . . . he *didn't have to move his large family to another state - or even another city!*

Blessedly, the Jay-man was able to take a giant step forward in his career . . . without the heartbreak and hassle of loading up yet another U-Haul truck and then driving his huge mob 9,000 miles across the American landscape.

Freed from the necessity to make like the Joads in *The Grapes of Wrath* by trekking halfway across the continent in search of work, our hero could put some serious time and energy into the two activities that ranked highest on his list of favorite past-times: fishing and boating.

Incredibly dedicated as a water-recreation instructor, Timer would eventually teach all nine of his kids (along with many of their friends) to water ski.

This was not an easy task to accomplish, mind you. Yet the Arthur kids turned out to be surprisingly proficient at the sport. Karen and Sarah achieved the vertical on their very first try, for example - and thus gained eternal fame in the Arthurian household.

But Merle, Joyce and Jeff trumped their accomplishment by quickly becoming skilled on the slalom course - a wet-ski victory that would never be duplicated by any other member of Jay's clan. Hey, did these guys have fun, or what? Most of the time, the Jayster manned the throttle. But every once in a while, when he decided to snap on the skis, himself, the rambunctious Merle would take over the Ship of State.

His first gambit, on most days, was to swerve the boat in an effort to dump Dear Old Dad!

But Jay knew how dangerous a motorboat prop could be - and he also knew of people who had been killed or maimed by kids who were

“only playing around,” so he seldom took to the water, himself.

Merle had an amazing ability to maneuver on water skis – even though he remained quite overweight from the age of 11 on. Still, the kid didn’t let this problem slow him down. He studied auto mechanics publications and worked avidly with his friends to fix automobiles. Later he switched to a “technical” high school in his senior year, then excelled in auto mechanics.

Merle’s talent for repairing engines could be seen by the time he was 14 years old. When the family’s 1972 VW van engine was “on its last legs,” the young man said cheerfully: “Dad, we can overhaul this engine easily!” He then explained how, and the decision was made to begin on the following Saturday.

But then a cold snap arrived, and on Saturday, the *high* turned out to be 8 degrees below zero! Jay owned a pair of Sears insulated coveralls, and he’d also spent a lot of time hunting in frigid weather, so he wasn’t unduly troubled by the drop in temperature.

Not so with poor Merle.

Jay was under the van removing parts in order to raise up the rear in order to drop the engine out, when he found he needed some different wrenches and called for Merle. No answer. He found the “lost” Merle in his upstairs bedroom with his head under the covers – the shivering kid was warming his feet with his sister’s electric hair dryer!

Jay just went back out and crawled under the van. But then he made the serious mistake of removing one end of the gas line without clamping it. Gas spurted into Jay’s eyes (temporarily blinding him) and into his nostrils, immediately going to his ears, where it triggered a roaring, static-like sound. He felt his way to the house where Bell led him to the sink and poured a gallon or so of clean water into his open eyes. Since it was Saturday evening, he didn’t seek medical attention . . . and he seemed to suffer no ill effects. But the incident had scared him witless!

The problems with the van remained, however. Because it was so cold, they decided to take the motor down the narrow basement stairs and work on it there. But the next week, when they were about half-finished, they became frustrated at not being able to install a critical part. Bell heard their “anguished expressions of doom,” and came to the rescue. Angrily, they informed her that a housewife with nine kids – and particularly, a housewife who had “never even changed the oil” – had no business advising them. Ignoring the two of them (as usual), the patient Bell sat down and eyeballed the repair manual – “Keeping Your Volkswagen Alive” – from cover to cover. After reading sections of it to them, she suggested a new line of attack . . . and within a few minutes, they had installed the part.

After a few more days, the ambitious overhaul was finally complet-

ed. They set the engine up on a “home-made” carrying platform and began struggling to get it back up the basement steps. After what seemed like hours, they managed to hoist it back outside. Good job, Jay-man!

There were repercussions, however. Unfortunately, a day later our hero returned from jogging in Woods Park and urinated a stream of blood. He was rushed to a specialist, who immediately put him in the hospital for two days of tests for cancer of the bladder. The tests were negative – but once again, the Jayster had been frightened within an inch of his whiskers. Afterwards, the generalist-physician said that he “wouldn’t have given a nickel” for the patient’s chances, after examining Jay. Apparently, the strain of bringing the engine out of the basement had caused the discharge. All at once, Jay Arthur could empathize with cancer victims and other friends and family members who had struggled with severe illness over the years.

In spite of the blood-scare, however, Jay found that he was quite pleased with the outcome of the “VW Adventure.” He also had to admit that Bell had a real knack for reading and following instructions. No wonder she’d earned 3.45 grade-point average to Jay’s 2.6 on the undergraduate level. Bell knew her stuff! On another occasion when he was erecting a large metal shed from a kit she’d offered her assistance. At first Jay had refused to work with her . . . but then he relented. Within a matter of minutes, she had looked at the plans, suggested a solution and the job was finished. Smart lady!

A year or so later, Merle was all set to remove the rust spots and do some welding on the 1972 VW van, preparatory to painting it. However, the two repair-whizzes had stuffed rubber insulation into the walls of the van for warmth against Nebraska winters. The welding torch set the rubber insulation afire – and they almost lost the van *and* the new garage. Thankfully, Merle put the blaze out and suffered only a few blisters on his fingers, before going on to complete the painting job.

While only 17, Merle built a very serviceable auto from three wrecks. The kid and his best friend did most of the work in Jay’s driveway and in Jay’s new 1-1/2-car garage. The car ran perfectly, and Merle made some money. Impressed, Jay loaned him some additional cash to buy a Dodge 2.2 that had been totaled in an accident. Merle straightened the frame and doors repainted it and sold it to Jay and Bell, who drove it to Baltimore and back. They then sold it for a profit, after returning.

For a while, it looked as if Merle might have a future in auto repair. But then, sadly, he became involved in heavy drugs – including coke, heroin and some uppers and downers. Later still, he was diagnosed as having bipolar mental disease. Bell believed for years that his “mental illness” was caused by his abuse of drugs.

To this day, however, Jay Arthur questions Bell’s opinion. Although

he suspects that illicit drug use can exacerbate a mental condition, it seemed quite likely to Jay that his son had been suffering from a mental health problem before the drugs made it worse. His heart went out to the young man - and his disgust and disdain for drugs (and those who peddle them) grew more pronounced with each passing year.

No life is perfect, and we're all responsible for the choices we make. Still, Timer wishes with all his heart that Merle and others like him could have been spared their agony . . . an agony that was partially the result of using drugs that were all too available to kids on the street.

THIRTY-TWO: From Frying Pan To Fire

“If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.”

John F. Kennedy, President, 1961-63

Whenever the very thoughtful and introspective Jay Arthur looks back on his years as a health care administrator, he remembers an unforgettable line from the great 19th-Century German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche:

“Whatever does not kill me only makes me stronger!”

Nietzsche, who wrote a dozen major books while struggling with a debilitating illness, understood a thing or two about standing up to adversity.

And so did our friend Timer!

Make no mistake: Although he would never step forward to toot his own horn, this man’s contribution to the health and welfare of the Nebraska citizenry during the second half of the 20th Century cannot be overstated.

Working quietly, courteously and without fanfare, the Jayman gradually planned and built what most observers would eventually describe as “the most proficient department in the entire State Social Services Network.” But when he was asked later to explain exactly how the transformation took place, he insisted on giving all the credit to those whom he’d supervised throughout the enterprise.

“Every career governmental administration should be blessed,” intoned the deeply grateful administrator, “with a decade of experience working with such dedicated and competent staff like mine at Lancaster County, Nebraska!”

To illustrate how he had overcome all sorts of obstacles en route to success, Captain Arthur was fond of telling listeners how – immediately after his acceptance of the Director’s job – his Assistant Director had written a letter of complaint to the governor, saying that Jay had “never been a social services administrator, so how could he take over the second-largest department in the State of Nebraska?”

Painful? You bet. But our subject weathered it – as he weathered the verbal attacks by another administrator who often spoke out against

his appointment during talks to community residents. She was advised to discontinue speaking adversely about internal affairs to the citizens. Jay wasn't angry about these assaults, however. He could see why some of the old-timers in the department might be disappointed . . . but he also demanded their respect, effort, and commitment to carrying out the objectives that he and his staffers would assemble together as an organization.

The Jayster endured, that's all.

And the results were worth the wait. In the end, both of the balky administrators did as he'd requested - and kept their displeasure between Jay and themselves - even if they seemed unwilling to make a full verbal commitment. Both carried out their duties efficiently and then resigned their top jobs after several productive years had passed. Jay replaced them with long-time Agency employees who had demonstrated their competence and their willingness to help reach desired team goals.

Probably the most positive, assertive and goal-oriented professional (she also remained unfailingly courteous) turned out to be Mrs. Loren Snowden, a 62-year-old doctor's widow from Washington State. She owned a master's degree in social work (MSW) and was not only knowledgeable in social work, but also sensitive to the impression the community had of the department. Jay barely had sat down in his chair when she came in and assertively demanded, "Are you going to do anything about training? I was hired eight months ago to initiate a training and development program and I haven't been given one whit of support. Unless you give me the support I need, I will be resigning as soon as possible."

Jay assured her that he was, indeed, "extremely interested" in training and quickly scheduled a full appointment to discuss her formal program plans with her. They went over them together and Jay was really pleased and excited at the depth and broadness of her training and development plan. She had already completed a questionnaire-survey aimed at finding out what the workers and supervisors regarded as their key on-the-job needs. Thoughtful and far-sighted, she'd also identified a number of community professionals who'd promised to provide the staff with critical information and skills training at little or no cost. She had also involved the the police department which had promised improved safety for the staff.

Fortunately for everyone involved, Mrs. Snowden knew which people had said they were interested in degree programs and which hoped for upward mobility by becoming supervisors or otherwise improving their job status. In the end, Jay came to count on this wonderful woman as a trusted professional and ally who would "tell it like it was," rather than merely functioning as a "yes" person. Although she was only able to stay for two years, she helped immensely in Jay's effort to establish

true “participative management.”

It wasn't long before things began to “come together” for Timer. Courses at the University helped. A University of Nebraska College of Business grant on communication resulted in a study of seven departments in State government, along with Jay's County Department of Social Services. The investigators concluded that his process of organizational communication was near the top in all aspects and the top department overall. And they were especially impressed by the way he would meet with all of his staff regularly and share written plans and programs. But these broad meetings would then be followed by confabs with his “cabinet,” which included his attorney, his training and development personnel and his deputy. Each of these execs would then meet with their unit managers (if they had them). Next the unit managers sat down with their supervisors – who then carried the word to staffers wherever appropriate.

Information and expectations easily moved down and up and laterally. Even within units, a person would be designated on a rotating basis to trade with a “peer” in another unit, so both parties could see how their counterparts performed and feed the info back to the home unit.

Standing committees in personnel, social, training, facilities and Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) were active; however, their short meetings remained focused on the problems and what could be done about them. Some of the knowledge Jay picked up through these years came from Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's PPBS (Program, Planning, and Budgeting System); some from MBO (Management By Objectives) (although both formats often seemed rather cumbersome); and POME (Problem, Objective, Method and Evaluation). The systems worked well – provided that the staffers involved also remained focused on Jay's favorite acronym for success: QQT (origin unknown) – which stands for Quality, Quantity and Timeliness, regardless of the particular program being implemented.

After nearly four decades of managing these kinds of complex systems, the Jay-man remains convinced that today's managers must be willing to juggle between human resources needs and computer technology – or we're likely to wind up with entrenched “sweat shops” in which no employee's input will be sought or accepted. If this ever happens in government, the people will be poorly served.

One of Ms. Snowden's largest contributions was her assistance to Jay in working with the “new women” of the department. The women's liberation movement was in full swing about this time, and the department included approximately 100 women who had sole responsibility for their family units. Most of Timer's supervisors were women, as were his managers and administrators and assistant director. He gained (or perhaps he

already owned?) a sincere appreciation for their competence and resilience, as demonstrated by their ability to pinpoint specifics while also remaining aware of the big picture.

In many cases, communicating with the few male staffers seemed to be more difficult. Many of them tended to withhold criticism, for example, while assuming that “it would come out in the wash” sometime. But the women in Jay’s department were different. They “shot from the hip,” and they were good shots. Of course, our hero was already well aware of the enormous ability that women could bring to most tasks. After all, he’d been watching Bell run an 11-member household – while earning a college degree on the side – for many years now!

Unfortunately, however, Mrs. Snowden’s son happened to be a high-level executive lawyer in Washington, D.C., and he wanted her to “come East” and join him. This was bad news, but even worse followed within two years, when she died of sudden heart failure. Jay never saw her again and hadn’t even been told that she had long-term coronary problems. She was a wonderful lady with loads of energy and fresh ideas. She was also assertive and knowledgeable. He says he will never forget her – and he also recognizes that he owes much of any success he has achieved to her.

Her calendar was perpetually jammed with upcoming training sessions, and she invariably started off new groups at the top, with a meeting in which Jay welcomed them and then discussed departmental expectations. Stopping gossip, improving professionalism and boosting the quality of work were three priorities with her. How the Social Service agency managed to find someone of her capability had always been a mystery to Jay. Two other training and development officers followed her – and although they lacked her stature and depth of experience and commitment to “being the best we could be,” they did great as team-members with Jay. The role-model Mrs. Snowden provided continued to guide the department throughout Jay’s career there.

What an adventure he enjoyed, during those tumultuous years! Jay says he will never forget that dramatic day on which he called all 143 employees into the auditorium, so they could “see the whites of his eyes.” There he explained – in a broad and general way – what he expected from them and what they could expect from him. He met with all 30 supervisors as a group and then individually, again, and all parties shared expectations with each other. Within the next two to three months, the staff had grown to 230, then dropped back to 190-200, where it stayed. One-hundred-eight-five were women, of which 100 were single parents.

Their families obviously made it tough on their ability to get to work during inclement weather or school closings. However, since Lincoln

didn't usually close the schools unless there was 7 inches of snow, the real culprits when it came to absenteeism were sick kids or auto troubles. Still, Jay managed to nip these problems in the bud, by encouraging to arrange for special pickups of stranded employees with four-wheel-drive autos and other transportation innovations. Attendance increased to a high level and remained so after the first three or four years. His staff attributed the increase to Jay's morale-enhancing administration - which also played a large part in reducing turnover from 33% to 13% during these highly productive years.

Even a cursory glance at the Jay-man's schedule is enough to see how caught up in meetings and conferences he remained during these hectic years.

Timer's schedule or "bleeding-to-death" day book from this era shows that he was either in conferences or meetings (or traveling back and forth) day in and day out. His staff were stationed in three city locales, along with the "County Poor Farm," located about 10 miles from town. The outgoing director stayed a few days to introduce him to the people at the farm. Basically, however, Director Jay set his own agenda from the start, due to the sharp schisms within the staff. Later, he hired a 57-year-old secretary, Halleen Williams, who began her career as the first such staffer in the RCA Central Office in New York City when she was in her teens. She was extremely precise in her typing, filing, communication - and she kept our hero tightly on schedule.

She also provided him with a veritable fountain of wisdom. On one occasion, for instance, she returned from a secretarial seminar and stood before his desk and said, "You should never have more than one-half of your work hours scheduled for meetings." Later in the day, she returned and asked politely, "When I told you shouldn't have so many meetings, did I cross the line from assertive to aggressive?"

Jay replied: "Maybe a tad, but what you said makes sense. Why do I schedule so many meetings that I can't properly prepare to make or participate in quality decisions?" Here was another memorable lesson provided by another unexpected source!

Another step forward occurred when the department produced a video tape in which Jay and his managers outlined their goals. It ran for only 25 minutes - yet managed in that brief span to thoroughly explore the agency's \$28 million program costs . . . along with Jay and his administrators explaining Medical Assistance, Income Maintenance, Social Services, the Work Incentive Program, Food Stamps and General Assistance. It was an excellent tape for the staff as well as for the public. Why more organizations don't make - or even allow - use of that form of communication has never failed to puzzle our high-flying communicator! Certainly *esprit*

de corps was enhanced by all staff and the public becoming familiar with who the top people were and just how competent they appeared.

Because Jay had several years of experience at the local level and his office was only a mile or so from the Nebraska State Capitol and the State Office Buildings, he was tapped to serve on numerous state-wide social services technical and administrative advisory committees. He also was asked to attend and represent the county at special ad hoc meetings. The County committees he served on were the City-County Health Department, Lancaster County Manor Nursing Home, County Office of Mental Retardation, County Mental Health, Office of Aging, Children' Detention Facility and City-County Personnel and supporting staff. He also assisted Indian Affairs, Planned Parenthood and the Pro-Life organization in his area.

One difficult area for administrators, presidents and governors is the schism between "Right To Life" groups, "Planned Parenthood" and other women's groups on the abortion issue. Jay believes it is wrong to abort just because a woman doesn't want the child; there are many childless couples who would dearly love to have an infant. However, the Church remains silent year after year on the related issues of vasectomies for men or the use of prophylactics, creams and other devices - while also ignoring the problem of rapes and life-threatening situations for mothers-to-be. Many unwanted pregnancies might be prevented, if only we had some leadership in these areas. (Jay believes a great number of Catholic families ignore the ban on using such controls and practice them anyway, however.)

What a good time Jay Arthur had during these hard-working years. Example: On many occasions, he and other county directors ate some enjoyable lunches at the county nursing home. This facility was very innovative. One day, they staged a "rock and roll" contests for its residents while rocking chairs and rolling a ball to each other! It was a fabulously high-morale home. The place featured wide hallways, high ceilings, and a large lawn - all of which helped to lift spirits and boost joy in living. It has since been replaced with a modern building. Just the thought of the loss of that beautiful old home is depressing.

Jay also developed a County-Wide Social Services Advisory Committee, composed of professionals and consumers. There was also an advisory committee on Protective Services for Children and Adults, Domestic Violence, Child Care Services and Emergency Clothing and Household Goods. Dedicated, interested people contributed to all these programs!

In addition, Timer's department provided the base and leadership for the Pilot Project for the new Social Services Program (Title 20 of the

Social Services Act), signed by President Ford in 1974. This was a big help in aiding the State Department to set up more effective, efficient programs statewide.

With the help and critical leadership of staff, our hero master-minded the installation of a new Information and Referral Unit to ensure that all new “walk-ins” or “phone-ins” – whether indigent or not – received accurate, timely information of services in the County or in the area.

He also worked with and served on the Community Action Committee and participated in workshops that discussed possible solutions for improving the lot of low-income citizens and minorities. Such service helped him understand his community, also. He sat in on some interviews for Aid to Dependent Children and accompanied Child Protective Service Workers to visit some of the homes. Jay was effective in doubling the size of the extremely important Child and Adult Protective Service workers in his agency without increasing the overall size of the department.

In 1981, in order to perform a professional measurement of the effectiveness of his department, he directed the staff to assist the Social Services Advisory Council to confidentially survey clients’ “perceptions of and experiences with the Social Services Office.” They also asked how the persons got to the agency, where they parked, how they were treated, how they learned of the services, if they were discriminated against, what type of housing they were in, the type of assistance they were receiving, their difficulty in obtaining assistance, etc. The results were to be tabulated by the Advisory Council and presented to Jay, the Social Services Director. Some of them were quite negative in how they viewed services being provided.

The results of the four-page, detailed questionnaire were excellent. There was an 85 percent response rate: 73 (or 19 percent) gave the department a Superior rating; 137 (or 35 percent) gave a Very Good rating; 101 (or 26 percent) gave Satisfactory and only 8 (2 percent) gave a Poor rating. Jay met with senior staff to review the results and set goals for providing more Very Good and Superior level services. The County Board was very proud of its Social Services Department, after only a short seven years after seeing it in shambles. The County Board was most supportive, sometimes at heavy political risks.

Jay was especially proud of the innovative Personnel Committee they fashioned. Although there had been a Personnel Committee for some time, it was restructured by electing staff from most floors of the department, so they would feel it was “theirs.” They reviewed all inputs from the suggestion box, gave them to Jay, and sometimes, commented on their perceptions. Timer then personally reviewed each item and shared the inputs

with all staff and had every employee initial that he or she had seen it. Knowledgeable people explored the problems and recommended corrections. The inputs were shared anonymously if highly controversial – unless the person specifically asked it to be open.

The Committee was elected on a rotating basis to keep continuity. Jay and his deputy director met with the Committee often, but usually accepted their input for study from their own elected chairperson. Partially due to this approach and some other strategies, the turnover was reduced from over 33% to just 13% per year average over nine years.

The leaders of an informal, spontaneously-formed group (which was able to bring about the ouster of the employee union by a 2-1 margin) later said this Committee and Jay's support for the concept of employee involvement and active participation was the basic reason for the vote-out.

During these strenuous times, Jay greatly enjoyed a stress-reducing activity: pheasant hunting. Alone with just his Weimaraner dog Jake, he spent a lot of annual leave time tramping around Adams, Nebraska. Although he never got the limit of three birds, he quite often managed to knock down a couple after walking for several miles over the rolling farm country. Once, when Jay downed a pheasant rooster, Jake retrieved it but set it down about 10 feet away. The rooster, of course, immediately ran off with Jake in hot pursuit!

A couple of minutes later, Jake returned and set the rooster down again – ten feet away. Once again the spooked bird took flight – with Jake tearing out behind him. As the “gray ghost” dog approached Jay the third time, however, he clamped his jaws down so hard Jay could hear the bones crunch and the pheasant's head dropped. After that, Jake got some extra “education” in the back yard on soft-mouthed retrieval of game! Jake was a very good retriever and would sometimes bring two quail back to Jay's hand after one volley of shots.

Bell seldom accompanied Jay to meetings when he asked, early on. After she agreed to go several times and then withdrew near the time to attend, Jay almost quit asking. However, he was able to get her to go to San Francisco with him, where he was scheduled to attend training in union negotiations. After a fashion, she accompanied him. A lady from work whom she knew and who had been to San Fran several times talked Bell into going. However, Bell said they must fly on separate planes; in case one crashed, the other could raise the children.

Bell took out \$100,000 trip life insurance and meticulously parceled out \$100,000 to members of her family and the children. Watching, Jay smirked. He knew the statistical chance of a plane crashing was almost insignificant. But Bell was serious. She returned home a day before Jay, right after the conference ended.

But our hero had some different ideas, and they involved Izaak Walton's favorite sport: angling. Happy as a clam on a mud flat, the Jayster went fishing on the Pacific - and promptly caught a gorgeous tuna that the experts packed with dry ice for the long trip home.

Imagine Bell's surprise when Jay walked in the door, held up his monster-catch, and barked: "Put the hamburger back in the fridge - we're doing tuna tonight!"

THIRTY-THREE: If At First You Don't Succeed . . .

“As we acquire more knowledge, things do not become more comprehensible, but more mysterious.”

Albert Schweitzer

“There are times I think I am not sure of something which I absolutely know.”

Mongkut, King of Siam

The years were passing one by one – years full of work, and hope, and laughter and love. Surrounded by his rambunctious children and assisted (while also being *corrected*) by his devoted spouse, our hero was growing slowly into the noble vocation to which his life had been called: *Public Service*.

Life was earnest; life was good. Whether he was battling a large-mouth bass in the depths of a Nebraska lake, or teaching one of his children how to properly “jump the wake” on a pair of water skis, the Jay-man was discovering the joy to be found in the smallest things – and the enormous sense of reward to be found in serving the public citizenry.

These were the golden years, the middle years . . . and they were flawed by only one nagging complaint: Jay Arthur didn't know enough!

The more he looked around him – and especially in the areas of animal science and public health – the more our friend Timer realized that he hungered for more education, more knowledge. At the tender age of 44, he had discovered that a “different beetle hides under every rock” – and that he was destined to go on lifting them for the rest of his professional career.

What he needed was more education!

If he intended to go on making management decisions far into the future, he needed to be sure they were based on specific, demonstrable knowledge – and not on habits or assumptions or mere generalizations.

It was time to go back to school.

In the fall of 1974, the Jayster made his move . . . by enrolling in a program that would eventually lead to either a master's or doctorate in business.

And although he faced a tough schedule, he really enjoyed the learning process as he went after his “MBA.”

Things got off to a good start when Jay learned that his first master's degree would help him win the MBA; as matters stood, he would need only another 24 graduate college hours. But this rosy forecast soon changed; in the end, our striver was required to complete an additional 26 hours of "core of knowledge" courses, along with the 24. The bottom line: He needed 50 hours, all told, and this meant that he would have to follow a brutal schedule for a while.

Make no mistake, however: The Jay-man *never* runs from a challenge!

For a while, after deciding on this course of action, he actually attempted to take two undergraduate courses in a single semester - while also working full-time during the day. And he made it work . . . although there were nights when he fell into bed so tired that he was unable to arrange the sheets!

After about 12 graduate college hours, the middle-aged scholar was required to "declare" his academic intentions - which meant that he was forced to relinquish the idea of earning a doctorate. After all, the guy had to keep earning Big Bucks in order to put "bread on the table" for a family of 11. Hoping against hope, he took the Graduate Management Acceptance Test (GMAT) and somehow passed it.

Jay believes he always had to study harder and longer than most other students in his college courses. Maybe it was because he truly enjoyed learning something new or something additional about a subject with which he already had some familiarity. Read it; evaluate the information; begin again: as a student, this line of attack became his mantra. Did the fact that he sometimes earned a "B" rather than an "A" have anything to do with his constant fatigue?

Maybe. Whatever the answer, it wasn't until he took three weeks' worth of vacation in half-days (this interlude allowed him to finish last course on the MBA) and nailed down an "A" that he knew he could compete with most students.

In hindsight, Jay is convinced that he owns the type of mind that continues to try and apply what he reads *as he reads* . . . and thus fails to pick up some of the specifics that most instructors look for on exams. Bell, on the other hand, seemed to have an inherent knack for retaining information . . . and she used it effectively, starting in 1976, when she decided to pursue a bachelor's degree in education. Bell could learn anywhere, and was often to be seen studying at the dining room table, even as she "held court."

As the kids passed through to go to the kitchen or bathroom or outside, she would ask about their studies, their day in school and their friends, *ad infinitum*. Jay looked on - and shook his head in wonder.

During his 128 hours of undergraduate courses, our warrior racked up a 2.61 semester grade-point average – while Bell scored a startling 3.45 out of 4.0.

It seemed to Jay the evening courses in management he took were different from those offered during the day. They offered quite a mix of students, as well. While some concentrated on general management, others pursued social work, psychology, social-psychology, sociology, finance, computer science, marketing or statistics.

These older students were very serious, but like Jay, they seemed to struggle with their introduction to the world of computer science. Still, most of them hung in there . . . like our hero, who understood that he would have to master these new tools if he hoped to hold his own in management. Somewhere in the back of his mind, Timer entertained the impractical thought that he might still gain a Secretarial Level in State Government.

Meanwhile, son Jeff continued to struggle. He'd entered the Catholic seminary in 1975 to become a priest. Jay missed him terribly – but he respected the fact that Jeff had always been a very devout young man. During the summers, Jeff worked with the other seminarians in painting houses, mowing lawns, etc., and spent very little time with his family.

In 1976, Jannell followed in her brother's footsteps and entered the convent. That was a shock, as she had always seemed so outgoing! She loved to dance, sing and had a million friends. Jay remembered the time he'd helped her memorize her lines in the play "Nail Soup," and he knew he would miss her. But once again, he shut down his feelings; his Invisible Emotional Shield was firmly in place. Jay and Bell visited Jannell . . . and it was upon that unforgettable occasion that Jay sang the first verse of Jimmie Rogers' 1933 song, "T for Texas."

This remarkable performance took place at breakfast, before about 20 novices and nuns. The song goes like this: "T for Texas; T for Tennessee; T for Thelma, the girl that made a fool out of me; I'm gonna buy me a shotgun as long as I'm tall; gonna shoot ole Thelma, just to see her jump and fall! Oddle-laydee, oddle-laydee."

An atrocity, really – and yet it always seems to get a laugh.

"Imprisonment, as it exists today, is a worse crime than any of those committed by its victims."

George Bernard Shaw, born 1856

While all of these family struggles unfolded, our subject was also

advancing in his career. One very interesting stop along the way involved the Jennie B. Harrell Detention Center – which turned out to be a great surprise and challenge, while also providing Jay with another “notch in his experience arrow.” Some background: A federal grant had been obtained by the County to use positive reinforcement for charged juvenile delinquents awaiting trial or being held as runaways, etc. Just prior to the opening of the facility, Jay was assigned the responsibility of the Center. He hired a well-qualified young man from Colorado as his director. Two and a half years later, he recommended the young man report directly to the Board.

He was ready to assume that responsibility after some battles with the sheriff's department and a group of county attorneys who said staff was too nice to young punks. In reality, the bulk of the problems were solved when unbreakable glass replaced the glass initially installed in the picture windows. Recessed special metal screws also had to be installed. From the second through the 15th year, the escape-rate stood at only 1 percent.

Jay's argument was difficult for an attorney or the sheriff to rebut. After all, the kids had not been found guilty of a crime – so why punish them? Jay's job was to hold them for any trial or other disposition, such as placement in foster homes, at Boy's Town, etc. The Center was an attractive, red brick structure that featured a one-story, open design with sunken floors, a pool table and other games. Counselors without guns or clubs would mingle with the children, who were all younger than 16.

The only lock-ups came at the end of the day. The Board saw a need to put someone in charge of initiating operations, after the completion of the construction. Jay had never been exposed to juvenile delinquents (except for the youthful rebel who lived within!). Still, he was able to rely on an advisory committee that included law enforcement, the juvenile court judge, and youth group administrators, etc. There was also a great deal of press attention. The two newspapers took opposite emotional stands on the “country club atmosphere.” The cost would have certainly increased – had the kids been “incarcerated” with round-the-clock club-carrying guards in a cell-like environment throughout.

Jay worked with a myriad of community groups during these years, including the Lincoln Information for the Elderly (an aging program); the Salvation Army's City Mission; the Veterans Office; the House of Hope Alcohol Program; the Child Guidance mental health program; the County Mental Health Center; United Way; Family Services Assn.; Juvenile Court; nursing homes and adult half-way homes. As always, he was intensely interested in locating whatever it took to pinpoint more effective and efficient methods to get the jobs done for people. He could put the need

together with the resources.

While Jay struggled to serve the public as well as he could, his son Jeff was involved in an unfortunate auto accident as a freshman at the University of Nebraska and suffered a collapsed lung and other injuries that required five days in the hospital. Bell immediately promised God she would attend mass every Saturday morning the rest of her life if He would spare Jeff. Her prayer was answered, and she does attend each Saturday . . . although Jay remains convinced that Jeff would have pulled through on his own.

“The whole religious complexion of the modern world is due to the absence from Jerusalem of a lunatic asylum.”

Havelock Ellis

Jeff was sent home from the seminary with apparent mental problems during his sixth year, with little more than two years remaining until he would have become a priest. Unfortunately, the accurate verb here is “sent”; the seminary directors provided nothing in the way of health or psychiatric recommendations. Responding, Jay asked the local priest – he represented the Bishop and counseled seminarians – about the possibility of a psychological evaluation.

The cleric announced that Jeff would never be allowed to return to the seminary if he were to be treated by a psychiatrist, so Jay and Bell sent him to a general practitioner, who found him to be in fine physical health. A father’s love knows no end, obviously, and Timer was no exception. He waited endlessly for signs of improvement in the young man, but it soon became obvious that Jeff had suffered a mental injury of some sort. All too often, it took him half a minute to answer even a simple yes-no question.

After 18 years of continuing struggle, Jeff still seems to harbor thoughts of becoming a religious worker. No one in The Church will touch him, however, since he has been hospitalized more than 10 times. On those occasions, he was usually escorted to medical care by the police. Each time, he would refuse treatment and would begin behaving in an unacceptable manner. On many occasions he had to be restrained and placed in care when he stopped taking his prescribed medicines and couldn’t rationalize what was happening to the point that he became a danger to himself or others. He was a fine fellow when on medication, but impossible to live with when not.

Jannell was also struggling, sad to say. She was brought home after just over a year in the convent, because she became overly devout and lost

her bearings. Jay and Bell had visited her during the summer where she played the guitar and the three of them sang oldies. One of Jannell's favorites was, "Hey, Jude." Jay had tears streaming down his face as they sang. In his heart, he didn't feel that his daughter authentically wanted to live in a convent - even though she would have made an excellent teaching nun.

The people in the convent were much more concerned about the impact of Jannell's sudden illness on the parents than the seminary officials had ever been. (In fact, the seminary had written the two of them off, once it was obvious that Jeff couldn't cope.) Jannell was hospitalized immediately and never had a repeat crisis, although she has struggled some. She was quite sick. Perhaps it was her mind and body's way of getting her out of the convent. The difference, Jay believes, was the positive and caring way she was treated and the honest way the convent treated the matter with Jay and Bell.

Whenever Timer looks back on this period of turmoil and struggle, his heart goes out to both of his children. He also feels a great deal of confusion - and no small amount of anger - when he asks himself why religion and madness so often seem to go hand in hand. Couldn't the Church have done a better job of understanding the psychological needs of these young people?

Bell listens and just shakes her head. Perhaps her faith is stronger? Or has she been deluded by Church rhetoric to the point that she can no longer think for herself?

Jay Arthur has stopped asking himself that very painful question. These days, he simply does his best. Living quietly behind his Invisible Shield, he endures.

THIRTY-FOUR: Go East, Middle-Aged Man!

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness.”

Mark Twain

Is Jay Arthur a proud person? Not really. Yet he glows with inner satisfaction whenever he remembers the tests he took before retiring in order to enter the private sector.

It happened in June of 1983 – after the City-County Personnel Department presented Timer with its specially designed “Performance Appraisal for Supervisors.” With a possible maximum score of 5.0 from the nine administrators, managers and supervisors reporting directly to him, our hero received a 3.85 in knowledge, a 4.39 in leadership, a 4.13 in communication skills – and a booming 4.3 in human relations. Make no mistake: Those ratings had been made under the cloak of anonymity!

The ratings gave Jay a mighty boost in morale – because they showed in black and white just how effectively he could work with a staff. Soon after this heartwarming exercise, Timer took his early retirement in order to go into private business as a management consultant in October of 1983.

When they asked him what kind of “retirement party” he wanted, the Jay-man did not hesitate: “Roast me!” And roast him, they did. Rather than being a sad occasion, the shindig had Jay and the attendees laughing until the tears streamed down their faces. (Thanks heavens for the roasting; left to his own devices, the sentimental Jay would have broken down and blubbered.)

The Lincoln Journal ran a front-page story (Sept. 30, 1983) on Jay’s resignation as director of the county social services department after almost 10 years. Two weeks later, on October 6, they ran a comprehensive feature article entitled, “Arthur’s Style Leaves Mark.” Jay raised more than a few eyebrows in the piece, by pointing out that the state’s “takeover of county social services took away the more challenging aspects of management for him.”

He was also quoted in that article as saying that he was from the southeastern Boot Heel of Missouri – and that the winds carry with them the smell, flavor, and feel of the Mississippi Delta. “That’s a good place to be from,” he said. “We didn’t have much, but then no one else did either.”

He went on to reminisce about how sore his back would get after picking cotton; about the unemployment created by the mechanical cotton pickers, and about the streams of rural families who had left for the cities. Describing how capable administrators lose their jobs through politics, he said: "I look at it with a feeling of regret. I think of how much better things could be if the professional administrators and the politicians respected one another enough to just sit down and understand what each could contribute to the success of the organization."

Why did Jay Arthur decide to move to Baltimore, in order to launch his consultancy? There were several reasons . . . not the least of which was the proximity of the world-renowned Johns Hopkins Hospital - which would become a powerful weapon, he hoped, in the battle to help several of his offspring with their mental difficulties. Bell's home was in Baltimore from 1941 to 1953 from the age of 9 through high school at The Catholic High School.

"In America there are two classes of travel: first class, and with children."

Robert Benchley 1889-1945

Looking back, Jay laughs about the wide variety of automobiles he owned during the years, as children came and came and came. (And as they moved and moved and *moved*.) When he and Bell had married in 1953, they'd each owned a 1947 Dodge four-door sedan. They sold Bell's (Jay claimed it ran worse than his - a statement which proved to be a fantasy), because otherwise, it would have been in the repair garage full-time. But Jay's car was no prize, either. Example: Once on a return trip from Missouri on U.S. Highway 50, they had to stop on the side of a steep mountain in Ohio or West Virginia while Bell held her foot on the brake.

Jay retrieved oil from the trunk and poured two quarts into its smoking innards. After the wedding, they placed the hope chest in the back seat and brought it and piles of clothing to Pocomoke City from Baltimore. They lived in a rooming house for a week before moving to a nice apartment. But then the money ran out. Unable to afford the second month's rent, they moved to a "walk-up" apartment, with steps outside and shared bath. It was very nice, though.

Next they sputtered, jerked and smoked into a used-car lot in Pocomoke City. There, they traded the 1947 Dodge - it had at least 93,000 miles on the odometer - for a 1951 two-door Ford sedan. Jay should have known Bell would later become a sales person, after she told the dealer, "That is actual mileage. No one rolled the mileage back." (The salesman

must have felt the way Jay did: If anyone turned the odometer back, he wouldn't have left it at 93,000!) By this time, of course, Bell was pregnant with Karen and they wanted to go to Niagara Falls for a delayed honeymoon. So they made the trip on a shoestring. Along the way, they stayed overnight in New York City - and ran a guy off on a crowded street who was in the middle of breaking their vent window to get into their car.

They made it to Niagara the next day and stayed there one night. After that they stopped in Montreal and enjoyed a wonderful French meal, with everyone speaking in French. But their "rooming house" turned out to be highly dubious; all night long, the flow past their door of single men and couples on the stairs never ceased!

The next day, they made it to Quebec, and managed to stay in the St. Louis Hotel, where it seemed that no one spoke English...only French. They visited the famed St. Ann de Beaupre Church, where many of the faithful had left their crutches and other supports, after apparently being healed.

They went back through Detroit to visit Bell's uncle Will, who was a manager in a General Motors jet plane factory. Jay had his first fillet mignon steak, which became his favorite (if rarely affordable) cut of beef. They stopped at a farm in Ohio where Jay's cousin lived and then completed the circuit the next day. When they arrived back in Maryland, two of the tires were so worn Jay easily touched the tubes with his fingers through the thin covering of rubber. How they made it back was a wonder to our pal the Jay-man!

They stayed in the walk-up until Bell couldn't manage the stairs before Karen's birth, then moved again. The next house was very old and was literally overrun by huge rats. In fact, Bell was resting on the couch with the infant Karen in a bassinet nearby, where she and Jay watched the rats come out from under the kitchen cabinets. One climbed into the large trash can. Jay crawled to the can with a heavy shoe and brought it down on the rat, killing him. Not to worry. There were plenty more. Eventually, the owner had an exterminator work on them some, they think.

They kept the 1951 Ford and drove it to St. Louis and to Columbia - even after Jeff came along in 1956. They were at the University of Missouri in Columbia, and Jay was working at the health department and had to drive a lot. They finally traded the Ford for a new 1957 Chevrolet station wagon just before Bertha was born. That Christmas they drove to Baltimore, where it was bitter cold, and Bertha caught pneumonia and delayed their return. The station wagon was packed with only five people, with the oldest of the three only three years old. Karen would get car-sick before they got out of Columbia, and seemed to be car sick for at least 500 of the 1000 miles each way.

When Jannell was born, they moved via the ranch's large, flat-bed truck to the ranch, while also employing the station wagon. Timer doesn't believe they tried to drive it to Baltimore . . . but they *did* take an interesting trip to Kennett from the ranch. A "beautiful" female pig weighing about 75 pounds was put into a crate in the back for the 250-mile trip. Jay didn't think the pig would do a mess for such a short trip. How wrong could one be! All were ill within 100 miles, even with the windows open and hanging their heads out. Harold kept that gilt until she was bred and had pigs. He then raised "a ton litter" - meaning that the litter weighed at least 2,000 pounds by six months of age. In fact, they weighed over a ton at five months, and Harold was understandably proud.

In 1964, they bought a Volkswagen van, with seats galore. By now there were six children, which required them to place a car-top carrier on the van. That wasn't enough, and so they were forced to buy a two-wheel trailer and cover it with a tarp. Now they were packing their stuff on *top* as well as in the trailer. They looked like the "Okies" of Dust Bowl times. For trips to Baltimore, they bought two large tents to stay in about half-way in Ohio or Indiana, depending on their travel-time. Jay and Bell stayed in the smaller tent with their smaller child and put the rest in the nine-person tent.

About 1968, the van almost "threw a rod in the motor" on the Pennsylvania Turnpike and they limped to a garage with the old vehicle grinding and sounding as if it were on its last legs. The mechanics looked the hulk over, then pointed out: "You might as well drive it the rest of the way to Baltimore, because the motor is probably ruined, anyway." They finally got the repairs made and were able to drive it back home, and they made it!

Riding along on the new I-83 from Pennsylvania to Baltimore, they crawled up the hills, then flew down them - over and over again. People would go past on the way up and Jay would pass them on the way down. Other drivers got to laughing and waving each time, and the kids would clench their fists and pump "yes" and get the drivers to honk their horns. (And especially the truckers, who loved to see all the little urchins giving them the signal, and almost always obliged by giving a long air-horn blast.)

In 1969, they bought a new Volkswagen van, but it also lasted only about four years. They then had enough room to add Emily and Carl in 1970 and 1972. Pulling the boat or trailer with a car-top carrier and 11 people was a bit of a stretch, and the problems soon began. But one incident wasn't entirely the van's fault. It happened after the starter refused to work on I-70 on a 90-plus-degree day, when they stopped to tighten the ropes on the tarp. Jay told Bell to put the van in second gear and keep her foot pressing down on the clutch, while he and the kids pushed the trailer

and van and got it rolling fast enough - at that point, she would let out the clutch.

After about the third try, bathed in sweat and with perspiration dripping from the end of his nose and even off his hair, Jay looked into the van and exploded, "You don't have the key on!" Bell responded in kind, "You didn't say to turn the key on!" The kids thought that was funny, so we pushed the van each time we stopped or left in on an incline. They probably wanted to push it some more. Jay laughed about it, also - but not for a while.

Providing transportation for slumber parties, basketball games for the kids and for entire baseball teams put lots of miles on the Volkswagens. But Jay, Bell, Karen, and Jeff were always very popular when they drove the VW van. On one occasion, Karen, who never seemed to look at anything except the road ahead, climbed in the van and drove it several blocks into a cul-de-sac before she realized the boat was hooked to it. In 1975, Jay became convinced that a camper VW van would go great with his fishing trips to Missouri and McConaughy in Western Nebraska. It was wonderful, except it couldn't stand the heavy loads, either.

The next car in their lineup was a Dodge van. Merle and Jay overhauled the engine, and Jay (with plenty of help) installed two captains' chairs, carpet, wall and ceiling panel, and a built-in bed and table. They pulled the trailer again with a lot of children. Highway safety experts would have had heart attacks if they'd known how the family traveled through those years in the "tin cups" posing as vans. With Jay being a careful driver and Bell keeping the kids "at bay" with toys, games and sleeping, etc., there weren't any problems except a couple of times when rods came loose in the Volkswagen engines. Sometimes, Bell would massage Jay's neck and shoulders and back to relax tired muscles and keep him more alert.

Jay remembers a moment in 1980, when he and his family were visiting from Nebraska and going to Ocean City, Md., with almost the entire family in a VW van. They were stuck on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge in a traffic jam for quite some time. Some lady, who obviously didn't see Jay's huge load of 11 people, invited him to a party whenever they arrived in O.C. Jay found himself listening carefully for directions to the "party" . . . and then Bell responded sweetly with a question, "What time should we be there?" The lady was not heard from again. Jay was probably disappointed, as he was an adventurous person, but he was trapped that day.

One time along the new I-55 near Sikeston, Missouri, they threw a rod. The nine of them waited five hours before a trailer-tractor hooked the VW van to a loose chain and towed them in neutral at 60-70 miles per hour for 45 miles. Jay's foot was nervously touching the brake in the pitch-

black darkness until they came to a stop at a restaurant where they found a phone. Jay's dad, Harold, came and picked them up. The car was then towed to another town where a new motor was installed. Jay's "second car" during much of this period was a Nash Rambler which he painted what he thought was gold, but which turned out to be an ugly yellow.

The Rambler's door refused to stay closed sometimes and would swing open on curves. Jay bought a 125-Honda motorcycle to help reduce the problem, but Bertha took that over soon. But then Merle got into a near-death situation with his 350-Honda. He wanted nothing further to do with that cycle and sort of "dumped" it on Jay. Great, except that just about the time Jay became comfortable with it, Bertha talked him into selling it to her! She then rode it and moved 400 miles west to Scottsbluff on it, with boots, jacket and all! Jay watched her ride into a 40-mile-per-hour westerly wind. She certainly had courage. No more motorcycles for Jay.

Jay will say to people riding with him, when following a driver who turns a corner extremely slowly, "They must have eggs on the seat." In those moments, he's remembering his dad . . . and how Harold would stack buckets, baskets and boxes of eggs in the floor and on the pickup seat. Then, he really did have to go slowly around corners. Even so, one time, he got to Kennett and somehow spilled a bucket of about 72 eggs that broke and messed up several dozen other eggs. That was the food money. Maybe Jay should have filled his VW van with eggs and kids and have gone throughout the neighborhoods selling eggs! (They might have made some money, which they could certainly have used.)

Jay was enjoying fishing in Western Nebraska's Lake McConaughy. In October, 1976, he had caught his first "trophy fish" since the five and one-fourth-pound large mouth bass and the (2) two and one-half-pound crappie(S) he and the family ate back in Columbia, Mo., in the early '60s. It was a six and one-fourth-pound rainbow trout, and this time it would not get away! The 32-inch fighting beauty was mounted on a black-satin covered board and hung on his office wall. He was given a Certificate as Master Angler. Appeasing Bell, somewhat, was a four-pound rainbow, which they ate.

Another very healthy sport Jay enjoyed from the beginning of November to the end of December every year was pheasant hunting with his Weimaraner, Jake. His next-door neighbor, John Howard, who bred, trained and hunted his English Setters, helped him train Jake to point when he was less than six months old. The first two to three hunting seasons, Jake was "trying his sea legs," but then he came on strong. He became a good pointer and retriever - as good as John's setters, Jay thought. What Jay especially liked was the tramping through the swampy fields in the Adams area during the week when there were no other hunters around.

“When I take a gun in hand, the safest place for a pheasant is just opposite the muzzle.”

Sydney Smith, 1771-1845, English clergyman, essayist, and wit.

Jay would usually shoot up to two roosters, but never his limit of three. He was like that with fishing, also. He like the outdoors too much to hunt for food to the point of reducing his enjoyment of the sport. Besides, there were better things than carrying heavy roosters on one's back and having to clean them when arriving home! Just watching Jake and seeing where the quail flew when their noisy “motors” erupted from under his feet was thrill enough for the Jayster. Perhaps good old Sydney Smith was watching him years before Jay was born. (There were times when Jay believed there was a connection.)

Whenever Jay Arthur looks back on his life as a whole, he can't help wondering if fishing and hunting and hiking and canoeing actually saved his skin. On how many hundreds of occasions did he soothe his tormented soul by paddling along a silent, glassy river . . . or hiking along a leafy, Appalachian trail?

For our man Timer, the “Great Outdoors” was far more than mere “recreation.” It was nothing less than a way of communicating with the Great Beyond, a way of giving praise to the ineffable beauty of the natural world.

THIRTY-FIVE: Battling For New Business In Baltimore

“Do other men, for they would do you; that’s the true business precept.”

Charles Dickens, 1812-1870

As Jay advanced in his business management master’s program, he became excited about the human behavior aspects of managing (or helping others to manage) people. But it was also true that the Social Services Department was humming smoothly along – and the big guy needed to make more money! All things considered, our valiant protagonist saw this as an opportune time to take early retirement – since the State was engaged in taking over the county social services departments, thus allowing county employees in the program to withdraw their retirements in lump sums.

By now Jay had completed his research on “Improving efficiency and effectiveness of government by improving attendance.” He’d also studied the effects of three years of his own attendance program and saw that it had reduced charged sick leave by \$119,000 among fewer than 200 subjects in the study over the three-year study period – while at the same time reducing tardiness and turnover. Could Jay make a significant difference in the success of an organization in just a few months to one to two years? Unlike Charles Dickens (quoted above), our hero believed that people in business could work together without injury to each other’s goals if they truly understood the concepts and committed themselves to that philosophy.

Jay received approval from the county board to do business consulting if it didn’t conflict with his job while he was working as director. The agreement with a large skilled nursing home in Lincoln, was that he would set up a program for them – after analyzing attendance and attitudes statistics. He would then provide supervisory training of all staff.

If the program showed a reduction of costs of aides, because the supervisors in conjunction with the nurse aides came to work more often, the payroll savings would be split 50-50 between the nursing home and Jay. Jay made \$12,500 in about one and a half years on a \$25,000 payroll reduction. He did this on his own time with only one assistant who he paid from his 50 percent. Because the management believed that the training alone improved the efficiency and the attitudes of all employees, the

nursing home was delighted to pay it.

Jay began to foster beliefs that he could take early retirement and move to Baltimore. In Baltimore, he felt Bell would then be near her family – so that they could separate, which he felt was her unspoken desire. In addition, Jeff would also be able to obtain some professional mental health services, and maybe the other family members could obtain support in a number of areas, including jobs and education, among others.

In July, the 85-county social service departments for the 93 counties had become local offices of the Nebraska State Social Services Department. The change began in friendly enough fashion, since it seemed certain to save the counties untold millions in their contributions for Medicaid. However, there were also some shifts involved in the power structure. Some counties were combined, requiring moves or at least longer drives for former county employees, who would now be working for the state.

In Jay's case, the state director refused to let him work on his own time in his consulting work – even though this step had been previously approved by the county board. Why not? As the director put it: "We need all your energy for directing the second-largest social services office in the state." But Jay had already lost \$3,000 from his pay because the county could no longer use his services for "non-state" work. He felt this functionary was definitely attempting to pay off a political debt by moving Jay out or allowing one or more of her staff to gain power by "supervising" the office from the Central Office. (He says this type of power play is typical of newly elected governors, each time as the dreaded "domino effect" begins to unfold. And this scenario – the newly elected governor or other leader insists on his building his or her own team – did not change with the inauguration of Gov. Bob Kerrey, who later became a U.S. Senator.)

The new state director liked to describe how she had pulled herself up "by her bootstraps" – while rising from being a recipient of Lancaster County General Welfare Assistance to becoming a top state attorney and then a director of the state social services department. Listening to her, Jay couldn't help wondering if perhaps she had a small "need" to exert power over a segment of government that had humbled her earlier in life – even if unintentionally. He feels sometimes a law degree vaults over barriers that shouldn't occur in government. There is little relationship in "knowing and administering" the law and managing a wide spectrum of staff and programs. He believes people trained in law sometimes have difficulty in determining just WHO their clients are...their employees, their bosses or the citizens who pay taxes for the services. He worked for some, supervised several and was peers to some. In his opinion, without special training and development above the doctor of jurisprudence, there

is an incompetent heading up that office in many situations.

The show of power undoubtedly affected some of the staff below the state director. These functionaries may have seen a chance to further their own authority and perhaps increase their pay by asking that Jay's office be splintered and the slivers then dispersed elsewhere in the state-wide office. That happened later, and perhaps it was needed. But the results were often ludicrous. As it turned out, a deputy from the state office was even "assigned the specific task of rearranging the times of Jay's staff meetings to fall into line with the central office meetings to enhance communication." What a laugh! All this step accomplished was to interfere with the Lancaster Office communication in what was widely considered to be the highest-quality, most proficient social service office in Nebraska in services and communication.

Jay also noted that a number of long-term executives from the state social services staff were being pushed out or moved around the state. The news media, circling like the turkey buzzards on the Ozark Mountain ranch that Jay had once managed, began running even routine staff movements to the front page. These tall tales were so crowded with conflicting quotes that it soon became impossible to be sure of the events that were transpiring!

For his part, the Jayster was simply hoping to get things in line, so that he could ease out and continue his business on a full-time basis and move it to Baltimore. He couldn't afford the notoriety of a "battle" with the director locally - since he needed to get his business "off the ground" in Lincoln and Omaha.

Jay went to an attorney on Governor Bob Kerrey's staff and discussed his concerns. He asked if he could be assured that he could resign his position and go into private business - with the guarantee that the move would be met by factual (as opposed to "political") statements about Jay. The attorney said he would talk to Kerrey and that he, personally, would assure the governor (on the basis of his personal knowledge) that Jay had truly been an outstanding public servant for 25 years - with 16 of them having unfolded in Nebraska. A day later, the staff attorney called Jay and said everything was in order. He told Jay the type of press release the governor wanted him to craft, so that it would be non-inflammatory. Timer provided the document in advance and made the announcement that he was retiring on or about November 1, 1983, to go into private consulting business in Nebraska and put his MBA and his knowledge about effectively managing organizations to work.

Jay spent literally hundreds of hours learning to operate an old Columbia 80-88 personal computer with integrated word processing, database and spreadsheet with graphs. This time was very well spent, because

he soon gained the ability to write duplicate letters, and to show results statistically as well as graphically. He could then print out the results for the entire organization or by divisions or departments - a key step that helped him clearly explain the results of his studies of organizational data and in some instances obtain contracts.

Later, as he went back into management, it was critical that he be "computer literate" in this manner to demonstrate to supervisors and subordinates alike where technological solutions could be found. Operating an 80-88, in comparison to a 585 Compact Bell purchased in 1995, was like pedaling a bicycle, compared to several years of racing at Indy! However, it worked for him because speed was not the critical factor; understanding the management challenges he faced was actually far more important.

After many years of management experience, our wise warrior has learned that it's always a mistake for managers to allow themselves to "tie their umbilical cords" to a computer. All too often, managers become obsessed with the smokescreen of speed and data as ends in themselves. Sometimes, techno-gimmicks merely allow executives to sacrifice scope and depth of professional thinking - and problems remain unsolved, as a result.

For managers everywhere, our pal Timer offers - free of charge! - the mantra that has assured his own success: "Don't rely on technology to get the job done . . . because we're managing *people* day in and day out, and not machines!"

THIRTY-SIX: Back To The Business Of Government

“It is only by paying one’s bills that one can hope to live in the memory of the commercial classes.”

Oscar Wilde, 1856-1900, British poet, and dramatist

In 1983, Jay and Bell took the plunge. They exchanged the secure, orderly world of government service . . . for the wild roller coaster ride that was the private sector!

They were both well prepared for the leap, after joining a consulting firm and attending training classes in business consulting. Bell had stopped teaching after five years to join in the corporation; her job would be to market Jay’s consultation with business. Bell had an extremely sharp mind and could work through adverse situations, although she’d never supervised a business before. Not to worry, however: Running a household of 11 while balancing a college education and volunteer services had prepared this lady for many things!

Bell also owned another enormous asset: She knew how to cruise past secretaries to reach top executives and nail down appointments for them in Omaha and later in Baltimore. But Jay always struggled badly in gaining interviews with decision-makers. “If I can squeeze flesh,” he told himself, “I know I’ll be okay. But telephones and I just don’t do well together!”

Still, their system worked quite well for a time. For starters, they discovered that they could land 10 interviews out of every 25 calls Bell made. Eventually, they would obtain one or two contracts from these 10 interviews. (Early on, of course, these were *verbal* contracts – at no charge – which simply provided for self-training and refining of their business.) Although it was a little easier to win non-paying contracts, these “freebie” agreements were still challenging – because they required the two partners to contract with public or private sector officials who would then be required to spend valuable time and energy, along with opening their books to the newcomers.

After several months of frustration, Timer discovered that he was too often settling for interviews with managers who lacked the authority to make the decision to contract for his services. Jay learned too late that top managers are usually interested in consultation to meet *their own personal goals and objectives of the organization*. He found this to be true, whether it be in government agencies or among for-profit organizations.

The basic goal was *not* to increase attendance or improve morale - although Jay's program would do that.

Jay's biggest mistake during this period was his failure to focus on outcomes that directly affected the success of the school system, the banks, manufacturing companies or county governments. All too often, he was unable to reach the executive who was intertwined with the success - and who had the authority and took the risks to make the decision in contracting with Jay's company. This slippery concept wasn't really grasped by our hero until he became an associate consultant in Baltimore and surrounding counties and cities. Then he became involved in developing and obtaining critical information through specifically designed questionnaires. Using a custom-crafted database designed by his pal John Howard in Lincoln, he was at last able to provide valuable and useful information for managers.

They were administered at every level of staffing, which resulted in their being able to provide a clear picture of goals that could be enhanced or reached through training and staff development. Such training and staff development and communication had to focus on the concept of team-setting of goals and objectives, involving employees at all levels.

In Lincoln and Omaha, they began to demonstrate how to reduce costs and improve efficiency and the success of the organization through improving attendance at the work place. It was an enticing approach - and a new approach for many managers. Jay did free work for a bank and the some work in the Lincoln schools and at a manufacturing company to perfect his process. Jay and Bell were also able to demonstrate their work in Omaha and Council Bluffs, Iowa, school systems, and with a large bank in Omaha. They were given free access to the attendance data, costs, etc., and really learned a great deal about the control of absenteeism and the costs resulting from the lack of a successfully managed program.

Well over 100 interviews (most obtained by Bell) were gained in Lincoln, Omaha, Council Bluffs, Washington, Baltimore and Hershey, Pa., with insurance companies, hospitals, food manufacturers, Pepsi-Cola, plastics manufacture, direct-mailing companies, a computer service company, a laboratory, Omaha Public Power, Chamber of Commerce, large nursing home corporations, Kellogg Cereal, Omaha Metro Utilities District, the Defense Corp.; packaging companies of all types, large and small banks, department stores, cleaning services, colleges, manufacturers of many types, including the huge Westinghouse Corp.; large clothing stores, hospitals, produce companies, insurance companies, beauty supplies corp., distilleries, beer companies, Marriott Corp., Holiday Inn, other hotels, a nursing home assn., printing companies, steel companies, radio corp., city,

county and state governments, and others.

Another 20 or so were interviewed when he worked with Walter L. Marshall Associates, STAR and Paula Singer Associates consulting firms. The size of these organizations ranged from 70,000 state employees or 8,000 at Westinghouse to less than 50 at one clothing manufacturer. Looking back, Jay suspects it would have just been a matter of time until they strung together contracts, but he doesn't believe in "crying over spilt milk."

Quite a few of the above outfits have merged with other companies or gone into bankruptcy. However, there were also many viable companies. If Jay had been "bankrolled" enough to carry his family through another year after coming to Baltimore, he feels certain they would have been off to the races. Interestingly enough, Bendix turned out to have been his most successful sales call - after the hard-charging Bell managed to get an initial appointment for him.

Next the Jayman associated with Walter L. Marshall Associates Consulting of Bethesda, Md., on a contract that eventually included Mash's Hams, the Charles County government, the Washington Bank in Hagerstown, and the Washington County government. They provided a classification analysis - a step that was adopted in Charles County and at Washington Bank - along with the Washington County Government in Hagerstown and at Mash's Hams. Timer also worked with Paula Singer Associates in Frederick County on classification.

Later, he would spend nearly two years with Strategies, Tactics, and Results Associates, Inc. (STAR) - a minority-owned business firm. Jay was most comfortable working with minorities, and they seemed to be equally at ease with him. Sometimes working alone and sometimes with another associate, our hero would provide training and development for a rapidly growing audio company, a booming bindery company, and a number of one- and two-day contracts - before returning to employment in management.

While the Lincoln and Omaha and area interviews were occurring, the Arthurs were busy having their home spruced up to sell. They had rented a house in Baltimore County, starting June 1, 1984. The housing appreciation in Lincoln had been tremendous - to the point that their home, purchased for \$18,000 in 1968, was appraised for \$67,000 and placed on the market at \$65,000.

However, the Lincoln housing seller's market became depressed in 1984. After two frustrating fall-throughs in which buyers failed to obtain financial approval, the house sold for \$57,500, a year after they moved to Baltimore. Another surprise occurred when seven of the children decided they'd move with Bell and Jay. (The couple had expected only five to

make the trip. Sarah stayed in Lincoln and Bertha – along with her husband and one son, Daniel – remained in Omaha.)

Most of the seven were living away from home in Lincoln, but brought their household goods back to their home to have them moved in the family moving van. The neat little 3-bedroom house in Baltimore was packed to the gills in the basement and all along the one floor. And then sure enough – the sewer backed up, and a lot of clothing and other supplies were lost!

In the end the moving van was so packed that they couldn't get the retractable, 30-foot metal ladder in it. It was given to the neighborhood to be passed around. (As late as 1996, it was still in use on at least two of the streets.) What a convoy! The parade included the Dodge van, the VW Rabbit, Jeff's black Chevy, Joyce's car (filled with her two-month-old daughter and Emily helping care for her), and Merle's car. There were some temporary breakdowns and lost travelers, but they made it.

In Baltimore, they wound up paying rent plus payments on an empty house in Lincoln. Bell found employment with a computer company and could no longer do her excellent job of making appointments for Jay. Too bad. All too soon, the Jayster's prospects seemed non-existent, since he wasn't able to make the transition from governmental administration to sales that quickly. He had to go to work at temporary clerical jobs that would allow him to interview prospective clients. What a struggle! For a while, they were so broke that toilet paper seemed unaffordable.

Another problem: their cars couldn't be repaired, or inspected and licensed. Jay parked one of them a lot and rode the public buses, but Bell had to drive 26 miles each way to the opposite side of Baltimore through the toughest traffic.

In the end he paid \$1500 for a firm to market him, and then ended up getting three positions in 1988 on his own. However, the marketing firm prepared such a beautiful resume that he used it for years. That document seemed wonderfully reassuring . . . and especially when Bell pointed out: "This is you!"

By now Bell was working in sales for a computer company and was doing quite well; clearly she would become a successful salesperson, as demonstrated by her \$60,000-per-year income for three years running. However, it seemed her sales income, early on, was flat at the same time Jay's was down. With so many bills carried over from Nebraska, things were becoming critical. Jay's lowest year was \$2,600 in 1984 and his highest totaled out at \$26,000 in 1986.

What they needed was a *steady* income (even if small) to pay first-of-month bills. Jay tried to continue marketing and running programs and working part time for Kelly Services as a data device operator for \$4.40 an

Timer

hour. Then he worked at Control Data as a full-fledged secretary at nearly twice the Kelly pay, or \$8 an hour. He also worked at Crown Petroleum audit division, at MaxiCareHealth America, at Johns Hopkins, and then for Commercial Credit Corp. (CCC).

Later, he labored hard for Services (yes, he was a “Kelly Guy”) at Westinghouse for five months, while also interviewing for consulting jobs. The next stop was at CCC, where he did computer word processing for seven months while seeking a permanent management position. He thoroughly enjoyed the people there – and had a blast while doing word processing for attorneys and making occasional collection calls. They tried to employ him, but he was so highly qualified that the position simply didn’t fit him, and they couldn’t afford to pay him what he was worth.

In short, he was caught between a rock and a hard place.

He understood how it had all happened . . . but the sequence of events was still frustrating. CCC allowed him time off for interviews, but without pay, of course. He interviewed for the Office of Aging, then for the post of manager in a large fruit company in Winchester, Va. Next he applied at American Public Welfare Assn. in Washington, at the Maryland Budget and Management Central Collection Agency, the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, and to be Director of Aging for St. Mary’s County.

Nothing.

Half-crazed with frustration, he put in an application to run daily operations at the Thomas O’Farrel Youth Center, in Marriottsville, Md.

Bingo!

Suddenly, the indefatigable Timer found himself at the center of a new world – and a world where he was desperately needed.

Another crucially important chapter in the life of Jay Arthur was about to begin.

THIRTY-SEVEN: Fighting To Save The Children

“The road to democracy is not a freeway. It is a toll road on which we pay by accepting and carrying out our civic responsibilities.”

Lucius D. Clay

On April 25, 1988, KHI, Inc., appointed the redoubtable Jay Arthur Deputy Director and assigned him to operate the Thomas O’Farrel Youth Center, a center for delinquent boys. The Commercial Credit Corporation’s (CCC) Legal Department gave him a rousing send-off with a luncheon attended by 25 people at Tio Pepe’s, a popular Baltimore restaurant. The lunches cost approximately \$25 each.

During the festivities, the attorney-director of the CCC Legal Department called Jay their “cheerleader” because of his enthusiastic work and the fact that he often took the stairs two at a time from the 7th to the 18th floor. Volunteering to help out in a crunch, if needed, he cheerfully accepted any assignment and delivered the work with enthusiasm and near perfection. And what a treat it was for our man Timer to hear these praises sung at lunch!

Had Jay known about the dire problems facing KHI’s juvenile facility, he would probably have opted to remain at CCC. The owner of KHI was a highly motivated woman from Bethesda who cared deeply about teenagers and possessed the financial resources (most of the time) to operate two or more such facilities. Thomas O’Farrel was a juvenile detention facility for boys under contract with the State of Maryland. It was an unfenced, unlocked (from the inside) 40-bed “attention” facility, where positive reinforcement was being used in an effort to return the boys to their families.

The setting was actually quite bucolic, and it was almost routine for Jay to see several deer grazing along the lane that led up to O’Farrel as he left work at sundown. Adolescent boys between 13 and 17 were sent there directly from the courts or from Hickey (reform) School. The boys’ families drove out on Sundays and holidays to visit. (It was also rumored that some of the residents managed to obtain drugs in this way.) But the location seemed ideal - with the facility located in a mixed forest, a mile or more from a highway.

Unbeknownst to the Jay-man, however, the State of Maryland juvenile officials had been strongly considering canceling the contract with

KHI before the latter's appointment. And they did just that - only two and a half months after his arrival. Of course, the KHI engineer found out about it and moved to another facility, as did the building and grounds maintenance supervisor. Jay was supposed to only supervise the office administration, the education program, and the supervisors of recreation, engineering and building and grounds, including the motor pool.

A break-in of the key closet had made it difficult to lock anything away from a boy with copies of the keys. And the problem was only exacerbated by the way that this individual would "loan" the keys to his friends. After the engineer and building and grounds staff left, Jay had to "fill in" while the owner searched for new staff. Obviously, new hires weren't about to sign on "under the cloud" of contract cancellation!

Some turnover of counselors also required Timer to have to fill in for them over weekends and holidays. It was a 52-mile round-trip, and yet he helped out on several holidays and weekends. During one especially busy week he put in more than 60 hours for straight compensatory time. While he was sincerely concerned for the well-being of the boys and his employer, it was becoming demoralizing in that there seemed to be less chance of holding onto the contract as each day went by.

The State Police encouraged KHI to report even minor infractions of laws, which resulted in more frequent visits by the State Police. Unfortunately, these investigations often resulted in reports from the troopers that Thomas O'Farrel was "out of control," which simply wasn't true. It was important that the boys be made responsible for their actions - but the Center was far from being the crime-jungle that the state cops described.

To this day, Jay is convinced that the boys rather enjoyed the diversion of "The Fuzz" showing up for regular searches for keys and weapons.

Of course, the real strength in the KHI Program was in the boys who wanted to stay away from Hickey and return to their homes. There was also a committed owner and staff that truly wanted the boys to gain an education, while also discovering that good behavior would result in desired results. Leaders among the young men helped keep the others in line in order to prevent fighting . . . while doing the cooking and serving, working for local farmers and contractors, and completing a thousand other daily chores.

Active counseling was on-going, as was general and special education. Jay even began showing some of the boys how to use a couple of old personal computers. There were really some well-intentioned boys there, and Jay was sad that they seemed to be in an almost impossible situation. They had to be released back to the drug culture they came from - even though most were eager to help with the work (mowing lawns and mop-

ping floors) required to get through the day.

To be released, a boy would have to be “clean” for most of three or more months at O’Farrel; however, unless they had a good home life environment, they probably would quickly return to O’Farrel or Hickey or one of the other more restrictive correctional institutions. To be paroled, they would usually have to be enrolled in school and have a part-time job. After leaving Thomas O’Farrel, Jay got an up-close look at the world that had produced many of the school’s troubled youth. He visited the home of one of the recently paroled boys, and was touched by his caring mother’s concern. This suffering parent made it clear that she was deeply hurt by her son’s refusal to distance himself from drug dealers, and Jay certainly felt her pain.

Probably the most challenging problem in administering the facility was keeping the boys from fighting each other, running away, and getting drugs – while also inspiring them to work on their education. The lack of computer equipment and lack of caring staff certainly didn’t help. The isolated location was something of a deterrent to running away, however – a fact that became evident after two boys became hopelessly lost. Jay believes they were eventually found by dogs and police helicopters. Indeed, our hero only knew of one boy who attacked a counselor or other staffer, although there had apparently been a sexual attack on a boy by other boys with a broom before Jay arrived. It was, however, a continuously tense atmosphere – since boys from the street lived by the code that “one must respond in kind” to any attack or aggressive behavior.

Even the smallest incident – splashing water with a mop or the bucket, or extra-hard pushing off in basketball – could produce an altercation. There was also the ever-present danger that other youth would take sides in the battle. Their ages ranged from 13 to 18. And were some of them smooth! They could (and did) tell stories about how they were going to become top athletes – wealthy wheeler-dealers who would go “clean” when they got out, then finish school and buy mama a car and put her in a nice house.

The steady turnover of teachers was also a constant at O’Farrel, probably due to the violent nature of the kids toward each other and class disruption, but mostly because of the isolated location. The previous policy had established a key rule: If one boy left the classroom, all of his classmates were required to follow. For that reason, it was a common sight to see 20 or more boys parading in and around the buildings and tree-lined paths, while their teachers waited patiently for them to return.

These were women teachers, for the most part, and they were apparently somewhat concerned about the isolated locale, although it was beautiful. The interviewing for replacement teachers, engineers and build-

ing and grounds workers seemed to be perpetual. Timer was able to get a foster grandparent to come out and help some, but never did manage to replace a clerk-secretary who left at the same time Jay arrived on the scene.

As time passed, Jay often witnessed behavior among the boys, simply because the location of his office in the one-story, cinder-block building was just outside the classrooms where frustrated boys usually “broke and ran.” There may also have been trust problems between the Director (who was counselor-trained), and the owner, because the latter asked Jay to call her daily. He picked up supplies and provided transportation to the hospital and to GED tests.

Jay had applied and interviewed for a position as a manager of the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) just before accepting the position at O’Farrel. He had taken a weekend “off” when KHI lost the contract. The boys were apparently washing the dormitory floors with soapy water when one splashed another boy, resulting in a wrestling match. That attracted others, who, when they tried to walk on the soapy floor, fell or were thrown about. The State Police were apparently called even though it was not really a “riot.” Suddenly, KHI was under threat of losing the contract if the State Police had to be summoned one more time, and they were.

Jay called the owner and told her he had a standing offer from HABC. Then he asked her what she thought he should do. (It would mean a 50-percent cut in pay for Jay.) He really hated to leave them in a lurch with unfinished messy business, but he was convinced they were powerless to improve the situation. Having raised a teenager who also struggled with drugs and mental illness, Jay felt thoroughly “connected” to the goals of KHI at O’Farrel.

At that point, the owner agreed there was little need for him to stay, since the State would probably want to do its own administration. As many of the boys as possible were now being interviewed in depth, with the objective of sending them home. As it turned out, he was needed for the transition; however, HABC refused to wait longer for his decision. So he accepted their offer after only three months in a challenging position he would have liked to have seen through to a successful conclusion. He was very sad to say farewell to the boys. He would miss the staff, also, because he respected these brave souls very much for their commitment and caring.

The 15-year-old, six-foot-five-inch Dave seemed to respect Jay. He was returning home and was looking forward to reuniting with his mom. A year later, Jay spotted Dave’s picture – along with a lengthy feature article in the Baltimore Sun that related how he had invaded someone else’s

coke and heroine territory. He was chased into an alley, shot twice in the back and then died. He was 16. His young mother, apparently unruffled, told well-wishers: "I wouldn't change a thing in the way he was raised. He did what he wanted to do." Nothing? The kid had been a straight "A" student at O'Farrel, could dunk a basketball, and was a natural leader, as shown by the kids who followed him around. The article did not mention his father, but Dave's fiancée was pregnant with his child.

Another notorious young man, who Jay believes was at O'Farrel and "extremely cooperative," also made the news. If he was the boy Jay believes he was, he worked well with staff and was also able to keep the boys focused on getting good behavior marks for early release. He and another boy or two killed a man and put his body in the trunk of his own car while they drove around and staged other robberies. He was an incredibly smooth con man - and once talked State Motor Vehicles Administration personnel into altering a driver's license by putting his own picture on the license of a man he had murdered (even though the victim was of a different race!).

He was a favorite at O'Farrel, because he was polite and could just quietly ask the other boys to take their turns at cooking, cleaning, going to class, and to stop fighting. Jay remembered the boy as the one whose father and two uncles were in the Maryland State Pen, and he "wanted to go there also." Last names weren't given to administration at O'Farrel, so he wasn't 100-percent sure he was the same.

Jay began his on-the-job training at McCullough Homes in West Baltimore on July 25, 1988. McCullough had two large highrise buildings for the elderly, and there were several hundred apartments in two-story homes for couples and some children. Jay was a first-level manager for them and would be in training there approximately six weeks before moving on to another location. Jay was very serious about making a success of his employment career with HABC; he must work hard and smart because he started at only approximately \$17,000 and even the top managers at such places as McCullough were only paid between \$25,000 and \$30,000.

He enjoyed working with low-income clients and was comfortable teaming up with minorities in accomplishing goals they set. Jay made this point because there were almost no whites working at HABC, none at McCullough and only one at Hollander Ridge, where he went next.

It was an extremely hot summer in 1988 in Baltimore. There were days in the 90s, during which the combination of temperature and humidity caused great distress. The HABC contract with its maintenance workers went to the extreme, according to Jay. If the zone reached the discomfort index level, the workers went home for the day. No matter that they were painting on the first floor in a shady home with doors open to allow cool-

ing breezes: They went home with pay! Yet it often seemed that most of the maintenance personnel didn't move fast or far enough to break a sweat in 90-degree weather. Of course Jay's cotton-picking and chopping days had taken place outdoors in 90-degree heat and raging humidity - and without benefit of fans or air conditioning. This may explain why he spoke up so volubly against the McCullough policy, even to the point of arguing his case before the Mayor of Baltimore at a town meeting.

The old people in the highrises died "like flies." They couldn't even open their doors, because security was so poor. Day in and day out, hoodlums pretending to be maintenance men came in, took the senior citizens' purses or other valuables, zoomed down the fire stairs and went . . . no one knew where.

The design of the two 18-story high rises at McCullough was such that there were no windows at the end of the hallways, which would have allowed natural air movement. Then, if a door could be opened safely, the poor old people could survive. Sometimes the fire escape doors were left open, probably for air; however, this would have burned them up for sure by creating a draft, according to fire experts. The garbage stench coming from the chutes was almost unbearable in the hallways, also. There was a door that opened onto a small porch, but no air seemed to enter on those scorching days.

Several times Jay was alerted to a call that an elderly person had been robbed. Once, he took the fire stairs up and another fire stairs down, hoping to find the thief. Unlike the fellow he had pursued on the ice with an empty .22 rifle, years before, he knew what he would try and do if he caught the person who robbed the 80-year-old woman. But, as in that situation so many years before, he was so emotional that he forgot to prepare for combat. He didn't have even a broom handle.

Still, he felt sure his fury would serve him better than the greed of some coward who had just stolen a purse from an 80-year old woman. He was irrationally very disappointed not to find the culprit. He suspected that one of the security guards was in on the job, since such robberies occurred around the first of the month when all knew the Social Security checks had arrived. Apparently, HABC now has security police more available than before. Well, they should have had them then!

Jay spent most of his time making inspections of apartments and recording cleanliness, or lack thereof, painting, plumbing and smoke detector needs. In apartments, apparently, the smoke detectors would sound the alarm with steam from the children's baths or cooking on top of the cheap stoves, which had no vents. Maybe they disconnected them because of other reasons - although to do so was to place the family in a life-threatening situation. McCullough Homes maintenance didn't seem as

deficient as that at Hollander Ridge Homes, where Jay went after six weeks, but it was poor. Probably mostly because of the discomfort index, they weren't there to repair the plumbing, doors, windows, storm screens, etc. They were probably in their air-conditioned homes or fishing somewhere.

He also took applications and escorted prospective tenants to select their new quarters. He explained how the apartment heating and ventilation systems operated and who and where to call for problems. Jay also responded to complaints from residents about the condition of the home. He settled arguments between tenants and heard complaints from maintenance about the condition apparently caused by the tenants. Most of the residents at McCullough had been there quite some time and were older. At Hollander, the HABC had only taken possession of the "Ridge" four or five years before. The residents were younger and there were several two- and three-generation families living in the larger units - some of which included up to five bedrooms.

The HABC "brass" had apparently bid to have its storm doors replaced at Hollander, and it was a fiasco. The "old doors" were still in excellent condition, and the new ones lasted about six months. When Jay asked where the old doors were, he was told by residents that the maintenance men probably took them home or sold them. Panels, windows and screens were in a shambles and the maintenance workers apparently had three speeds: slow, slower and slowest. Although the problems weren't as severe at McCullough, the maintenance men seemed to have less to do than at Hollander. (Of course, it was also true that the Hollander maintenance crews had rarely gotten around to taking care of business, themselves!)

At Hollander, when Jay sent the reports in and nothing was done, he forwarded them to the downtown maintenance supervisor. Only then would they go to work! On Jay's last day, he took two-dozen donuts to the then-very busy maintenance men. The maintenance foreman told Jay, "I've never seen a man with as much energy as you! You've made inspections in more than 200 homes in three weeks," which was true. He thought that he detected a sigh of relief from the foreman, as they dug into the donuts. Maintenance had really gotten a lot of work done over the last two weeks.

Several residents told Jay this was the first time any meaningful maintenance had been done in their homes, and they had lived there and been calling frequently for more than four years. Several thanked him for his tenacity. Managers at the two sites where Jay worked were cordial enough; however, he believes they weren't given financial or moral support by the top people in HABC.

Jay's comments were, "At Hollander, drugs were a problem as was

non-payment of the very minimum rents due.” He once had to help set the skimpy furnishings of a mother with eight children in the street, as required by ordinance. There seemed to be few incentives for the resident to space the size of the families because the rents could be reduced; they could move to a larger unit, get more welfare payments or a combination of all three. It wasn’t rational from a financial standpoint, and most of the people seemed to be good citizens; they were just caught in a several-generation man-trap. It will take several generations to get out of it, too. But, Jay says, “Somehow, somewhere, someone has to get control of it, since lives, tax money, and resources are being wasted at an alarming rate!”

During this period, he often asked himself: “Why can’t both parents live with the children and receive some assistance, including helping attain and retain employment? As it is now, only one able-bodied caretaker parent can live with the children, without working. Now that ‘Workfare’ is upon us, that may change somewhat. The other parent may be there overnight in many cases but would not be available to provide parental support with schools, housing, employment, neighborhood, etc. because someone would report them, and the family might have their subsistence monies reduced or withheld. One parent having to use public transportation in Baltimore stretches the budget nearly to the impossible.”

There was another key area of leadership, also probably due to lack of financial and administrative support. Residents, in many instances, could maintain their own faucets, smoke detectors, painting, etc., if they were given minimum training classes or one-on-one. Leaking plumbing in the walls requires skills, but changing faucets could have been done by a child. Plumbing leaks on the second floors of literally dozens of units had eroded away kitchen cabinets at Hollander. Unexcusable, and dangerous. Roaches, mice and rats abounded in such situations many times.

Management, Jay said, had little practical knowledge in such things as notifying tenants that there would be an inspection. Policies required management to notify tenants 48 hours in advance of the reviews. The managers, therefore were painstakingly addressing, signing, folding, stuffing notices in envelopes, then sealing, stamping, and mailing them. One person couldn’t get that done and make more than a few inspections the same week. Jay found he could address them, sign and walk them to each unit and put them inside their storm doors - and then have Wednesday afternoon, and all day Thursday and Friday to inspect. He inspected more than 200 homes in three weeks and 300 within six weeks, all with proper notification. And he got good exercise, which didn’t hurt at all. The units were all within six to eight blocks from the office.

There was only one highrise at Hollander and it was occupied by couples, was air-conditioned and didn’t smell like an uncovered dump like

McCullough Homes highrises did. Jay understands a few years later that there were problems of violence there, also, as younger people began moving in them, but he doesn't know that for sure.

One reason that our subject was able to get so much done was that the other manager working with him preferred to take applications for approvals or disapprovals for units. He had been there a couple of years and was a workaholic, but it was too much for one person to keep up. They agreed that Jay would concentrate on inspections and complaints, and the other manager would concentrate on applications and drug busts, but ask Jay for help as needed. They nearly eliminated the backlog in the time Jay was there - a period of only six weeks. And, as said earlier, maintenance staff really got on a high note and just might keep going. Eventually, however, the high rise was "imploded" in a publicly attended demolition in the late 1990s.

Jay would have liked to have stayed with HABC; however, the Maryland State Workers Compensation Commission's (WCC) beginning pay for Administrator III was nearly twice his pay at HABC. And, of course, he suspected his lack of experience and political connections would prevent his being promoted to a decision-making position any time soon. The managers he knew were making a pittance above his own pay even with many years of experience and competence.

Once again, it was time to change jobs in order to do a *better* job of bringing home the bacon!

THIRTY-EIGHT: Hi-jinx Along The Gunpowder

“Flowers have an expression of countenance as much as men or animals. Some seem to smile, some have a sad expression, some are pensive and diffident, others again are plain, honest and upright.”

Henry Ward Beecher

Ask Jay Arthur to describe his “favorite outdoor activity,” and the big guy won’t hesitate long before belting out three high-voltage syllables: “Back-pack-ing!”

It’s true. For many years, now, Timer has been absolutely nuts about hauling jumbo-sized packs loaded with everything from sleeping tents to portable radios across some of the wildest and steepest terrain that the Big East has to offer.

Jay started hiking and backpacking on Saturday, January 14, 1989, with the Sierra Club. Over the next eight years, he backpacked 30 times in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Maryland, and Virginia. On many occasions, he was able to earn compensatory time at work – then take advantage of it in order to get a half-day early start. Looking back on his record, the Jay-man estimates that he probably averaged about two day-hikes a month and one backpack every three months . . . with most of them taking place on Saturday or Sunday, every other weekend.

Around 1991, Timer snapped up a weathered but invincible Old Town canoe and joined the Mountain Club of Maryland. During the next six years, he had more than 60 separate canoe partners, and much of his canoeing took place in fast water. These hardy souls canoed with him on voyages that lasted anywhere from a few minutes to six days. The forays took place on the Allagash River in Maine, on the Delaware River, and on Saranac Lakes in New York State.

Five years later, the Jayster purchased his second canoe, so that he could have a speedier boat on “flat water” lakes and non-rapids, and in order to be able to count on an extra vessel in order to take family members on voyages.

Bell canoed with him alone only once. Otherwise, she insisted on bringing her family with her! On one exciting occasion, Jay rented two canoes so that they would have three canoes for nine people. They left a car at the take-out (end) of the trip and another at the put-in (starting)

point. The group included two brothers (one a priest) - Vance and Fred - along with Bell's sister, Roween, and another priest, Joe. Also attending were their son, Jeff, a brother-in-law, Hamil, and a nurse sister-in-law, Elsa. This particular journey saw them floating eight miles down the narrow, winding Gunpowder Falls River or Creek.

It was shallow, but the Gunpowder did have some fairly fast water - along with some sharp turns and its share of downed trees or log "strainers." Hamil, Roween, Jay, and Jeff were the only experienced canoeists, although Father Joe swore (make that: "He assured us") that he "knew how to row." Everybody still liked the *padre* after the trip, but a paddler, he was not! Jay attempted to get the group's attention in order to provide some pointers about keeping the canoes straight and using the correct paddle strokes.

Sure enough, Father Joe scratched his leg and bled a little . . . and was "ministered unto" so much with bandages and sympathy that you'd have thought his injury was life-threatening.

Jay wanted to follow in order to provide some assistance, if needed, but they insisted he should go ahead to check out the rough spots and warn them. They didn't realize that the bends in the narrow river would actually prevent them from seeing Bell, Jeff, and Jay. In addition, it was impossible for Jay to paddle forward and look backward. Elsa sat in the middle between the two priests. They were in great form - while laughing, flailing, and then running into the bank on one side, before crossing the river and slamming into the other.

The two priests and the former nurse managed to capsize three times. But they were great sports and never stopped laughing, though soaking wet and covered with scratches. At one point, Jay, Bell and Jeff were close enough so that they could beach their craft and walk back to help put the canoe back upright. But during the other two mishaps, they had only the canoe with Fred, Roween and Hamil, who were probably laughing so hard they were of little help.

Jay, Bell and Jeff weren't close enough to them to give advice, but could hear them laughing or Elsa screaming almost all the way. The priests changed places from bow to stern, but it didn't matter . . . they continued to head the canoe from one bank to the other quite often. It was so shallow that once they had the canoe full of water, they couldn't turn it over. They used their hats to dip the water out until they could tip it. Roween was in the bow of one canoe, brother Fred in the middle, and her husband Hamil in the stern.

The "best part" was yet to come. Elsa left her car at the take-out point at Phoenix, and two cars were used to bring the nine adventurers to Monkton for the put-in. She was reminded to bring her car keys with her.

The trouble was, they didn't make it clear to her that she was supposed to *bring* the keys in the boat with her, as well. She later said, "Well, you talked so much about putting everything in dry bags so it didn't get wet or lost, so I thought they would be safer in the car."

Well, they sure were! When they got to Phoenix, the two priests and Elsa were a total mess - wet as drowned rats, scratched and bleeding, with wild hair. And, of course, not a priest's collar in sight. All of them were starved. "Where are the keys, Elsa?"

"In your car, Father: oh, my God!"

They looked at each other - nine sad sacks, all looking the worse for wear, with the gear spread all over, and three boats. Desperate, they began asking passing strangers for a ride back to the keys. But the strangers were frightened off by their appearance: "Sorry, we're going the opposite way!" Finally, after more than an hour, a never-smiling Maryland State Trooper with a dog screen between the first and second seat drove up. "Officer Friendly," Elsa and Roween groaned in unison. He had given each of them a traffic ticket during the past few months for not wearing a seat belt (Elsa) and going 42 miles an hour in a 35-mile per hour zone (Roween).

Since Fred had a business in Timonium, Officer Friendly's normal "beat," he didn't even smile when he saw them. Finally, he agreed to put Hamil in the dog section and took him back to Monkton. Fred called for the single employee he had working Saturday to come and take "the cooks" to Roween's, while the rest of them waited for the car to bring the boats. By the time Hamil returned with one of the cars and then hauled Jay back to his car in Monkton (before he roared on to Phoenix), it was 5 hours since they'd stepped into the canoes. Wearily, they loaded them up.

It was after dark when Jay deposited the two rental boats 25 miles away in Jarrettsville in Harford County. He was almost shaking from hunger when he arrived at Roween and Hamil's. But what a supper they enjoyed! They feasted that night on Dixie Queen roasting ears, filet mignon, wonderful green vegetable salad, baked potatoes, home-made bread, beer (yes!!), ice cream, and cake. They all laughed until they cried as they related how Elsa and Fathers Vance and Joe had gone into the drink three times and had been required to bail several hundred gallons of cold water from the swamped canoe with their hats.

After four years, the adventurers still talk and laugh about their great canoe trip. Only rarely does Timer remind them that the section they canoed was the easiest on the Gunpowder. Why bother? If these hapless bumblerers insisted on thinking of themselves as Lewis and Clark, why shatter their naïve illusion?

Only Bell and Roween have dared to join Jay on a fast-water

stream - Deer Creek - in the years since the Great Gunpowder Disaster. And they soon wished they hadn't . . . when our hero dumped the three of them into waist-deep water. Gurgling and spluttering, they climbed back into their drenched canoe with a solemn vow: "We shall never go down to the sea again - not with the likes of *you*, we won't!"

THIRTY-NINE: At War With The Bureaucrats

“It is useless for the sheep to pass resolutions in favor of vegetarianism while the wolf remains of a different opinion.”

Dean William R. Inge

The month was November, 1988.

After finishing a brief stint with Walter L. Marshall Associates of Washington County, Maryland, our hero set sail for the next great challenge in his life: a management role with the State of Maryland Workers' Compensation Commission (WCC).

Just how Jay was finally able to land a job with the state is still a mystery to him - even though he'd applied nearly four years before and had taken a test which qualified him as Administrator I through Administrator VII. (He remains convinced to this day that there has been rampant age discrimination in Maryland State Government in the non-political positions.)

He wrote to a State Senator, who was told the agencies seeking an Administrator wouldn't be able to "see" age, and that they wouldn't focus on when an individual graduated from high school or college. Still, the Jayman knew from experience that personnel staff have a "good ole boy network" and a way of finding out such things.

At any rate, our subject attended an interview at WCC in October, 1988, and began work on November 3, 1988, as an Administrator III. Jim Neeley, a World War II Navy pilot who had been stationed at Offut AFB in Omaha for a time, hired him. He was the Director of Administration and was retiring in February, 1989, but as usual, didn't tell Jay in October or November, 1988. At first, Jay thought they might have brought him on to fill that position, and he *could* have handled it.

As it turned out, however, they brought in a really fine professional individual who was a formally trained law graduate, a retired U.S. Army colonel. Although he professed to have been exposed to no training and development in administration or experience outside of legal work in the Army, it worked out quite well for several years. Chairman George Krukow also interviewed Jay and let him know there had been claims of racial discrimination against Krukow from another Administrator III, Mrs. Jane Peller.

Jay was directly responsible for training, records management, forms management and building coordination for WCC's 47,000 square

feet of floor space, Equal Employment Opportunity, telecommunication, parking passes, internal control, and was administrator over the divisions and units of Personnel, Fiscal Services, Vocational Rehabilitation (Rehab), Court Reporters, Information Support (computer division), Appeals, Building Maintenance, and also a secretary who came on board Feb. 8, 1989. This was a huge challenge, because most units had been functioning without an administrator over them for two years, and they were basically self-supporting already. That independence came to haunt Jay in one situation several years later in the computer department.

It was soon made clear to Timer that Mrs. Peeler was to be given little thought. Instead, he was instructed to “just run your department.” The Chairman had fired Mrs. Peeler two years before, for insubordination. However, she had appealed and after a year, she had been returned to WCC with pay restored. It became almost immediately apparent that for WCC to be successful, the two Administrator IIIs, who were responsible for 45 persons each of the 130 employees, would have to work together.

Jay went to her immediately and offered his hand and committed himself to working with her in every way possible. To his face, she agreed and shook on it. However, the grapevine had it that she just laughed privately and said something like: “Here’s another white man being brought in by Krukow to keep us blacks down.” This was a different kind of challenge for Jay.

After that, things went downhill quickly. Soon after Ryan Bailey (new Director of Administration) came on board, Jay, Neeley, and Bailey met to discuss an idea Jay had to improve morale and relationships between and among staff. (Krukow had pointed out to Jay during his hiring interview that such a morale-boost was badly needed.) A couple of years before, the Jayster had joined the international corporation, Resource Associated Corporation (RAC) of Reading, Pa. RAC produced training programs, course texts, workbooks and audio tapes in management, supervision and leadership. Jay felt the content was excellent; however, there are just so many truths, and Jay couldn’t use RAC’s materials without paying for them.

Jay had previously developed his own training course materials, also. He suggested that with his management and training background he could acclimate principles of management and supervision with the WCC organization and provide staff development. Perhaps with this as a starting point, serious communication chasms which had developed between staff over the past two or more years could be somewhat lessened.

Chairman Krukow thought it was worth a try and said, “Do it, and begin as soon as possible.” New Director-designate Bailey wanted to participate in the training and staff development sessions, which Jay estimated

would take two hours every other week for 10 sessions. It actually required more than 12 sessions and with unavoidable delays didn't end until about September, 1989. Bailey and Neeley came to the "Kickoff" on December 13, where all three attempted to gain acceptance from Mrs. Peeler and her staff. Although she didn't say no, she did interfere with the outcome of the training and staff development over the long haul.

For starters, she argued that employees who truthfully and frankly answered some of the questions would be exposing themselves to people such as Jay, who could use the information against them in the future. Theoretically, Jay said she was right; however, it did make it difficult to acquaint himself with training and staff development needs and work closely and directly with the persons who expressed such needs. As an outside trainer and developer previous to coming to WCC, that problem hadn't surfaced. There had been no trust internally at WCC. Almost all results of individual needs would now have to be confidential. Jay's new secretary (who came on in late January) didn't know the people nor the handwriting of attendees, nor did Jay. In the end, they captured the information and Jay evaluated it on his own computer at home, for the most part. WCC did, however, manage to obtain a 286 IBM-compatible about 1/2-way through the training sessions.

At the end of the 12 weeks, the evaluation was nearly meaningless, since Jay couldn't tell if the same 13 of 22 persons who answered the questions at the beginning, were the same 13 who answered the same questions at the end - due to confidentiality security. From his own pocket, Jay paid Bart Hampstead of STAR to hold a two-hour workshop on Team Work for all 22 persons. The bureaucratic process to get the State Personnel to approve the workshop took more time than he had to allow him to stay on schedule.

In order to keep the difficulty of the 12-session course comparable for them, he put supervisors and managers in one group and assistant supervisors in the other. Later in the summer, he facilitated a course for another 15 secretaries and Assistants-to-Commissioners through a leadership development course. It was more successful, Jay felt, and with much less tension.

The Maintenance specialist, Ralph Jones, had a severe stroke on December 12 and was off until late March or early April, then came back for a couple of months, and finally took disability retirement. While he was out, Jay did Ralph's physical work and designated "volunteers" to help him move desks, etc., and do other manual work, such as clearing out rooms used as storage for new tenants when he could find an able-bodied person or persons. He made sure that he worked a full eight hours on the Administrator III Support position because he wanted to know just how

much time, knowledge, and energy it would take to cover both positions. He soon learned: a lot!

He spent dozens of hours on his computer and software at home because the WCC only had one borrowed pc and no software. Jay input the data into spread sheets and data bases and word-processed the training and staff development course being held for two groups, i.e. supervisors and assistant supervisors. At that time, he didn't put in for compensatory time because he felt managers at that level should be able to plan to get their work done, or "suck it up."

However, over time, he came to realize that the State was so ill prepared to meet peaks of workload, that this was just about the only way it could be handled. He then followed the lead of the rest of the staff, including the Director of Administration, and accepted several days of compensatory leave.

FORTY: The “Management Guru” Reaches The Pinnacle Of His Career

“To get others to come into our ways of thinking, we must go over to theirs; and it is necessary to follow, in order to lead.

William Hazlitt

Jay was also still in the process of wrapping up the Washington County Supervisors training and development with consultant Walter L. Marshall Associates. So, they were, indeed, busy times. He even had to find a contractor to build an office for himself and his secretary. And, he had the two groups going on supervisory training and staff development from December to May.

Over the next 10 years, the frenetic pace was greater for Jay only when he was Director of the Medical Services in Nebraska. However, this ten years was mostly a time of achieving short-term successes.

Jay and MD Workers’ Compensation Commission (WCC) did a professional needs survey of WCC with Mark Van Nostrin. A sense of powerlessness showed in the survey. Jay contracted for four hours of training for all staffers in “Communications for upward growth.” Following that, there was Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO). For many, there was the IAIABC (International Association for Injured Workers) convention in Baltimore, for which Chairman Krukow was president.

In August, 1989, Jay, and the head of Data Processing visited a bank in Delaware to see their FileNet System. It entailed scanning and then imaging paper onto laser disks to be retrieved on personal computers in “workflow queues.” Sounded foreign then, however, by 1994, Jay was in it “up to his neck.”

Had Hillary Warren, his long-time great secretary, lived to see his schedule, she would have wagged her finger at him and reminded Jay, “No more than 50 percent of your day should be scheduled in meetings.” There was so much to be done, and so few who knew how or were available to do it.

A new internal control program was initiated to try and prevent waste, theft, etc., in the administration of the WCC. The Rehabilitation

Supervisor, Faye Solange did double-duty in supervising the new “Drug-Free Work Place.”

People were concerned to be on the 8th, 9th and 10th floors of an old downtown office building because of everything from elevator problems to heat, cold, odors, bird droppings on the window sills, etc. Telephones and office equipment were antiquated. Typewriters were replaced by word processing equipment and, strangely, carpal tunnel of the wrists became a major problem while using the easy-operating (personal computer) pc keyboards.

There was only *one* (PC), and it was borrowed. By 1996, there were 130 modern and powerful personal computers (PC's) with monitor screens large enough to bring up two 8-1/2 x 11 inch documents from the FileNet disk storage “jukebox.” There were some PC's placed that were not cost-effective, but at the time, were believed to be mandatory by Commissioners. In Jay's observation, it seemed the more effective Commissioners used the PC's before and after hearings, but kept focused during the hearings on the person testifying. However, the most serious situation was the racial tension that existed when Jay arrived. Both ways. Most of the top managers were Whites, although most of the employees were Blacks. Baltimore City Public Schools agrees that it has a long ways to go to raise the education in the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic in order to compete in today's world. Apparently, minimum standards were felt to be beyond reach by some.

Maryland state government benefits are excellent. They included health, annual, personal, sick and holiday leaves. It is estimated that benefits add another 33% to the salaries of employees.

Although the Maryland State Capitol is located 35 miles away in Annapolis, a major portion of State Offices are located in Baltimore. The state government and legislative bodies are extremely sensitive to EEO for all races, gender, ages, disabled, colors, origin of births, etc. Complaints of racial discrimination seldom surfaced while Jay was acting EEO and Fair Practices Officer, however, when a full-time minority EEO Officer was hired, more were filed. They may have been encouraged or felt safer in filing discrimination complaints.

Many improvements were being initiated by Ryan Bailey, the new director of administration. They included Jay's active training programs. Ryan became an exceptionally versatile computer user. He learned word processing, data base, spreadsheet, graphics, and how to query on-going data from the main frame computer. In his study comparing WCC with other agencies, he concluded the grade levels, and thus pay, were two or three levels below somewhat similar departments.

Bailey, certainly performed an excellent interpretation of the WCC

laws and regulations. He could be called a “workaholic” as he never stopped. If the Chairman had given him the authority to delegate those necessary responsibilities with commensurate authority to carry out duties, things might have been much different at WCC.

Ryan used his newly-acquired computer skills to make statistical comparisons of applied data from the 38,000 to 40,000 injured worker claims received each year. He analyzed the process of a claim “from the cradle to the grave” and presented that data in many formats to the Chairman, governor’s office, legislative bodies, insurers, attorneys, our Commissioners, and staff.

He surveyed the insurers and self-insurers as to their willingness to finance “bringing WCC into the 21st Century” or words to that effect, as the insurers and self-insurers paid for the operation of WCC. They gave strong support, thus, a new stronger Mini computer and a laser disk imaging system using electronic work flow was purchased, including a contract for enhancing the system.

Electronic fax capability made it possible for some forms to come in electronically without staff seeing a paper, yet it goes into the system, and can be retrieved on screen or on paper, and the original going to the injured worker. The attorneys’ and insurers’ offices and others, can connect to the WCC computer and have documents faxed to their offices.

The Law Library was replaced by CD ROM disks. Jay was able to furnish a training room. The phones were improved greatly, obtaining lighted key systems with “roll-overs” to others to keep the phone answering going.

A sequencer was added to enable people to get an answer and be placed on hold and brought “on line” with an operator as their calls came in. It worked quite well, except there were too few persons who were capable of answering the difficult questions asked. WCC added an automated attendant with voice mail about 1993.

Jay and Ryan completed and tabulated training needs surveys. Input from staff on improving attendance was obtained, and then Jay held a showing of an excellent film on controlling absenteeism. WCC had the highest rate of sick leave in Maryland State Government – a whopping 9 percent! Jay shared the serious problem with staff and gained participation with the rate reduced by two or three percentage points. Quality of Work and Productivity was discussed by the governor’s office. This eventually became CQI (Continuous Quality Improvement) in 1996 for WCC, except it never got off the ground.

Jay cooperated in the work involved in surveying for the State Records Management Division. He worked on air quality problems, Starling bird droppings removal contracts, recycling of paper; copiers were

antiquated—slow and produced poor quality copies and incapable of providing speedy services required. Jay met with the fiscal director who took charge of copier problem as well as sharing a major part of the Internal Control Program. The fiscal director became a solid assistant.

In 1991, Jay participated with the Department of Education in selecting the contractor for the 10-story building of which WCC occupied the eighth, ninth and tenth floors. The period was for five years and would include maintenance of heating and air conditioning, security, housekeeping, elevators, painting, etc. Extremely important.

Jay participated in the bids for the new main frame computer and awarded a contract for remodeling of the Information Support offices and computer room, as well as meeting with the Department of General Services (DGS) architects and engineers and successful contractor.

Ryan usually did not delegate the work to Jay for WCC cohorts UEF and SIF. They were a part of WCC, and at times, now felt isolated from administration of personnel, fiscal and computer services. He provided the impetus and coordinated the assigning of medical claims work to a medical service analysis company to get files off floors, out from under and off desks and tables and blocking the window

The Maryland Fiscal Management Information System (FMIS) program began in June, 1991, which would change the way all state agencies does its financial and time keeping. The governor, without increasing pay, declared all staff must work 40 hours each week in July, 1991, up from 37-1/2 hours, further negatively affecting morale of staff as they said the contract was unilaterally changed. Lots of undercurrents. It seldom affected Jay as he almost always worked well over 40 hours at WCC, plus several hours of take-home work each week.

Jay sent several staffers, to team management training seminars. Phyllis requested an upgrade to 19 from 18, and Jay supported her. With Jay acting director for Ryan, who was on leave a week, he met with Internal Control and pre-bid conference for the computer room construction. Jay appointed and chaired a committee to recommend a smoking policy to the director. Then, the governor declared all smokers must leave the building, regardless of precautions for fire and second-hand smoke taken. Then, WCC lost productivity of the smokers as it took a minimum of 20 minutes to take the elevator down, smoke, and ride back up the 8, 9 or 10 floors. Perhaps some quit or smoked less, because of the policy, so maybe it was worthwhile.

A reorganization Committee was formed, and was chaired by Jay. The purpose was to combine the Claims and Hearing Departments in 1991. They met several times over the next few days until a “trial” organization was hammered out. Ryan’s “marching orders” changed from assign-

ing only staff from Claims and Hearing; then, allowed other individuals to be considered for assignment to the new Teams. Created lasting effects. Some good, some bad. He reasoned that each would have an idea whether they wanted to serve in that capacity or WCC wanted them, before the positions were actually developed and filled. What a zoo! Burl was off on sick leave for several weeks, and Jay had to have temporary acting team coordinators, one week at a time, "pinch hitting." WCC began selection of interim claims examiners and team leaders.

Somehow, Jay was able to spend six days visiting and pheasant hunting with his friend John Howard in November, 1991. When he arrived at the Lincoln airport, it had just begun to snow the first of 11 inches. Travel was by four-wheel vehicle only as the temperature hovered around zero to 10 degrees above most of the time. Most nearby cities postponed Halloween from Thursday to Sunday throughout that area to protect the kids. That date was the earliest blizzard on record in Lincoln. "Sure! Waited `til I came," Jay grouched. On his return to the airport, after six days, in his rented auto, it was snowing so hard that Jay missed the turnoff and was 45 minutes late. Not to worry! The United Airlines jet couldn't land because of the low visibility from the snow. Jay got his first limit of three rooster pheasants one day and brought some delicious pheasant filets back. Needed that break!

New Team meetings began in February, 1992. Much discussion on microfilming to get Records Management to take it over and finish up. In September, 1992, Jay found himself in the middle of the planning and designing of work stations and 2,000 square yards of carpeting for ninth-floor teams for imaging. Carpeting totaled more than 2,000 square yards, and all offices were occupied. Excellent steel work stations were installed by Prison Industries as well, after months of planning by Jay and Erby. Erby, as the person in charge of maintenance and supply, was nominated by WCC as their "Employee of the Year" in maintenance-type work. Jay proudly chauffeured Erby, his mom, daughter, and father-in-law to Annapolis for the ceremony. Erby certainly deserved the nomination, even though someone from a larger agency won the Statewide award. He was proud and so was the WCC staff.

Pre-bid Conference for the Imaging project was held January 7, 1992. Several potential contractors did walk-throughs: IBM, Bell Atlantic, Wang, Digital, View Star, NCR. Bell Atlantic, as prime contractor with FileNet as the expert in imaging as subcontractor, were selected.

Some things occurred which caused the staff to reconsider whether or not things could get worse - and they did! Due to "an error in estimation of cash flow," State employees also had some non-paid furloughs. Jay took some of his furloughed time to canoe and complete the

Red Cross flat water and white water canoe-training. He also enjoyed several backpacking trips in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. By early 1996, Jay had backpacked more than 25 times - of course, all were overnights, some even involved two and three nights and as much as 25 miles in length in tough mountains.

Lots of canoeing also took place in 1992 and 1993, in addition to training. He counted over 60 partners by 1996. Some were his children and grandchildren, but mostly they were new canoeists paired by the Mountain Club of Maryland canoe trip leaders. About 20 days were spent canoeing the Tuckahoe, Chop Tank and Pocomoke Rivers on the Eastern Shore; the Potomac, Deer Creek and Gunpowder Falls at various locations in Maryland; Pine Barrens in New Jersey; then six days on the Alagash River in Maine. Oh, those loons, rapids and sunsets! Such quiet. Except for the Alagash trip and a couple of Fridays, all of the canoeing was on weekends because of the work load.

Jay began seriously considering Wil Tel Automated Attendant and voice mail, which was installed in 1993. Now WCC could print out reports to be sure messages received a response.

Finally, Jay reached the point where holders of \$100-per-month-value parking passes were loaned to other WCC employees when holders were on leaves. That system worked well until July, 1996. It was received as a big boost for mothers with children who had to take public transportation most of the time. It gave them a break once in a while by being assigned the passes. It allowed them to drive the children to sitters or schools and park next door free and be safe from muggers and car-jackers.

Jay purchased and prepared southern-style-strawberry shortcake with vanilla ice cream for all staff in August; it was a positive gesture for people who were like mushrooms, as in being "kept in the dark and having manure pitched to them." A film was shown on "New Supervisors" for the new team leaders representing Eastern, Baltimore, Western, Greater Washington, Docket Adjustment and Reception for combined claims and hearings. Literally scores of hours were spent in discussions before the teams were finalized. Ryan insisted on "trying the leaders out" first and included anyone who wanted to try.

He purchased a VCR, screen, tables, chairs for training. Jay also served as "Wellness Coordinator" and made the contacts with Blind Industries for improved vending machines with money-changers. He became involved in the 1990 census; risk management program; coordinated and through Erby, supervised moving office equipment, installing locks, etc. He also set up a task force on attendance, using a cross section of employees and a supervisor or two. The move was very successful and was well accepted.

He coordinated budget submission training by the director of administration and fiscal director. He was still the fair practices officer; the director hired an EEO officer. Next our hero helped get a conservation program, leading to recycling, off the ground. Air quality surveys were requested and performed by the Baltimore City Health Department. Another big project involved retrofit lighting with MSDE and DGS, as the reduced energy of the new lights paid for cost of installation and more.

He investigated “Baker’s Chute,” a fabric tunnel to slide to safety from up to 10 floors in case of fire, etc. Jay set up a Personnel Committee, but Ryan let it drop within three months for some reason. Then Timer divided his support staff meetings into “operations” and “staff” with meetings at least once a month. Training surveys were conducted and there were discussions for retirement planning for staff. He also attended and participated in an annual Rehabilitation Conference and administered a temporary shared-parking pass policy, a critical area that helped morale. Later he helped get a group to plan a Christmas Party for all staff in 1990 – the first and only one in 8 years.

Joint Analysis Design (JAD) began on June 26, 1992, to electronically image onto laser disks, eventually eliminating nearly all paper files in the WCC by 1996. Consultants discussed and drew routes of WCC paper flows by form numbers on flip charts showing movements from “cradle to grave.” Individual interviews took place in many cases. Also several full days of JAD. June Jordan and Jay spent a rather hectic day taking AmTrac to Trenton, N.J., to see the NJ Retirement Systems FileNet operations. Very informative, and it was helpful for the work ahead!

Rapid change caused morale to become so bad that in 1995, Xmas decorations, formerly installed by volunteers, were not even prepared. Christmas cards deposited in a large box were simply distributed by volunteers. That was all. Later Jay initiated a personal improvement program from Extension Service in budgeting, diets, etc. as requested in surveys. Ryan sent him to a two-day, project management training course, which came in handy in the computer and imaging projects. He also provided training in employee evaluations and chaired grievance hearings. In response to survey returns, Jay set up a representative employees’ lounge committee and facilitated it; the director and Jay volunteered along with several others to paint the two rooms on a Saturday.

Jay had to go to local stores with Erby and purchase and even personally distribute fans because of a/c being inoperative in August, 1990.

In June, 1993, Jay and Bell and a combination of nine children and grandchildren attended the Arthur reunion in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. Lolah with Teri, H.E., Don and their spouses brought their children and some grandchildren, also. It was quite a gathering and a good

time was had by all. Jay had rented a large van; his brothers and sister had driven Cadillacs and Lincolns. Upon purchasing a used Lincoln Continental, he found it sometimes took a small fortune to keep one running. A reunion was held in 1995 and another was planned for 1997; however, Lolah, lost mental abilities so severely that she had to move to a nursing home in February, 1997. Rhett, the loyal Shelty, was given to Jay's 85-year-old cousin - much to the disappointment of some of Jay's grandchildren!

FORTY-ONE: Wrapping It Up

“The belief that youth is the happiest time of life is founded upon a fallacy. The happiest person is the person who thinks the most interesting thoughts, and we grow happier as we grow older.”

William Lyon Phelps

How does one “put the wraps” on 65 years put in these 41 short chapters? Unless an unforeseen physical problem cuts short his plans, Jay is convinced the “best is yet to come.” It was a delight writing about his dad, mom, brothers and sister, the old dog, Buck, Penny and Minnie; sitting on Mag or in a wagon behind Mag and Diner. He enjoyed looking at the old photographs of the turkeys, steer, horses, pigs, fish caught, pheasants bagged, Jake, Duke, Navy, canoe trips and partners and around the camp sites.

He was also able to recapture some of the nostalgic feelings of his simpler past. Having been raised to be considerate of others and honest in all dealings and contributing to the completion of a task was a “gift.” Maybe he can pass it on to those with whom he comes in contact.

He happily recalls the thrill in having been given the controls of the trainer-jet by Lt. Smith for an hour; the times he was a passenger in the old World War II planes; then commercial airline prop-jets and later the newest commercial airlines and flying all over the U.S. and to Europe. Reminiscing about Armstrong’s “first step” on the moon made him realize just how fortunate he and the people of the U.S. are to have been able to experience such wonderful progress. Then, for him to be able to hike, backpack and canoe the quiet, beautiful, woods, streams and lakes any weekend he wishes is like “a dream too good to be true.”

It is clear to him, that had he not practically “forced” his way into the Navy, bad ear and all, he wouldn’t have enjoyed that comradeship and teamwork experience. He was also given the opportunity to develop supervisory skills and acquaintance with, and somewhat of an understanding of different races, colors and origins. And later, of course, the GI Bill supplemented his full-time job, and allowed him to raise a large family and earn his first two university degrees. He has always kept several “balls in the air” at any one time, and at age 68, that hasn’t changed.

He continued his career at Maryland State Workers’ Compensation Commission (WCC) until January 31, 1999, then retired. He had hoped he

could see that communication, training, development, and morale were improved. The injured workers, the employees at WCC and the insurers, attorneys, and taxpayers deserve and expect professional leadership.

Jay planned to canoe, hike and backpack on weekends with a few other days off during the year. He had seriously been considering completing the last 2000 miles of the Appalachian Trail (AT) after retirement. He had completed well over 150 miles of a connected section from Virginia into Pennsylvania plus some in North Carolina and New Jersey. However, he has become excited about hiking and backpacking some of the Glacier National Park in Canada and Montana. Alaska appeals to him also.

In addition, he would like to tie one of his canoes on top of his car and drive across country to the central northwest U.S., canoeing or hiking and fishing in interesting spots in Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Arkansas, Wyoming and Montana in the process of going to Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. He has lightly approached Bell with the idea; however, her idea of “roughing it” is to stay in a motel that doesn’t have a sauna or Roman bath. Before any of that, however, he had to have (and recover from) rotator-cuff surgery on his right shoulder.

A funny thing happened on the way to becoming a couch potato or a canoe bum: he started his own employee and organizational development business. He specializes in strategic planning, customer service, training and development, coaching managers and supervisors and improving productivity in organizations. In addition, he had serious internal bleeding which put him in the hospital for three days. Luckily, the worst problems were an ulcer, a benign polyp and a navel-related hernia - all of which were corrected with surgery in 1999.

One dream he had was to purchase a small farm where he could have a pig or two, a cow and horse or two, and a chicken or two. He doesn’t wish to go commercial, although in a matter of a few weeks, he knows he could brush up on his animal nutrition, health and breeding principles and make a profit. He believes his children and grandchildren should know something about farm animals.

However, he has put that on hold. He took a full-time contractual position in assisting Ryan in marketing and writing of proposals for a multinational computer corporation. He is trying to get his training and development business off the ground. Not easy.

Probably more space should have been given to Bell’s contribution in this book. Certainly, the importance she played in over 48 years of Jay’s life and her own story has only been touched on and could fill a fascinating book. Still a healthy, animated, yet personally introverted, caring “workaholic,” she cheerfully volunteers her time to assist her children, fami-

ly, friends or church without hesitation. She is constantly keeping the streets and highways hot. From a close-knit first-generation Italian-American family, she has provided a home for Jay, nine children and several of the 15 grandchildren from time to time. Truly, she's the controlling matriarch of the family – controlling all except Jay. Most of the time, Bell was even able to keep Jay out of trouble.

At approximately age 45, she went to the University of Nebraska and earned a bachelor's degree, and some graduate hours, in education, graduating with a 3.45 average out of a possible 4.0. She usually did her studying at the dining room table and maintained the household and provided "taxi services" for sleep-overs, sports events, car repairs and school and church events. That included tutoring her own children and neighbors' children. She then taught fourth grade at a parochial school for five years while serving as a volunteer assigned to work closely with young families who were apparently abusing or neglecting their children. Jay hid in the office or his bedroom or Don's fraternity to study and managed a C+. Oh, well!

Bell then obtained a position as a computer salesperson and after self-teaching herself to understand computers and "computer-ese" language and how they work, she became a top salesperson for five years. Then she switched careers into insurance for several years and became fully licensed as a Maryland agent for insurance and mutual funds investments. Desiring to spend more time with the family, she began working directly for an insurance agent for salary plus some commission, and did so until he retired. She then began successfully working in photography, financial matters and sales for her brother's studio.

H.E. had prostate cancer surgery in May, 1997, and has struggled with high and low blood pressure. He recovered slowly, however, and at age 70 is able to drive tractors and do from light to heavy farm work, if slowly. He still directs the church choir every week and is a pillar of the community.

As for the "little Timers and little Bells," all live in Maryland, except for Sarah: Karen got married to John Penota and left Maryland State Social Services; Carl works for a computer company doing professional work on local area networks and still plays the drums in bands. He's married, with one daughter, who was born in 2001. Bertha finished her BA degree and is married with three boys and two girls. One of her sons made her a grandmother and Jay a great-grandfather in 2001 with a beautiful girl. Jannell is a full-time teacher and is married with two girls. Sadly, Merle (40) passed away suddenly in his sleep in April of 2002, after suffering an undiagnosed heart attack. He was living in Ohio, where he had been preparing to re-enter college. He had been an auto body worker and did

miscellaneous work and had been in an Ohio college and still single.

Joyce, meanwhile, works as a senior analyst for a medical insurance group, has completed her BA in Business, and is married with one girl and two boys.

Sarah is living in North Carolina, is divorced and has two sons; Emily is a secretary, is married and gave birth to their first child, Jay's 12th grandchild (a girl) in April 1997, and then another girl in 2001. Jeff finished training to operate computer programs. If you've kept count up to now, you'll know that there are currently 15 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

There's a noisy 25-26 people, making a house seem full, even when only part of them get together on special and not so special occasions. It is a friendly atmosphere and for the most part they are a happy family. All the children are maintaining their health by staying on prescribed medication. Two of the grandchildren are now staying with their father in Florida, where their dad is recovering from heart problems.

Jay is still active in the Mountain Club of Maryland, a 65-year-old hiking, backpacking and canoe outdoor group with more than 800 members. Having served as nominating chairman for three years, he became acquainted with some wonderful people who volunteer their time and efforts in improving lives of people in Maryland and surrounding states.

Although Jay has weakness and pain in his lower body from time to time, whatever he does, he will commit himself to "making it work," and will enjoy it, I'm sure. He led some backpacks and canoe trips in 2000 and 2001, and a canoe trip during April and May, 2000. He also helped recently on a tough, eight-mile hike. Six of the 15 hikers were long-time co-hikers whom he enjoyed immensely.

He did just fine physically and loved the people, the challenge, the rocks, the climb, the descents, the trees, the river and the flowers!

If you could write an epitaph for this man, what would it say? How about:

*JAY ARTHUR: HE LOVED LIFE - AND THE PEOPLE WHO
SHARED IT WITH HIM!*

THE END

