Meandering Musings

I recently invited a friend for lunch to discuss this paper I am presenting. I sent him a copy for his edification before we met. He has not been a guest at one of our meetings but has a sense of the group's purpose of presenting papers on a variety of subjects. As a sometime writer himself of a column in a local weekly newspaper, I wanted his thoughts and suggestions as I read the draft to him ... and while waiting for our table, as a preemptive defense to his usual sharp opinions, I told him I wasn't interested in a hatchet job and hoped he would keep the comments constructive and selective ... what follows are notes of some of his comments.

Sure enough, he immediately broke in ...

"So, whatdaya want, Jim, "half or three-quarter truths?"

"Come-on ... we're just gitin' started here," was my whinny rejoinder.

We waited in silence a moment or two and then were ushered to our table back in the corner, telling our server we didn't need menus, just coffee. We sat and exchanged thoughts about his upcoming vacation and touched briefly on the latest neighborhood news and his column last week.

He offered another dig ...

"First, Jim, before we really get into this, I gota' say, 'meandering musings'?... Makes no sense ...strike it ... get a nice, catchy title ... anyway, in point of fact, musings don't meander ... "

He paused, then continued ...

"So, listen, what's this paper about? ... I read it ... what is it you want your audience to take from it ... "

I thanked him for the good opening for me ... and continued ...

Bob Hilton and Gibson Carey, two long-time faithful members and believers in the Club's traditions, thought a member needs to leave a piece of himself with his audience ... I believe that.

Incidentally, see, generally Gibby's paper, *Unwritten Rules: Some Guidelines for a First Paper*, November 10, 2010.

That's why I wrote this paper ... my essays are personal ... personal encounters in a variety of circumstances which may call to mind similar experiences of the membership.

I didn't pause but just started reading before he could break in again.

...and notwithstanding his complaint, my paper is still titled ...



Meandering Musings

1729 West 106th Place

... this, my first story, is the address of my home in Chicago where I spent a lot of time and youthful energy, running and playing, biking and throwing snowballs ... it's a trip back to that time when every day was Saturday ... those summers when the Good Humor ice cream truck cruised "da neighborhood," where we raced our "fat tire" bikes and played countless games of kick the can, oh, and remember your paper routes with those giant bags hooked on your handlebars holding tightly rolled-up papers, rendering the bike way out of balance and almost uncontrollable? The papers were ready for you to throw to or at people's porches while you biked past without stopping, unless there was the tinkle of breaking glass; remember how to roll them up? ... and no fair using rubber bands or "NY Times" blue plastic bags.

Remember, those shouts of "Oley, Oley ocean free", or was it "all come free," ... or something else?

My friend added

"OK. My mind is now focused on my own time as a kid ... on Principio, going to Kilgour School, and running around Ault Park ... sorry to interrupt ... go ahead ..."

These were my pre-high school years on Chicago's South Side, da'Beverly/Morgan Park Neighborhood ... c'mon', turn back to your own pre-high school years ... in my case, those days ran from V-J Day to high school ... I was seven when we moved to Chicago from Coffeyville, Kansas and I vividly remember V-J Day, in August, 1945, just before we moved, and sitting on my father's lap steering our 1941 Ford around-and-around Coffeyville's small downtown, probably along with the town's entire population joining the festivities, everyone honking, honking, honking horns ... after all, the War was over! ... the boys were coming home! ... I understood that.

Summertime found us downing a hearty bowl of Wheaties the "Breakfast of Champions!" We'd carefully clipped cereal box-tops to send for the official "FBI in Peace and War Signal Ring" or "Captain Midnight's Spy Spotter." Or, perhaps after a quick real whole-family sit-down dinner maybe it was your turn to clear the table and help dry dishes, ... then we'd dash from the house,

usually staying out until it was getting dark. It was often kick-the-can, street baseball, World War Two army games, which always ended in arguments ... "I gotcha first ... no, you didn't ... and besides, you tripped me."

Summer brought other conflicts: clashes between new fat-tire bikers and little kids with their herky-jerky actions using that key trying to keep those adjustable roller skates clamped on black Converse high-top gym shoes, or cruising around with their Radio Flyer Red Wagons. There was probably a broken arm of someone falling from a tree in Dick and Billy Sanders' yard, Sometimes, the dreaded "you'll-put-your-eye-out" Red Ryder BB guns, and always a bit of pushing and shoving usually involving Rich Boyle who grew up to become a fullback at Notre Dame in the later '50s.

We let the younger kids play kick-the-can to make it more exciting ... the more the merrier ... lots of bushes around to hide behind... lots of arguing – "I got to the can first ... no, you didn't ... I'm going home and takin' the can with me".

In the Spring, Memorial Day was a big deal of parades and flags, the time for honoring our soldiers and riding our fat tire bikes down Longwood Drive with the Morgan Park High School marching band, a band I later belonged to for several years — we'd march up to Ridge Park and listen to taps drifting over the field coming from a spot behind a nearby Park building. We decorated our bikes with crepe-paper streamers and used a Joker playing card purloined from our parents' bridge club decks of cards ... and, using one of those wooden laundry clothespins, clipping it to a fender brace and bending it just so ... so it would hit the spokes of the bike's fat-tire sending a rat-a-tat-tat fluttering sound, "just like a motor."

Winter brought its own focus ... snowmen – sticks for arms, someone's knitted wool hat as a top-off, pieces of coal for eyes, a carrot for a nose ... remember toboggans? ... great sledding for 3 or more of us piled on an almost uncontrollable wooden sled ... and the snowball fights ... high school kids versus the much more numerous younger kids ... Chicago winters were cold ... winds off the Lake ... sometimes a kid was hit in the face with an icy snowball followed by tears and shouts "...that was a dirty throw ... not fair ... you're bigger than us and, besides, I'm telling my big brother ..." and sometimes we'd scatter ending the snowballing for we knew who his big brother was.

I have a Brownie Camera snap-shot of a welcome home we gave the son of a neighbor when he returned from the Korean War ... we painted a big banner, someone's very old worn-out bedsheet, "Welcome Home Oakie" ... attendees included all the neighborhood's dogs and of course Oakie's boxer, Duke, lots of different bikes, and oh, none of those silly European bikes with the brakes on those stumpy little handle bars. Yes, the usual crowd was there ... Billy, Larry, Tony Semfrobebo, Dick LaPan, the Kaminskis ... others.

I enjoyed writing this part of the paper ... this returning ... when, as kids, we really did believe every day was Saturday.

Well, on to another story line ... here's one a completely different subject.

"Urban Pioneers"

By 1989 or so, our children had graduated from college and were now on their own scattered all over, Wes in Brooklyn he and his wife editors of children's and young adult books at Farrar Straus Giroux, Jenny in Chicago, teaching at the University of Chicago's Lab School and Will, U of Colorado-Denver and working full-time at Target ... and all nice cities to visit.

For 20 years, we'd lived on Stanley Lane in Columbia-Tusculum, next-door neighbors of the stalwart well-known Mrs. Pauly and her sons, you may remember her, and who, at age 90 (give or take), every Spring still ran her rota-tiller through the soil in her vegetable garden and who, one winter day while sledding down Stanley Lane hill, - not Stanley Avenue - flipped over, broke her leg, and crawled back up the hill seeking help.

We were looking for a smaller house with a river view and spent many Sunday afternoons driving up and down both sides of the River to locate that perfect affordable vista of the Ohio River Valley. But, unfortunately, everything we saw was too far out of town with lengthy commutes and heavy traffic and lots of major road construction.

But out of the blue, our real estate broker called ... "Say, how 'bout a house in Covington ... on the River?"

On our first house inspection, we could see this house had not seen a hammer or saw or a finish carpenter, let along an architect, nor had it recently received any fresh paint. We also learned that the 1937 flood waters had risen half-way up the walls of the first floor causing, in the broker's words, the floor to "slightly buckle."

The immediate area was composed of older houses, the house next door circa 1840, at least one dating from about 1820 and most from the middle of the Nineteenth Century, only one or two of which had been renovated in any manner, and almost all suffering the indignity of years of being divided into multiple lower rent apartments.

Upon entering the subject house, the first time, my immediate reaction was, and I quote, "You've got to be kidding."

But after several additional and still depressing inspections, and lots of consultations with an architect and building contractors, we decided that, "yes, this would work" albeit with a lot of imagination and money, and a willing bank, whose vice president incidentally called us "urban pioneers" at the closing of the purchase of the house. Almost a year later, remodeling sort'a done, we moved in, and over the years, have continued renovations.

We enjoy watching the comings and goings in George Rodgers Park for the Park hosts all manner of public festivals, Boy Scout groups, yoga classes, an annual art show, endless photo ops for weddings, graduation, engagements and fashion models, an occasional wedding itself presided-

over by the local Covington Notary Public, the Right and Reverend Father John Hoffman (\$25 please), several Tall Stack events, a visit by Columbus' ship, the Pinta, the Lewis and Clark reenactors camping in the Park for a week using our shower every day, the dynamiting of the old Riverfront Stadium and the Cincinnati-Newport Bridge not to mention the thousands of spectators gathered for the annual Labor Day and periodic Cincinnati Reds "game winning fireworks", of course, with the recent last place records of the Reds, there have been fewer "game-winning" Red fireworks.

"Floods?", you ask. I have to relate our experience with the '97 flood, a recent flooding ... so, as the musicians say, a "Coda" follows, this one titled ...

*

"If the Crik Don't Rise. I'll be there."

Technically, it's a "flood" when the Ohio reaches about 52 feet; pool is about 25 feet.

The 1937 flood reached 80 feet, probably more.

In 1997, almost 65 feet.

I was working in 1997 on a case out of our Lexington Office, at the very time of the normal flooding periods.

When I returned to Lexington, on Monday of "flood week", the River was still rising, but no one really anticipated a flood at the level it ultimately reached. I was monitoring the situation and soon was "called home" to deal with, yes, it was a real a flood, and yes, the River was still rising and yes, it may crest at or in our home.

When I arrived home, the City, the Chiefs of both the Police and Fire Departments, and utilities company had already turned off the utilities of all the homes on Riverside Drive and evacuated the residents, and were poised to also tell us our utilities were being turned-off and to immediately evacuate leaving our home to suffer the indignity of flooding , destroying a goodly amount of interior furnishings and personal effects.

The Park and our street were both filled with crowds of neighbors, the curious public, and television cameras and technical personal keeping all this electrical wiring, generators, and allied equipment not only running but operating so that no one was going to be electrocuted as the rapidly rising River.

And, indeed, very soon, the River covered the entire Park leaving a 10 foot of dry Park land next to our house in the alley ... and it was still rising, albeit at a slower pace ...we waited for the order to evacuate.

Toward the end of this "River-rising stage", I was standing in my dining room watching the media gather about 15 feet away to provide film for their 6 or 11 o'clock news shows. CNN, and the rest

were standing on a sheet of plywood. By the time they started their drumbeat warnings of catastrophe, the River had risen to their shoes, and the flood continued rising and very soon had had covered – not dampened, but covered - their shoes, causing a quick two-step dance to that ten foot of remaining dry space of dry Park-land as they quickly ended their report thereby breaking the electrical circuit of water, electricity, and their hand-held microphones.

The River stopped rising!

The '97 flood crested officially at 64.7 feet ... lucky were we ... reaching about 10 feet from our garage doors ... no water in our basement or electricity cut-offs or orders to evacuate.

My friend broke in ...

"For the next threatened flood think about reserving that life-sized ark down in Williamstown ...

Ignoring his weak attempt at humor, "OK," I said, "Let's move on ... here are some recollections of our youngest son ... "



Will

My wife and I weren't certain where son Will's mechanical skills came from. I'm a lawyer, not an engineer. My chemist father could fix just about anything but I was only his assistant, his hander-of-tools as in "hand me that large Philips screwdriver". My father's gene pool had to have contributed to Will's skills.

My friend spoke up ...

This better be good ... everyone has kids and everyone thinks they're special and wonderful.

"You are absolutely correct," I said, "and these thoughts are my thoughts ... my disclaimer is that nothing is intended nor should be implied or inferred. That OK?"

I read on ...

So, here's Will, in kindergarten or first grade at Kilgour School, the class having been assigned the task of drawing a picture of their homes ... an innocent enough assignment. His house drawing looks pretty much like it should ... but he had drawn it as if it were *x-rayed* ... instead of windows and doors or the white wooden siding, he drew the home's internal hot and cold-water pipes and internal electrical wiring down into the basement. This was the beginning of something, but we knew not what.

After the "x-rayed house," unknown to us, he had started to mess with our intercom system tied into our landline phones. Cincinnati Bell sent a techie to check things out ... My wife found them in Will's fort in the crawl space under the slope of the roof ... Will and the techie scrunched down

on kiddy-sized footstools seriously discussing operational aspects of telephone and intercom systems.

He soon moved up the electrical and mechanical complexity ladder by our visiting Saturday's estate and yard sales buying up and repairing broken vacuum sweepers, and when we later moved, we found 25 sweepers he had repaired, secreted in the attic.

Next on his activity list was collecting and paying for complicated "in-the-car-door" electrical window switches and wiring, all removed from junked cars at Schneider's Junk Yard on Kellogg Ave. But, alas, his periodic searches stopped abruptly one Saturday when Mr. Schneider, who was fortunately working hard to hold his lunging junk yard dog, Leroy, not only stopped us and told us to leave but, as we were leaving, yelled, "Don't come back!" ...

Yes! ... in fact, we had been thrown out of a junk yard ... and ... barred for life!

Nearing the age when he would obtain his driver's license, we should have expected Will's next step would involve complete automobiles ... and having listened to hours and hours of tapes about how to repair VW engines, what would Will select as his first set of wheels but of course, an iconic 1977 "Age of Aquarius" VW bus. His first was not in the best of shape but he got it running. It was apparent it wouldn't run much longer so he purchased a second VW bus, to serve as a parts bus and combine the best operating parts from each ... then he thought he would have at least one bus that worked to drive every day to Seven Hills.

A quick aside: to pay for his tools and stuff, Will always had a job ... a summer "Enquirer" job program, time in the kitchen and serving at Marjorie P. Lee, cleaning elderly folks bird cages and so forth.

I assisted in one part of the project, switching engines ... you heard correctly ... in our garage, on a Saturday, take the bad one engine out ... remove the "good" one from the parts van, and install it in the surviving VW bus. Because of all my training as a tool-hander, I felt I was well prepared to assist.

My friend spoke up.

I can't imagine ...

"You mean actually detaching one engine from the bus, taking the engine out of one bus ... the whole thing ... and moving it to the bus he was hoping would run ... putting it in and connecting it all up... so, it would actually start and run?"

That Saturday, at the end of the day, we had done it ... it took a bit of fiddling, double-checking and tightening connecting parts, looking on the garage floor to find missing washers and wires and making certain any engine- looking part found its way to the hopefully soon, running van.

Ultimately, he actually started it late that Saturday afternoon and quickly, before my wife and I could act, off he drove around the neighborhood without any driver's license or even a learner's

permit. At some point he took the engine apart and cleaned it and brought it mechanically up to snuff.

A few years later, he matriculated to Denver for college, he had climbed up another rung in the complexity automotive ladder and into the world of Audi, his first being a 1980 5000 T.

He bought another Audi, wrestled it into shape, and placed it on eBay and waited for a flood of bids ... alas, none came but shortly hereafter, he received a call directly from Audi in Germany to arrange a date for an inspection by Audi German mechanics already in Colorado Springs, who upon arrival in Denver, proceeded to crawl all over the Will's Audi. Since Audi didn't have that particular model in its museum collection, it purchased it from Will and placed it in its hypermodern museum in Ingolstadt, Germany.

A couple years passed and last year, on a hunch, he just called Audi of America and sold another, this one, a restored 1974 100 LS, to Audi of America for its display at a major media event in New York City, a celebration of Audi of America's 50th Anniversary of business in America.

With that sale, Will somewhat retired from the auto restoration business.

My friend spoke up ...

"Wait!" ... didn't you mention another car one time to me ... a Porsche, perhaps ...?

...yes, I said, a Porsche 914 ... but so far, Porsche hasn't called so his yellow spotless 914 sits in his Denver garage.

I'm ending this story recalling the fun we had watching and participating in Will's journeys in electrical and mechanical complexities.

Certainly, you recall a road traveled with your own kids, your grandkids, their paths could have been a soccer field... or library ... or some wilderness mountain trail ...

Judging from my friend's body language, it was apparent he couldn't sit still, couldn't hold back any more, and broke in ... and I was losing patience with him ...

"Say, didn't you tell me that you had written something for this paper about Al Capone and his Outfit or mob whatever it's called ... I'm looking forward to hearing it ... did you cut it?"

Actually, yes, but it survived until the last draft and was cut just prior to the final run-through of edits and corrections.

While it did contain some interesting situations, in the final analysis, it just seemed to be out-of-place. Growing up in Chicago, I had a mild interest reading of organized crime's escapades it just didn't fit this paper ... or the subjects of Club papers in general. If you're interested for a glimpse,

log onto the Chicago Crime Commission. By the way, in addition to the usual data of The Outfit, the Commission now includes statistics and an index of all the City's current drug gangs by neighborhoods.

So ... with that, let me move on ...

*

Mrs. Pepper's Manuscript

This piece was inspired by discovery of a book which raised thoughts about a timely subject ... thoughts about addictions to substances and how one family coped.

A couple years ago, I was invited to attend a group supporting David Pepper on the publication of his then new book, "The People's House".

What really caught my attention in his remarks was a book he referenced which had been privately published by his father which is available through Amazon. It's titled, *The Fourth White Gown – A Daughter's Addiction – A Mother's Battle*. I followed up later and ordered a copy.

- It was written by John's mother between 1964 and 1968 and placed in an unlabeled box probably soon headed to the attic. Its existence was not disclosed to her son, John.
- Elizabeth, John's sister, died of a drug overdose in 1972, Mrs. Pepper died in 1975 of natural causes.
- In 2015, the hand-written undated manuscript was discovered by Francie, John's wife, and
- In 2016, John Pepper put it in shape for publication.

The first reading of her manuscript must have been difficult ... only 156 pages long, it traced several years of her daughter Elizabeth's frequent episodes of alcoholic behavior, drug overdoses, repeated rehabs and relapses, thefts of family valuables to trade or pawn for narcotics, straight-jackets, escapes from mental hospitals and rehab facilities, and so forth. Mrs. Pepper wrote of her own tragic devastating fears and repeated reactions to the slow but steady movement down Elizabeth's path of addiction and, given the depth of Elizabeth's addiction, to the most likely conclusion.

The initial cause was the prescribing of pain pills following Elizabeth's knee injury while playing ice hockey and, tragically, followed by repeated failures of operations and medical treatments

Mrs. Pepper's manuscript was about her responses and frustrations to her child's cries for help, and Elizabeth's anger with herself and the inability of mother and daughter to stop the descent. In her paper, Mrs. Pepper's sought the strength to "never give up" and even, to her credit watching and fighting her daughter's addictive behavior, she didn't give up ... nor should anyone else confronting this disease.

Today, there is a greater awareness of the perils of addiction particularly regarding pain-relief medication, more treatment facilities are available and we see deeper, more sensitive and quicker medical responses ... sadly, Ohio and Kentucky still rank as a couple of the worst states in terms of numbers of addictions and over-doses.

John Pepper's "Afterword" in the book spoke of its publication as "spreading awareness of this epidemic and the need to support people who are helping those addicted to recover."

The mother's draft paper could have been kept private ... it might never have seen the light of day. For that, the Pepper family deserves our appreciation.



My First Day at Frost & Jacobs

My last story is the memory of that first day ... but not the memory I anticipated.

It was mid-August 1963 ... the weather? a typical Cincinnati bright sunny August day, hot, humid; clothing, a sincere lawyers' pin-striped dark grey suit, at least I wore no vest ...

equipment: a brand-new lawyer litigation bag, obviously a law school graduation gift, containing a Big Chief pad of lawyer paper and a pen and pencil

time 8:45 a.m ...

it's Monday, I'm in the then Union Central Building at 4th and Vine standing in Frost & Jacobs' 23rd floor Reception Room, asking for Mr. Headley, the hiring partner.

I said to the receptionist/switchboard operator, "Mr. Headley, please;" I was met with a curt, "Whose calling?", "Jim ... " and just as I was adding my last name, I was quickly interrupted by the next, and a one-word instruction, "Hava'seat."

A ten-minute pause ... suddenly a door swings open ... Headley emerged, "Jim, how are ya'? m'on in."

Maybe you remember Jim Headley ... grey hair, tall - six eight or so, the aura of a formal dres-sage' competitor, which is what he was in the 1930s when a member of the Army Reserves.

Headley's office was a bit smaller than I expected with a large window air conditioner earnestly banging away attempting to deal with the City's humidity. Of course, since you couldn't carry on a conversation with this thundering A/C unit, Headley turned it off when we entered ... necessary also because, as I learned later, he was deaf in one ear from boyhood scarlet fever. His deafness, by the way, was the reason he was discharged from the Army Reserves in the late 1930s.

"Well, how are you ... I'm still grading the Bar Exam test papers and ..."

With that, a fog ... a run-a-way fear enveloped my consciousness, ... I was afraid he had in-hand my Bar Exam Blue Book and was going to ask me why I answered a question the way I did ... obviously I missed the rest of his sentence. But I did perk-up near the end when Headley said, "... and by the way ... I'm not sure how much we're paying you".

The next thing I clearly remember is Headley springing up from his desk, telling me, "Come on... let's get you a yellow pad and get you to your office, c'om on," he urged, ... sorta felt a bit like an order.

Out the door he went, I followed, but since I'm always a friend of any map, I paused to check-out a map on his office wall titled, "Travels with Headley." It displayed 3 or 4 red pins ... and quickly turning, ... noting to myself that I'd check it out later.

On I went to catch up ... up the stairs to the 24th floor, the walls of the stairway in the traditional light grey marble found in men's rest-rooms in all railroad and bus stations, then down a hall and into the library.

"Here," he said. "You're sharing the library with that other new fellow, he's over there by the 'phone and your work space is that table over there," adding, "I started at \$25 a week in my father's law office so you can work here, sharing the space with that other fella. I'll go get you a problem to work on. See ya' for lunch", and he turned and was gone.

A few minutes later ...the phone rang ... my office-mate answered, and, handing the 'phone to me, and with a lyrical tone and a grin on his face, saying, "Here, it's for you. Miss Dahman the office manager asked for 'that new guy.' That's you."

My guess was she handled the tracking of associates' legal research projects, but ...

"Hello ... Yes ... Thank you.

"OK ... I can do that.

"Yes, 8th Street, Piatt Park, yea I know it", having of course no idea where that was.

"Golden Rule ... yes, I'll come get the ticket."

There was no reason I should have then understood the importance of this mission but I soon learned Frost & Jacobs had just purchased its first large office-sized multi-cup coffee machine which promptly failed its only assigned mission ... and here I was, 90 degrees outside in a dark suit, facing an 8 block walk to pick up a rather large piece of important now hopefully fully operative equipment and lug, I think that is the best description, lug it back to 4th and Vine which would, I was told, placate the F&J lawyers who were dismayed when this brand-new multi-cup coffee maker had been abruptly sent to the Golden Rule repair shop.

So, after the first day, and with the delivery of that large multi-cup coffee maker, I could say that three years of law school had brought me essentially only to the point of serving as a temporary

UPS delivery guy, but sans those dark brown rubber running shoes, but nonetheless well-dressed in my dark suit, now sweaty white shirt and rep tie.

That evening, upon reflection, I concluded that today I had learned that a Frost & Jacobs lawyer always undertook the necessary action to do the job properly.



Conclusion

With that, I conclude this paper ... maybe one-of-these vinyets has struck a responsive chord in your experiences. They're a bunch of personal stories each of which were simply fun to write ... they are personal recollections, and I leave them all with this body ... hopefully, Bob and Gibbie aren't turning over and over in Spring Grove.

My friend had to interrupt once more ...

"I found it interesting, Jim. I liked it ...thanks for the chance to hear it read. Good luck. ...

"... oh, by the way, those red pins in Headley's map ... what in the ...?"

Yes, those red pins ... "Travels with Headley" ...

Well, I did find out later about that ... those red pins were islands he in fact had visited in 1944 and 1945 ... Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima and following those visits he decorated with 2 Navy Crosses and 2 Silver Stars ... and his deafness was noticed in 1945 at the time of his discharge from the Marine Corp and forced his Battalion Physician to disapprove his promotion. He also told me he had a hard time making Headley wear his helmet. Headley's excuse was that he couldn't hear too well if he wore it.

With that Gentlemen, we end this historic evening ... the first internet electronic presentation of The Literary Club, the oldest continually meeting literary club in the United States. And remember, be sure to tune in next week ... same time and station ... when another paper will be presented by a member of Cincinnati's own Literary Club.

Good night everybody.

James R. Adams

The Literary Club

March 30, 2020

