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BUDGET

November 29, 1999

- 1 - Ars Gratia Gratuity. Frank G. Davis
- 2 - Oh My Yes. Holden Wilson, Jr.
- 3 - The Penultimate Party. Lewis G. Gatch

1

Ars Gratia Gratuity

"Another towel please, MACHELLE"

"Darling, that's your third. What will she think?" whispered PATTY to her entrepreneur husband, ARTHUR FILCHER, as the 747 started its descent to Nice.

"Who cares what a stewardess thinks?" Art replied. "Stop worrying about other people now - everything's under control". He applied the steaming fabric to his face, humming with pleasure at the sensation.

Leaning back in his spacious first class seat, ART FILCHER reviewed the remarkable events of the last 1-1/2 years. A graduate of Pratt Institute, he had found slim pickings as an associate curator at the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh. Then, by a happy coincidence, he had crossed paths with JOHN W. DEALER, a trustee of the museum and himself famous as an art collector. JACK DEALER had first achieved fame as a redoubtable nose tackle on Pittsburgh's professional football team. He had then parlayed his career as a Steeler into a hugely successful career as a dealer in steel products. The J. Wheeler Dealer Co., his own creation, was as famous in the world of steel as J.W. DEALER, art collector, had become in the art world. So when ART FILCHER curated a modest exhibit of Pennsylvania Picassos, he had been pleased and flattered when MR. DEALER had sought him out at the opening and talked to him at length about the Picasso market.

That conversation led to others, followed by business luncheons, drinks at WHEELER'S club, and finally a job offer which ART was delighted to accept.

Now, landing safely at Nice, he and PATTY hired a Citroën and drove casually westward on A8 to Aix-en-Provence, where Mr. Dealer had reserved them rooms at the hotel Paul Cézanne.

This was not their first visit to Provence. ARTHUR had been there before on an exploratory mission for DEALER. DEALER'S Paris agent, GASPAR TOUTE, had agreed to take ART under his wing. Due to ART'S natural empathy, he was easily able to ingratiate himself with strangers, and his training at Pratt had given him considerable expertise in art appreciation. GASPAR had sent him on a trial run to the Piccardy chateau of the semi-senile COUNT EMOUT. The COUNT was

reported to have tucked away in his small collection a small Picasso from his cubist period, entitled "UMBRELLA WITH VIOLIN STRINGS". ARTHUR FILCHER had persuaded the COUNT to hire him, for a modest fee, to catalogue the COUNT'S entire collection. Not surprisingly, the finished catalogue did not list the Picasso, which returned to Paris with FILCHER, FILCHER'S fee and the mindless gratitude of the COUNT, who had forgotten all about the Picasso. "What Picasso?" Whey the one now stashed in the WHEELER DEALER private collection in Pittsburgh, naturally.

This led to ART'S first trip to Aix-en-Provence. Aix is the jumping-off point for the Chateau de Vauvenargues, known to all tour guides as "Picasso's Castle". It is nestled in the shadow of Mount Sainte Victoire, a mountain ironically associated with Cézanne rather than Picasso. For almost 90 years Pablo Picasso had bounced around France and his native Spain like a sparrow in the roadway, tossing off artworks as he went. In 1958 he acquired the Fourteenth Century chateau, now "Picasso's Castle", where he worked on and off for the rest of his life and where he is buried. After his death in 1973, the family and the French tax collectors battled long and hard over his estate.

His family turned over large hunks of his work - painting, sculpture, metal assemblages, etc. to the government to settle the tax claims. Not surprisingly the rest of his output is spread all over the landscape - Barcelona, MOMA in New York, the Tait in London, etc., etc. A lot has gone to earth in way-places, like COUNT EMOUT'S chateau, the DEALER Collection and similar spots. For example: for years insiders have speculated about what ever happened to Pablo's 1930's masterpiece nick-named "La Dame à Trois Nez" - (the Three-Nosed Lady). That was when he was experimenting with combining a full-face and a profile onto one head. As you would guess, the Three-Nosed Lady included, (or was said to include) a third perspective, the full face, the profile and a view, as it were, from below. The rumor was that he had painted it to lampoon his first, then estranged, wife, Olga. Others saw it as a study of his old friend Gertrude Stein or her old friend Alice B. Toklas. Picasso being Picasso, any, all, or none of the above may be possible.

ART FILCHER'S first visit to Picasso's Castle was an effort to determine what of the Master's work might still be on the premises, after Pablo's warring family and the tax collectors had done a disorganized house-cleaning, but no three-nosed lady had been reported. Bearing a letter of introduction from GASPAR TOUTE to the caretaker in residence, ART drove out from Aix in a rented Citroën and arrived at the Chateau. In his luggage was the latest camera equipment, sundry measuring devices and supplies, and, last but not least, a dozen bottles of the best St. Emilion red Bordeaux.

After a couple days of applying the old FILCHER charm, ART had learned that there was a locked downstairs room hung with a few dusty old pieces. The custodian had been charged with keeping it locked until things quieted down, when each of several claimants would quietly return. The custodian bore no love for the warring clans. He was proud and pleased to give ART a key and the run of the room. Sure enough, hung in a shadowy corner in a simple frame was what had to be ART'S quarry, the Three-Nosed Lady, his new-found cher ami. The custodian was happy to let ART photograph and measure several of the pictures, which were supposed to be for the information of GASPAR TOUTE'S agency. Privately the custodian guessed that ART and GASPAR were working for the French tax people, especially when ART suggested that the locks be changed and the keys be hidden. Loading up his equipment plus many detailed photographs of Mrs. Three-nose, ART hastened back to Aix, to Avalon, and then via the high-speed train to Paris.

The many photos and measurements were delivered to PIERRE FORGÈRE, a redoubtable artist and an associate of the TOUTE organization. Selecting a suitable 1930s canvas from his extensive stock, he began to duplicate the Picasso painting.

Several weeks later, ART FILCHER received a long distance call from GASPAR TOUTE. All was ready. A perfect reproduction of the Trés Nez would be delivered to M. FILCHER in person as soon as he called in from the Hotel Cézanne in Aix.

All this explains why ART and PATTY FILCHER were driving casually along A8 to Aix, on the day that this story began. To make a long story short, they checked into the hotel, called Paris, enjoyed themselves that evening, accepted the over-night delivery of a large flat package from Paris, and set out for Picasso's Castle with a different load of equipment but another case of the same wine.

The custodian was delighted to receive Mis-your and his oh-so-charming wife. After a pleasant dinner with the good wine, they descended to the cellars, where the custodian showed them into the locked room. "Untouched", he bragged, "since Mis-your's last visit". Leaving the key in the lock, he went back upstairs to revisit the new stock of St. Emilion.

Downstairs, while PATTY carefully unwrapped the new Three-nosed lady, ART skillfully removed the old one from her frame. He was prepared to draw the tacks and staples from the original stretcher, but PATTY discovered that the new stretcher had been aged and tacked with 1930's tacks. While PATTY carefully dusted the few other pictures in the room, ART cleaned off the old frame and wrapped his prized picture in the wrappings from the new picture. They locked the door. They said goodbye to the custodian. They drove back to the hotel in Aix. The next morning they drove straight through to Paris and the establishment of GASPARD TOUTE. There, in the privacy of TOUTE'S office with only TOUTE, FORGÈRE, and the two FILCHERS present, they unwrapped their prize: "La Dame à Trois Nezes" by Pablo Picasso.

TOUTE picked up a magnifying glass and started to scan the picture. Suddenly he reared back, turned purple and shouted, "Fools! You have brought back the copy, not the original!"

"Impossible" gasped FILCHER, "it never was out of my sight from the time I took it out of the frame".

"Nevertheless, it is not Picasso" snarled TOUTE. "Look at the brush-work on the nose hairs. All wrong!"

"But I know what I did", pleaded ART. "MESSYER FORGÈRE, help me on this".

FORGÈRE took the magnifying glass and contemplated the third nose thoughtfully. "Ah, yes. I recall the time that the brush work was doubtful, but I attributed it to Pablo's emotional state, and copied it with care the most".

TOUTE was somewhat mollified. "The original is evidently a copy. But where is the original original?"

"No" said FORGÈRE. "You underestimate the Master. Not only could he create the new, he could re-create the old. Pablo Picasso RUIZ was a most skillful forger of his own work".

And there the matter must rest.

Frank G. Davis

2

Oh My Yes

"Another towel please, Marcelle."

"Darling, that's your third - what will she think?" whispered the woman to the man next to her, pretending to be her husband, as the 747 started its descent to Nice. His plane ticket identified him as John Cosgrove, an alias he had used many times years before.

"Who cares what a stewardess thinks?", he replied. Stop worrying about other people now, everything's under control." He applied the steaming fabric to his face, while smiling inwardly at the forgoing repartee which would convince any casual observer that they were man and wife.

"Where are we going after Nice?" she asked.

"A day or two of rest and relaxation on the Riviera, getting adjusted to the time change, and then the express train to Paris. The Italian trains have such wonderful food."

The man calling himself Cosgrove leaned back in the spacious first-class seat, once again reviewing the strange twists his life had taken. After college he had taken a sabbatical in New York City before starting a training program.

He had graduated in February to get a jump on the job market. What a joke, as if a four month head start would mean anything in the long run. On 4th street in the Village three of his friends had a third floor walk-up. It was Washington's Birthday so they all had a day off.

After drinking large quantities of milk and a bowl of vichyssoise, to soothe their terrific hangovers, they decided to honor Washington by re-enacting his feat of throwing a silver dollar across the Delaware. His friend, Dave, a history buff, pointed out that this event, like the cherry tree, was just another Washington legend. The Delaware was over a mile wide, and silver dollars were not yet in circulation. George probably threw a crown across the Rappahannock, still a remarkable feat.

The narrow village street would take the place of the river, and since no crown was available, frozen cod fish balls from the freezer were substituted. Much discussion arose about what Washington probably said, while making the throw. It was finally agreed that he probably said, "Take off you *****."

The living room window was lowered from the top, and after several attempts, a cod fish ball cleared the street and into an open window. A loud celebration followed. It was just a matter of minutes before a loud knock sounded at the door. Three young ladies were there with a somewhat smashed cod fish ball, demanding to know what they were trying to do. They were told to relax and invited in. Since it was 5:30 someplace, Martinis were served, shaken but not stirred.

This is how he had met Helen Hudson, whose family was in the blanket business in Ontario. They spent the next few evenings in various bistros, as she shared his love of Dixieland. After work they would walk around the village. He called her Blankie.

Helen worked at the United Nations. Over the next year, whenever he was in New York he would call her. His work with institutions caused him to be in the city every four to six weeks. Typically he could catch a flight Thursday morning and return late Sunday night, which gave them two nights to listen to Dixie, visit 21, and generally enjoy the Big Apple.

A call to Helen late one afternoon announced his surprise visit to the city. Arrangements were made for a dinner the next evening at Lutece, Dutch treat of course, as that kind of restaurant was over his budget. When he picked her up in a cab, she seemed agitated and apologized for having to break their dinner date. She asked if he could drop her at LaGuardia, and promised to call him when she finished her "family business."

He was not to hear from her again. Her roommate had not been able to reach her. She abandoned her clothes and furniture. There was conjecture that this had to do with the U.N., but no concrete explanation was available.

Two years had passed and Helen, like many people that you meet a few times, had faded from his memory. He was in the Ol' South Restaurant in the Dixie Terminal Building, having lunch with his friends, celebrating his 26th Birthday, when nature called. As he stepped into the basement lobby he had almost suffered cardiac arrest. There was Helen.

"Helen - Helen what are you doing here?" he mumbled.

She grabbed his hand and quickly led him through the revolving door to Walnut Street where a blue Plymouth was waiting. She explained that she had left New York as she was identified by the FBI as a Canadian agent. Although she was not engaged in espionage

against the United States, once her identity was known, she felt it best to retreat as soon as possible.

She indicated that she had kept tabs on his career through agents in this country. He was stunned by her request to join British Naval Intelligence. He accepted her entreaty on the spot, as he had always been a great admirer of Elizabeth II Alexandra Mary, the Queen, and Helen was hard to refuse. His only caveat was that his first loyalty would be to the United States.

It was agreed, and he had assisted in missions for the next 6 years, before retiring at the age of 31, to marry, raise a family and lead an inconspicuous life. She would always have a special place in his heart.

Now 40 years later he found himself on another mission. When Helen, now head of F. Section, asked him to come out of retirement, he agreed. It was always hard to say "No" to her.

The plane completed its descent to Nice. It was only after claiming baggage and arriving at their hotel that the couple was able to speak to each other seriously. They retired to the water closet, and with the water running to thwart any listening devices, they finally could make introductions.

"It's nice to meet you. I suppose I should give you the password" he said.

"The world is a half slice of lime."

"The clock strikes at midnight" she replied.

"Who makes up these stupid passwords."

"It's old Davis, I think. He has gone several bridges too far."

"Well Commander, I'm Rhonda Heels."

"It's great to be working with you. That can't be your real name."

"No, of course not! Pussy Galore wasn't her real name either."

"Good point! My name is Stock. James Stock."

"Oh James, I've heard so much about you, the famous OH OH FORE. I thought you retired years ago."

"That's 004. I did, but an old friend convinced me that I am needed for one more mission in service of Her Majesty."

"I don't have the details of the mission yet, but they will be taped under the pay phone by the Men's room in the lobby."

They promptly went to the lobby and Rhonda reached under the pay phone and read the card. "If you want a good time call Daisy at Heatherton 55775."

"That's ridiculous! Look again."

"Here it is. Do you have your decoder ring?"

"Of course, read it to me."

"12-13-76-99-11 1-4-10-721-67-94 821-36-86-16"

"That translates: Proceed to #10 Rue Bear Ducket. Find secret weapon. Destroy. Good luck James. 73's Helen."

Hailing a taxi, they headed for #10 Rue Bear Ducket. Rhonda confided, "I have your weapon James, I snuck it aboard the airplane in the X-ray repellent bra that good old Davis designed for me."

"I thought you looked a bit lopsided at the airport." Stock said, while feeling the balance of his beretta.

"I've heard you were the surest marksman in the agency."

"Yes, I was the best," Stock said modestly. "They used to call me old sure shot."

"I thought that was Annie Oakley."

"Well yes, her too!"

Number 10 was a red brick brownstone of antebellum architecture. Over the doorway under the portico was a sentence written in gold leaf: "Il vient ici celui au pistolet"

"What does it say? You're proficient in French," inquired Stock.

It says, "Here comes one with a pistol."

"My God, they're expecting us. Keep behind me when we get in, Rhonda."

Stock's tie clip had been designed by old Davis. It had seventeen functions. Eighteen if you count holding a tie. In no time, Stock used the clip and the door popped open. As they crept up the stairs, the only noise was the creaking of Stocks arthritic knees. This was no job for an octogenarian. Entering the first door they found themselves face to face with an old adversary. In the corner of the room stood a figure Stock knew well.

"It's been a long time, Dr. Yes," smiled James through gritted teeth.

"Yes, Commander Stock. I've been expecting you. Good-bye James."

With that Yes drew an M-1 from under his tunic, and swung it in Stock's direction.

"Oh my, Yes," he exclaimed while diving to the floor and rolling to his right, the beretta magically appearing in his hand. He took dead aim of Yes' navel and squeezed the trigger. His bifocals had been knocked off during his dive, and the bullet sailed high and to the left. It struck Dr. Yes' right hand knocking the weapon to the floor with a great clatter.

"It's better to be lucky, than good" Stock thought.

He tried to regain his feet, but rheumatic knees would not respond to the challenge. Crawling to a chair he pulled himself upright. A figure lept from the shadows, waving a baseball bat. The first blow knocked Stock to the floor. "Ah," he thought, "probably a Louisville Slugger."

The next blow felled Stock for good. Before loosing consciousness James thought, "It feels like a Ted Williams model."

Moments later, Stock's eyes fluttered as he heard Rhonda's urging voice "Get up James Get up. Get up."

He was able to open one eye and found a familiar figure standing over him, as he lay prone next to his bed. With arms akimbo, his wife stood over him.

"What are you doing on the floor?"

"Get up - Get up," she implored. "You wanted a little nap after dinner, but now you're going to be late for the Literary Club."

Holden Wilson Jr.

The Penultimate Party

"Another towel please, Marcelle, and some more champagne."

"Darling, that is your third towel and fourth bubbly - what will she think?" whispered Nouvelle to her husband as the 747 started its descent to Nice.

"Who cares what a stewardess thinks?" he replied. "Stop worrying about other people - we've got it made now - after the year I've had. Talk about a coup - when this is over, I'm going to write it up for the marketing boys at the Harvard business school." He gently wrapped the steaming fabric on his face - purring with pleasure at the sensation.

Reclining in the spacious upper-deck seat, S. Martin Aleck thought about his success of the year past, a process he would no doubt indulge in frequently during the coming weeks while sipping champagne on the deck of their villa in Menton - looking over the Mediterranean. They could have stayed with the others in Monte Carlo, headquarters of the International Champagne Society, where the victory celebration was happening, but the quieter Menton seemed the better choice. They would be in Monte Carlo and Nice for the celebrations, but a short drive up the coast towards Italy would bring them back to Menton - away from the touristas. The farmers market in town would be redolent with the aroma of mimosa. They would start each day with a goblet of liquid mimosa - fresh orange juice from the southern coast of France with an equal part of Dom Perignon. Yes, the last weeks of 1999 and the first weeks in 2000 held great promise - for good times and copious thanks for a job well done.

Marty had hustled all his life. After college, finding himself married to Nouvelle, he parlayed these skills into a full time position with a public relations firm in Manhattan. The first few years found Marty expending his creative energy on the Home Depot account. Sales surged, the stock price skyrocketed, yet Marty was unfulfilled. He did better fixing a martini than a clogged drain. Thus, it was with great delight that late in 1998, Marty learned that his company had won the International Champagne Society's business, and management of the account was up for grabs. He applied early and often. With his demonstrated knowledge of the product, he convinced the boss that he should run the ICS campaign.

The ICS was a new trade group. With the emergence of legitimate producers in California, the French had become less haughty. They realized that decent champagne was being bottled worldwide. With the French connection, vintners had joined forces to form this worldwide marketing association. It was up to Marty to sell the product in America. He decided he would not be content with a mere 10% increase in U.S. consumption in 1999, the goal of the ICS, which tied an incentive bonus for his company to each percentage point gain over 10%. Marty's bonus would be one-third of the

company bonus - if any. Marty learned early in life that when preparedness meets opportunity, something grand will happen. He was prepared, and here was the opportunity. All he needed was a theme for the campaign - some big event that would cause people to buy more champagne in 1999 than in any prior year.

Lightning started to spark as he walked along a cold Manhattan street one morning and noticed a bearded man holding a sign proclaiming "End Of The Millennium - End Of The World - Eleven Months To Prepare." "Wait a minute," Marty thought to himself, "the next millennium is a year and eleven months away, why rush the end of the world?" The same day, he noticed a cruise line ad inviting people to participate in the new millennium cruise departing from Miami on December 28, 1999. Next, he overheard a train conversation about reservations at the Biltmore for a turn-of-the-century party. Marty realized that all these people thought that the turn of the century, the beginning of the next millennium, would take place on January 1, 2000, rather than the appointed time of the Gregorian calendar of January 1, 2001.

If they were going to make it happen a year early, who was S. Martin Aleck to stand in their way? What better way to lubricate the imagined milestone than with copious amounts of champagne? Marty tied the entire campaign to a millennium starting January 1, 2000 and held his breath. It worked. Other than a few bean counter types, and some dusty historians, no one complained. By September, all stock had been sold - including the lesser wines produced on a hurry-up basis by the artificial method. Opportunistic price increases of up to 40% did not dampen sales. Marty's 1999 bonus (paid in October) exceeded \$500,000.

Not only Marty promoted the phantom event. President and Mrs. Clinton decided to entertain on the same premise. D.C. prepared accordingly. Marty was surprised yet gratified at the public's willingness to accept the end of 1999 as the start of the new millennium.

Nouvelle asked for Marty to explain the matter once again. "Why doesn't 2000 on the calendar mean we're starting the next century?"

"You have to look at it from the other end, dear," Marty said. "Let's say you loan me \$2,000. I promise to repay you \$1 per day at midnight starting the day of the loan. I pay on schedule and at midnight on the 1,999th day, I pay you the 1,999th dollar. Have I paid you the \$2,000 I owed you? No. Here's another example. Remember the game pick-up sticks? Assume that you're playing a giant game - one with 2,000 sticks. You drop them on the floor and retrieve them one at a time without moving other sticks. You successfully pick up 1,000. Congratulations. You're half way there. You have just completed the first millennium. Now, you pick up another 999. Have you won? Not until you pick up the last stick of the second 1,000. Likewise, you haven't finished the second millennium until you have completed the 2,000th year. What's hard about that?"

"Well, isn't the calendar system based on the birth of Christ? Doesn't the Bible answer the question for us?" asked Nouvelle.

"Not exactly." said Marty. "When the 6th century scholar, Dionysus, compiled a table of dates of Easter, he used the birth of Christ as the starting event. What he didn't do was establish an accurate date for the birth. Some scholars believe that 1997 marked the end of the second millennium. The Bible only deals with the first 1,000 years," said Marty, "and then, only in Revelation - the last book of the Bible. You will recall that Jesus sent an angel to John to testify to the word of God including prophecies of events to come. What an exciting book! Lots of trumpets and bloodshed - even a message to Philadelphia which I'm not sure was delivered - based on what's happening there today. In the 20th chapter an angel comes down from heaven with a chain and a key to a bottomless pit. He grabs Satan - in the form of an ancient serpent - binds him, and throws him into the pit. He locks the door and seals the pit - not forever, but for a thousand years - after which Satan must be let out for a little while. In verse 7 we learn that when Satan will be released, he will come out to deceive the

nations at the four corners of the earth. In other words, he'll be mad as hell and ready to do some serious damage. Tell me, Nouvelle, at the end on the 999th year do you think his jailers were in any hurry to unlock that serpent? I'll bet they waited until 1,000.

No doubt the author of the book of Revelation didn't plan for the second thousand years, and it doesn't appear they ever recaptured that old snake who has done a lot of harm in the second millennium. By my count, he has one more year to go."

"Well, I guess I understand," said Nouvelle, "but what about everything you read in the paper? In the Post last month, I read a story that the World Peace Bell will ring for the first time in Newport on December 31st. The Millennium Monument Company supplied the bell. The reporter said we'll hear the bell on the last day of the 20th Century. The Post couldn't be wrong, could it?"

Marty could only smile at that one.

"Come on, Marty," said Nouvelle. "Tell me what's going on here. I know you are a genius, but you had a lot of cooperation. You couldn't convince the world to leapfrog a year all by yourself."

Marty explained. "Most people feel as though the next millennium will start this January 1st because of the calendar change, and the Y2K talk. Feelings and emotions, rather than facts and standards, now dictate life in modern America. How many times have you heard a politician tell us that he or she feels our pain. It follows therefore, that the millennium starts when we feel it starts. I have coined the word "prelieve" to explain this new condition - a combination of 'believe' and 'pretend'. People down deep might know the truth, but they don't like it, so they 'prelieve' what feels right to them. For example, we prelieve in professional wrestling.

"So what does all that have to do with selling champagne?" Nouvelle asked.

"Don't you see?" said Marty. "The people want this millennium to end on December 31, 1999 because it feels right to them. They are ready to have a party and I was ready to help them. The comical, but sad, part of the situation is that our leaders, even those who understand, won't tell the people the truth. It would be politically incorrect for the president, or a congressman, or a teacher, or a preacher, or a television pundit to say 'Wait a minute, folks. You can celebrate all you want to, but you are doing it for the wrong reason.'"

Remember the story about the emperor who was being ripped off by the high priced tailor? He wanted to believe that he wore the finest robe; when, in fact, he was doing the 'full monty.' How about his subjects? It felt good to them to see their emperor so proud of his appearance. They wanted him to be well dressed, so they prelieved right along with him. Who was the villain in the piece? - the wise-guy kid who blew the king's cover (so to speak). Do you think the people were happy to hear the truth? I doubt it. They probably ran the boy and his family out of town.

Do you think people want to hear the truth about the millennium? Just try and tell someone who has had a New Year's Eve reservation at the country club for two years. It feels right, so no one is going to spoil the party - certainly not our leaders. If you click on the White House website, you will find a clock counting down the seconds to the next millennium - only 32 days away - not one year and 32 days.

"Why Marty, are you suggesting that our president would deceive us in any way?"

"Well, only for a little while longer, my dear."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you see, Nouvelle? As soon as the penultimate party is over - say on January 15th - then our leaders can tell us the truth. And, if they don't, I certainly will."

"Won't we all be mad?"

"Heck no. We all had a ball, and more importantly, we will be able to do it all over again on the correct date. The people will be delighted, and one Marty Aleck has secured this family for the next century by investing my '99 bonus in champagne 2000 futures. Most people think champagne prices will plummet in January, when just the opposite will occur, after the world realizes that the next century, the next millennium, will arrive on January 1, 2001."

Nouvelle gazed adoringly at S. Martin Aleck as he tipped a glass of bubbly to her. "Here's to the next millennium - whenever you want it to happen," he said as the wheels touched the tarmac.

Lewis Gatch

AGAINST ALL ODDS

December 6, 1999

Richard S. Hait

The year was 1634. An Indian Tribe of the Northeast was engaged in a version of a strange religious ceremony.

It was a game of sorts, played with dice made from peach stones, one side of each stone was seared black in the fire. Five stones were placed in a special dish, down on the ground. The players violently thumped the platter, shaking their hands to and fro, smiting themselves on the breast, and shouting Hub Hub Hub! They could be heard a quarter of a mile away.

Champion gamblers prepared for days ahead, denying themselves the pleasure of their wives, and fasting for 24 hours. As preparations for the contest continued, betting began: skins, wampum strings, war implements, farm tools. And then the shouting again - Hub Hub Hub! As you can see, it is not difficult to learn.