

REVISITATIONSJanuary 17, 2000Frank G. Davis

All American law schools worth their salt publish Law Reviews. These scholarly endeavors are organized, edited and generally written in part by the students. Over the years there has developed a practice in the law reviews of including articles or notes re-examining or re-thinking fine points of the law in the light of new developments, either legal or societal. "Revisiting" is, therefore, a respected and worthwhile literary conceit among the deep thinkers of legal academe. Thus we might find "The Writ of Right Revisited" by a legal historian. In more timely fashion, we might re-examine F.W. Maitland's observation that Edward First's "statute. . .DeDonis gives the issue in tail the 'foremedon in the descender". This, of course, would be "The Presidents' Intern Revisited".

I have come to the Club for over thirty years with a variety of papers. During that time I have been guilty (as perhaps we all have) of occasional sins of omission or commission. Having left undone those things which I ought to have done, or done those things which I ought not to have done, I will now try to make amends by a series of revisitations as follows:

**Attu Island Revisited**

It is hard to believe that although I have been hanging around The Literary Club for all these years, on only two occasions have I burdened you with matters relating to Attu Island. I served at that tip of the Aleutian chain for two and a quarter years of WWII. The only times I got off the island were for an ill-favored flight on a B25 and the sea voyage home. One has to be some kind of a nut, I suppose, to develop an affection for a sub-Arctic, tundra-blanketed rocky little island, but somehow I managed it.

In one effort to convey its atmosphere I have ground out:

### Aleutian Spring

The goat-grey snow sinks wearily weak  
 On its couch of crusted grass  
 While whistling over the rock-bound ridge  
 Raw winds whip down the pass.  
     They are ripping the ice  
     From winter's vice  
     With the crash of shattering glass  
 A dismal dawn creeps under the clouds  
 And trails across the beach  
 Where reluctant pebbles grind and screech,  
 Resisting the tidal pull,  
     'Till the fog rolls down  
     From the higher ground  
     To smother the world in wool.

I started "having-at" this bit when I was still on the island, and have come back to it off and on ever since. It's still all surface and no substance, I'm afraid. A real poet (it might have been Auden) once said that poems are never finished - they are just abandoned in despair.

With that said, let's move on to another subject:

### The Neanderthals Revisited

A few years ago I came with a paper concerned primarily with the Inuit, as the Canadian Eskimos call themselves. In the course of the paper I had inserted a few comments on the relationship of the Neanderthals and the Cro-Magnons. I sided with those theoreticians who held that Homo Sapiens Sapiens (our Cro-Magnon ancestors) descended from Homo Sapiens Neanderthalis, the Neanderthals.

Today, the overwhelming weight of opinion holds that modern man, including the Cro-Magnons, is a separate strain which came "out of Africa" long after the Neanderthals had spread over extensive areas of Europe and Western Asia. I plan to some day re-visit the Neanderthals, who I think are getting a raw deal, but not at this time.

Instead, let me propose a Swiftian debate which even Gulliver would find incredible:

There is a school of thought among the geneticists that all modern people are mitochondrial descendants of one African woman. We came "Out Of Africa" as they say, and overran the world, shoving out the poor Neanderthals and any other varieties of homo erectus who got in their way. This evokes eerie echoes of the Biblical account: all mankind who survived the Great Flood must be descended from Noah's wife, and THEY proceeded out of Mt. Ararat and overran (or inherited) the earth. As we learn from Genesis 9.2:

And God blessed Noah and his sons and said unto them,  
Be fruitful, and multiply and replenish the earth.  
And  
the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every  
beast of the earth and. . .All that moveth upon the  
earth" etc., etc.

Now as far as I know, Noah's wife is never named, just like that anonymous African mother from whom we have all supposedly derived our identical mitochondrial DNA. For the sake of simplicity let us call Mrs. Noah "Ma" as in Ma-arath and the African mother "Mom", as in Mombasa. We can now develop a truly Swiftian confrontation: are we children of Ma, being Out of Ararat, or children of Mom, being Out of Africa?

In either case we have a lot of cleaning up to do. Where did Noah's and Ma's sons wives come from? Where did African Mom's husband or husbands come from? Seriously, the intricacies of human origins will stand a lot of revisiting, but not by me.

### The Inuits Revisited

Another aspect of my paper "The Agenbite of Inuit" needs to be updated. The September 1997 National Geographic and the March 29, 1998, Cincinnati Enquirer carried articles about the creation of a new territory in Northern Canada. It is called "Nunavut", spelled N

U N A V U T, meaning "Our land" in the Inuit language. It comprises 770,000 square miles of the easterly and northerly Northwest Territories of Canada. It has a population of about 22,000 Inuit and 4000 other people. It opened for business on April 1, 1999. The capital is Iqualuit on Frobisher Bay in Baffin Island.

Iqualuit, population of about 4,000, is a so-called government town, with an airport left over from WWII and fifteen miles of road. The Inuit look forward with both optimism and apprehension to governing themselves. As one naïve native optimist put it, "Now you can make things happen the way you want them to". But there are massive problems to wrestle with: encouraging local business, finding trained people, using three languages interchangeably, maintaining hunting and fishing rights while developing a viable economy: in effect, reconciling a subsistence economy with a money economy.

To get things started, Canada is settling cash equivalent to a total of 840 million U.S. dollars in equal installments over 14 years. How this will be spread around remains to be seen.

Nunavut, by twentieth Century standards, is a barren land. Whether it can support itself by commercial fishing, mining, crafts and tourism is speculative. Many are predicting that it will go broke. "There's going to be a generation of growing pains" predicts a teacher. But the Inuit are a tough self-reliant bunch. John Amagoalik, one of the Inuit leaders, says "We're seeing the continue revival of our culture. We're starting to recover". As an Inuit poem puts it:

And yet, there is only  
One great thing,  
The only thing:  
To live to see in huts and journeys  
The great day that dawns  
And the light that fills the world.

Lots of luck, guys!

### The Vasty Deep Revisited

You may recall that I concluded my paper on Owen Glendower with challenges from Dafydd Wigley (a modern Glendower) demanding the ouster of the Tory party and the reining in of the Labor Party. Acknowledging that spirits were again rising from the vasty deep of Wales, I wondered whether even a partial come-back was possible.

Well, danged if it wasn't! In September 1997, a few months after my query, Wales voted, by a minuscule margin, to create a national assembly. Although its powers will be limited to local matters, it is modeled after the Westminster government and has its capital in Cardiff. On May 16, 1999, the first national assembly since Owen Glendower's day was elected. To the surprise of many, Labor failed to get an absolute majority. The final result was Labor 28, Plaid Cymru 17, Tories 9 and Liberal Democrats 6. This doesn't look like a recipe for a stable government, but it surely is progress.

What tickles the Welsh Nationalists is the rising of Plaid Cymru from a sort of joke to a power in the land. It also brightens the economic future. If the English-speaking eastern border and the Welsh-speaking west could cooperate politically they might be able to (as that Inuit said) "Make things happen the way you want them to". It's my impression that the Welsh have clung to their language as a symbol of defiant nationalism in the face of the always-overbearing English. If they hope to form a coherent nation, join the European Union and make their own mark in the world, they had best stay with the English-speaking international community for government and business, like the Irish and Scots. Welsh is fine in the home, in literature and in music, but not in the market place.

I have written about two widely-separated new governments: Nunavit, with a population of 26,000 spread over 770,000 square miles, and Wales, with a population approaching 3 million, compressed into 8,000 square miles.

It will be fun to revisit them both later in this new century and, as the old exam question phrases it: "compare and contract".

### Shooting One's Age Revisited

Here's a quickie: I still have no hope of shooting my age, but since my recent budget contribution on the subject I have (mirabile dictu!) scored a hole-in-one. Probably nobody is deeply interested, but I have noted a tendency among golfers, even the greatest, to dwell in detail on particular holes or strokes they have been involved with, so:

It happened like this:

The usual Saturday foursome in session  
 At the Triple-C Ranch's fourth tee  
 The usual yardage - one-sixty or so  
 (That's just under 500 feet, you know)  
 The usual golf ball - a 90 compression.  
 The usual golf club - a 3 wood or spoon.  
 NOT his usual stoke - (an offline swat) -  
 But he swings right through this one  
 with all that he's got:  
 Launched higher than the tree-tops but  
 lower than the moon,  
 It lands on the green  
 And loops to its goal  
 Taps on the flagstick  
 And drops in the hole. . .  
 No adoring gallery breaks into a cheer  
 Babe Ruth might have hit one even longer  
 But not into a bleacherite's cup (of warm beer).

### The Final Revisitation:

#### The Corn Belt Unbuckled

#### A Rondeau In The Manner Of Villon

Do not turn back - the road has gone to dust  
 And all the fairy palaces of youth  
 To hollow clinking shells and wrecks uncouth  
 To eyes not focused for an inward thrust.  
 You who in bricks and mortar put your trust,

All you to whom the tangible is truth  
 Do not turn back unless your spirits lust  
 For new insights and for quixotic sooth  
 Beneath dark-glass sealed from time's savage  
 tooth;  
 Unless you would with windmills joust  
 Do not turn back.

Driving north from Effingham on Interstate 57, I reflected on my two previous revisits to Mattoon. After the second one, I made one of my typical cocky assertions, to wit: "That was my second mistake. I'll never make the third one". So here I was, sailing up the highway for my third revisit to Mattoon, the cidevant Buckle on the Cornbelt.

As I reported to the Club in early 1973, I had lived as a boy in Mattoon, Illinois, during the Roaring 'Twenties'. I had not been back since the mid-Thirties, when the Great Depression was bottoming out. I opined that at that time the town was shabby, grey and sort of broken-looking.

Now let me give a thumb-nail sketch of change and progress which I hope will be of general interest as a socio-economic study. I had called the Mattoon Chamber of Commerce before venturing back and was rewarded with a long pleasant chat over the phone, followed by a large packet of glossy literature. This revisitation therefore results from conversation, reading, and eyeballing the town as it is, plus reconsidering my 1973 paper as it was.

The self-styled "Buckle on the Corn Belt" has long since outgrown the belt. Corn is still the number one agricultural crop in the area, but soy-beans, wheat, hogs and all good stuff like that are big items.

Speaking of hogs, I remember a day back in the Twenties when we were out in the country visiting a farmer acquaintance. In a big pen, a big pig pen, that is, we looked at a big pig, maybe the biggest pig I have ever seen. This big pig was a boar hog of mammoth proportions, and I started to climb up on the big pigpen for a better look. Dad and the farmer chorused "get down right now". Dad explained that even domestic

boars have uncertain temperaments, huge weight in proportion to their tiny sharp hooves, and if a hog "stepped on you it'd go right through you". Dad had a way of putting things.

Back to the business at hand: Decatur, maybe forty miles northwest of Mattoon, is the home of Archer Daniels Midland, possibly the biggest agribusiness in the world. If there's a buckle on the corn belt, or even the food belt, Decatur is now it. As I mentioned in my first paper, Mattoon and Decatur are connected by a single-track spur of the Illinois Central railroad. During our latest revisit we were held up at a crossing for about ten minutes by a double diesel engine pulling what must have been a hundred-car freight train passing through on the way to Decatur. You say "a hundred cars!". Well, we stood for about ten minutes, and figuring a car every five seconds, twelve cars a minute - nah, that's just too many, isn't it? But it certainly recalled my boyhood, when hundred-car freights used to rumble down to St. Louis regularly. Dad always said that freight supported the passenger service, and that was even before the airlines and super-highways were in the mix, which reminds me: things were different way back in 1855. The railroads were just coming into their own, and one William Mattoon, a railroad builder himself, was one of the Town's founding fathers. There was a legend that he was also a poker player, and won the right to name the town by winning a big game. The Chamber of Commerce is silent on this point, however, and someone else will have to look up the economics of freight vs. passenger service in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Once again, back to the business at hand. Since I lived in Mattoon, it has almost doubled in size from 12,000 to 23,000 on an area of five-plus square miles. (Compare the Inuits' Nunavit, with a population of 26,000 spread over 777,000 square miles).

Industries now include plants and offices of General Electric, Blaw Knox, Kraft, R.R. Donnelley, Kal Kan Foods, etc. Also Lake Land College has sprung up on the south side of town. It is a community college enrolling over 5000 students. Which reminds me that I wrote previously of the 1920s normal school for

teachers over in Charleston. It is now Eastern Illinois University enrolling over 10,000 students.

The Big 4 Railroad is gone, another casualty of the Penn Central fiasco, but the Illinois Central, Amtrak, Interstate 57 to Chicago, the Coles County Memorial Airport, Greyhound, and fourteen motor freight carriers have picked up the load. But enough of facts and figures, fascinating though they may be.

In my earlier essay I mentioned that the sign near the Big 4 station claiming Mattoon as "The Buckle on the Corn Belt" was even then long gone. Now the station itself, while not long gone, is fading away. The publisher of the local newspaper, the Journal Gazette, wrote in August of 1998: "The old Big 4 station is slowly but surely falling down. The owners had dreams of rehabbing for offices or possibly an upscale restaurant. The dreams have vanished. The eyesore is a bad situation".

He's right. Once the scene of bustling mid-town action, the old station is boarded up, crouched down, and defeated looking. I remember it as it was when dad used to take me down to his office on the second (and top) floor. The men in the "Maintenance of Way" department sometimes faced enigmatic crises that brought us in on Sunday mornings. Dad would set me up on a high chair at a drafting-table, and let me play with the triangles and T-squares and stuff while the men gathered around desks and tried to figure out what the blasted Interstate Commerce Commission was after now. One morning I climbed off the chair and stuck my foot squarely into the adjacent spittoon. As you can well imagine, this brought some levity into an otherwise somber morning. "Hey" The kid stepped in the goboon! Watcha doing in the goboon kid?" I guess Dad was as embarrassed as I was. Which reminds me! It was one of those same guys who, according to dad, announced on a late spring day that he had just planted a bed or "salivas". "Aha" says the office wit, "now I guess you'll hafta put in a border of spitunias."

But back to the present: leaving the old station we drove out Western Avenue to revisit the house my parents had built in the mid-twenties. It is still

standing and in good repair. I recounted before how dad planned the garage with doors at each end so that we could drive in the driveway and out into the alley without having to back up. Local wags had predicted that it would blow down in the first high wind. WRONG: The alley is long gone and grassed over, but the Garage is still there and functioning.

Everyone in town necessarily lived within hearing distance of the railroad lines and their deep mournful steam whistles. We were only a few blocks away from the Big Four main line and sometimes had contact with the hoboes, the so-called "riders of the rods". The "rods" were the tie-rods under the boxcars. Lying across the rods on boards a few inches above the ties must have called for nerves of steel. Books have been written about the hobo culture of the 'Twenties and 'Thirties. The "Knights of the Road" in those days were in no way equivalent to the modern drug-culture bums who rob and kill for drug money. Even before the Great Depression they were a free-ranging fraternity of adventurers, roaming the country, working only enough to keep body and soul together, and producing along the way a number of authors and substantial citizens like Mr. Justice Douglas, later of the U.S. Supreme Court. We didn't perceive the hoboes as particularly threatening; at least I don't remember it that way, although I rarely saw one up close. Once in a while a guy would come up to the door asking if he could do an odd job or two for a sandwich and a cup of java. As I recall, mother and other mothers in our neighborhood would usually give them a handout, even if they didn't have any odd jobs.

Across the street from our house was an old frame house, abandoned even in those days, this was a sometime refuge for hoboes. I remember that a few of us kids on a dare once sneaked up on the porch and peeked in the windows. No tramps, no hoboes, no Old Man Mose, but there was a litter of Sterno cans. I think Sterno or the equivalent is still around - that pink inflammable jelly called "canned heat". I said to dad that it didn't seem like a very good way to keep warm in cold weather, but he set me straight on that one. You drain Sterno through slices of rye bread, which is supposed to filter out the poisons, and get

drunk on the alcohol. And if he ever caught me trying it, I was in deep trouble. (Dad did have a way of putting things).

That old abandoned house is now long gone, and in its place is one of those praying-mantis looking oil pumps, recalling the local discovery of a little oil in 1940. When Mattoon's Lytle Park expanded clear to Western Avenue the old house was gone, but the oil pump is still there. Lytle Park claims one of the largest outdoor pools in Illinois, which makes me think about my comments on the flatness of central Illinois and the drainage problems. It seems to have been solved by the creation of several large lakes. Old Paradise Lake, now Lake Paradise, is still there but refurbished with picnic areas and up-to-date vacation cottages. The new sprawling Lake Mattoon is downstream from Lake Paradise; it is eight miles long and branches out up all the little creeks which feed or fed it. Out to the west is still bigger Lake Shelbyville, boasting 11,000 acres and 250 miles of "unspoiled shoreline". So now we know what becomes of all that runoff I used to worry about.

Finally, just to put my mind at rest, I will update a few more local developments. Progress looms up everywhere: the Mattoon Country Club, once a long low clubhouse fronted by a wide veranda, is now the same long low clubhouse with the veranda enclosed to form an extended dining-room and bar. The nine-hole course is now eighteen holes surrounded by, no longer corn fields, but an up-scale suburb with houses that would bring four hundred grand or more on the Cincinnati market. (By-the-way, I have an invitation to play the course if I ever revisit, but I doubt that I can ever take them up on it.)

And that reminds me! In the late Twenties my mother was a very capable golfer. On one occasion she was playing for the club ladies championship, and I was caddying for her. On the fourth green I was holding the flag-stick (bamboo in those days) and her opponent (whose name escapes me) hit a long putt dead on the hole. I tried to lift the stick, but the stick stuck. Of course, her ball struck the stick and glanced off a few feet to the side. I was totally humiliated, mother

was embarrassed and Mrs. Laughlin (now I remember her name) was slightly amused. It wasn't until long after that I realized that her ball was hit too hard to go in the hole anyway. Mother later lost the match, but thank goodness nobody but me blamed me. One thing I learned that day and have never forgotten: the first thing you do when you take the flag stick is turn and loosen it so that it will come out when you lift it.

On the way out to the Country Club there was a big old institution called the I.O.O.F. Home for the Aged. I had always assumed that I.O.O.F. stood for "International Order of Old Folks", because everyone called it "the old folks' home". I found out eventually that it was the International Order of Odd Fellows. The old building is gone, replaced by an extensive new Fellowship Center furnishing "modern living for senior citizens" sponsored by Oddfellow-Rebekah Housing, Inc. Thus do we see how the world wags, for what was old then is new now.

Just a couple more instances: I wrote before about the Hotel U.S. Grant, the six-story skyscraper in the middle of town. Long gone. There is a U.S. Grant Motel south of town, but it doesn't sound very impressive compared to the six other motels, most of them members of the big chains: Marriott, etc.

The public library, a 1903 Carnegie building, looked just like the one at Kemper Lane and Taft Road in Cincinnati. They still look somewhat alike, but in Mattoon they have added a wing in the same style.

I guess that one of the surest signs of progress is concern with the decay of downtown. (That's what we called "uptown" in the 'Twenties). I've already mentioned the Big 4 Station and U.S. Grant. The Mattoon The-ay-ter is gone, replaced by a small park. There's a new modern movie complex on the strip east of town. The Community Church has gone somewhere, J.C. Penny's is out on the Cross County Mall on that strip east of town, etc., etc. Like so many modern municipalities, Mattoon is spreading out and leaving its center in disarray.

During our wanderings around town, as I looked at what was gone, what was still there, and how I remembered them, I was reminded of the legends of sunken cities so common in western Europe. Traces of walls and towers still stick up out of the sea of memory: some clear and sharp, many clouded and defaced. As Lord Chief Justice Sir Edward Coke put it: "Slippery memory. . .seldom yieldeth a certain reckoning".

Better yet, I have Stan Troup's OK to quote from his sensitive paper last spring on old North Minneapolis:

"It is difficult to be confident that what we now recall is what actually took place, that buildings no longer standing were as we remember them. . ."

So, in Mattoon, old buildings that are sunken down or like the Big Four Station are mere shoals in the sea of forgetfulness evoke:

#### A Sunken City

Engulfed by shifting seas of memory  
 This former town  
 Wavers beneath the present city's sprawl  
 But here and there  
 An ancient spire or stack rears up  
 To snag the wandering thought bemused by fog.  
 While back and forth across the current scene  
 The recollection wanders here and there:  
     A lost dog sniffing and snuffling,  
     Questing the track back home.  
 So "was" and "is" conflict until the end:  
 Down through the final door  
 Into the enduring past  
 To walk again the vanished ways  
 And so come home at last.

#### Envoy Revisited

I wrote this Envoy to "the Buckle on the Corn Belt" a little over a quarter of a century ago. Recently I have been advised that the theory that the body replaces all, rather than some of its cells, over

time, is now discredited. Therefore the following is probably bad science, but is possibly still good poetry:

What childhood memories can persevere  
Through all the generation of the body's change  
From cell to cell transmitted in the brain  
Unaltered?

What process beyond the will,  
What sea-change in the mind so warps  
The image of a long-lost time  
That every rod and cone of the mind's eye can cry  
"I have you not but yet I see you still  
Unaltered"?

What insubstantial blade can kill  
More surely than this slow distortion of the past?  
We are not what we were:  
Not even recollections last  
Unaltered.

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RESTORING ROCQUE

January 24, 2000

Keith Stewart

Part I: Map

The whole story, like Tristram Shandy's, begins long ago; my own small part begins in the late nineteen fifties. My wife and I were in England for the year, living in Kensington while I worked at the then Library of the British Museum. The dollar was strong, the pound was weak, prices seemed relatively modest, and even though we had three very small children with us, we lived on a grant approximately the equivalent of my instructor's salary at least as well as we have since on a professorial one. On weekdays I remained generally faithful to my trade, but on evenings and weekends we regaled ourselves with the kinds of riches