

# Marks Chronicles

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# Chapter 1

## Our Early Family

Having a wife and kids is awesome. Sometimes, it looks more fulfilling when the experiences are behind you.

All three of my children are different - and I love them all. Dad used to tell me he didn't think it was possible to have any more love than he had for me. But when Ray came along, he said his love doubled and I know what he means. I think it is just a hint of the love that God has for all his children. That's a lot of love!

Jeremiah, Joshua and Marilee were all born at home supervised by a registered midwife who was (a) a naturopathic doctor who taught at the local naturopathic school, and (b) was a male. His name was Dr. Griffith. Connie used no drugs and joked that if any of her kids used drugs after all of the pain she had endured to give them drugless birth, she would kill them. Connie also insisted on breast feeding. We captured Jeremiah's first taste of applesauce after a diet of sweet breast milk. It's in Figure 1.1. Joshua was so cute as a baby, he would have been illegal in some states. One of my favorite pictures of him as a baby is in Figure 1.2. Joshua always liked to wear hats.

I occasionally went to Joshua and Jeremiah before church and enthusiastically asked "Hey! You want to dress up like nerds!?" They always went "YES!!" So I slicked down their hair with a clean hair part. We're shown dressed as nerds on the left in Figure 1.3

Connie and I kidded we were going to keep having babies until we had a girl. It turned out to be true. The girl, of course, was Marilee. Everything about Marilee was feminine. The way she talked, walked and interacted. There was not an ounce of Tomboy. And she melted her Daddy's heart. Still does. The Marilee I remember is captured on the right side of Figure 1.3. I don't know for sure, but I bet she posed for this photo. Marilee has always had a great sense of presentation and fashion.

There is always the question "Who do you love most?" It's kind a stupid question. There are things like love which are not naturally ordered. I love a good steak. And well made coconut cream pie is my favorite. Asking which I like more is kind of a stupid question. They are different foods and when I think of them, I think differently. Forcing an ordering is silly. This is like asking which kid you love the most.

I decided early on to tell my three children not to expect to be treated equally. All three were different. They required different discipline and were motivated differently. I feel compelled to continue my analogy. You eat steak with a steak knife. All you need for coconut cream pie is a fork. I used to like mine through a thick straw.

Enough of drawing an analogy too far. Here are some memories from the 1980's and 1990's.



Figure 1.1: Jeremiah in 1983 tasting his first applesauce.

## 1.1 Some Short Family Stories

### 1.1.1 JOSHUA'S DISJOINT EXPERIENCE

At a pizza restaurant we frequent, I was demonstrating an aerodynamic principle to Jeremiah and two year old Joshua. A small piece of paper napkin is moistened with the tongue and adhered to the tip of the nose. When the index finger on the left hand is yanked, an upwardly directed puff of air from the mouth separates the napkin from the nose and sends its fluttering to the ground. The boys giggled in delight at the sheer stupidity of such a trick. I repeated it to their continuing enthusiastic approval. Jeremiah asked if he could try. I tore of a napkin corner, touched it to my tongue and stuck it to his nose. He yanked and puffed and down fluttered the napkin. All expressed their delight with his skill. Always the imitator, three year old Joshua asked to be next. I placed the napkin piece on his nose. His eyes crossed to get a good view of his new appendage. With anticipation, he grabbed his index finger and yanked. The napkin did not move. He pulled harder. Nothing. We controlled our laughter enough to correct him before he pulled his finger off.

### 1.1.2 SHODDILY MADE MAPS

My mother has a number of pet peeves. Among them is an intense dislike of poor workmanship and, more generally, inattention to detail. It was hot at the 1986 World's Fair in Vancouver, British Columbia. There was so much to do and we weren't even sure where we were at. A map of the fair was purchased at a nearby souvenir stand. After unfolding, I located two nearby landmarks and and rotated the map to be congruent. Mother looked at the map and bristled. "Isn't that typical" she sneered. "Printing the maps upside down!" Connie and I chuckled. Mom thought for a second and joined us.

### 1.1.3 JEREMIAH'S WATERED DOWN SALUTATION

Our children are polite, I found out, to a fault. After his bath, four year old Jeremiah sat in the tub in the midst of numerous toys, and watched the water level recede. A funnel soon formed and a slurping sound came from the drain. Jeremiah smiled pleasantly, looked toward the drain and said "Bye bye water. Have a good time in the pipes."



Figure 1.2: Joshua in 1986 being cute.

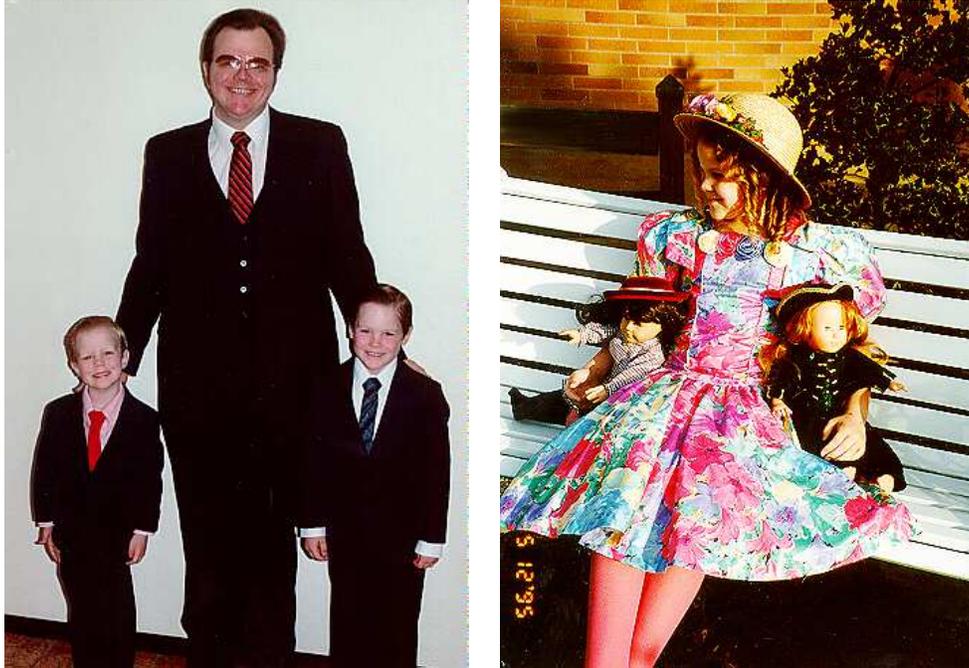


Figure 1.3: The Marksmen dressed as nerds in 1989 (left) and Marilee being a beautiful young lady in 1995 with her American dolls (right).

#### 1.1.4 GETTING BLOOD OUT OF OTHER VEGETABLES

I suppose there is nothing that scares a three year old more than loosing his blood. When told about the substance on which mosquitoes subsisted, Jeremiah decided that he would never venture outside of our house for his remaining years. In an unrelated development, he had developed an aversion to broccoli. Before bed that night, Jeremiah and I were saying our prayers together. With eyes closed and head bowed, he prayed in all sincerity, "God. Make mosquitoes not like blood any more. Make them like to eat broccoli instead". My genius boy had killed two birds with one prayer.

#### 1.1.5 DECEPTIVE SNORING

One of my great joys in life is teasing my wife. I have many habits which annoy her, including snoring. One June day in '87, I lay snoozing in my easy chair as Connie quietly hummed along with a tape she was playing. I awoke and decided to snore. As is characteristic of a good sequence of faked snores, I began slow and fairly quietly. Connie didn't even look at me. After a bit, she arose and turned up the volume on the cassette player. When she sat down, I turned my head towards her and increased my volume also. I opened my eyes and starred at her, all the while enhancing the vulgarity content of my deceptive snoring. In the middle of a grade A snort, she turned her head towards me in disgust. Our eyes met. I smiled and continued my snort. I'm not sure whether she thought I was funny.

#### 1.1.6 A LESSON IN WEAPONS

Connie doesn't allow our children to play with guns. We don't even let them watch violent cartoons. They inevitably see violent television, however, at others houses. Three year old Joshua was running about the house one day with an extended index finger and a skywardly pointing thumb. He pointed towards his



Figure 1.4: In 1983, Connie and I took a drive to Washington DC. Here is a great picture of Jeremiah in front of the US Capitol. Connie took the picture. You can't see me, but I'm behind holding Jeremiah on top of the car so he doesn't tip over.



Figure 1.5: My family with Dad and Mom in 1989.

mother and went "Pehew pehew." Connie confronted him with our rule concerning no guns in the house. In innocence, he responded "But this isn't a gun Mommy. It's a flame thrower".

### 1.1.7 THE WEDDING MYSTERY

Two of my Professors, Tom Krile and Hal Sabbagh, came to our wedding. I will never forget how much that meant to me. For reasons I do not now understand, students place their Profs near the top of their status list. For this reason, when Debra sent me an invitation to her wedding, I decided I would make the effort and go. I had worked with Debra on her senior project in signal processing. I arrived at the church about two minutes before the ceremony was about to begin. My aim was to sit near the back, give a quick congratulations to the bride and groom after the ceremony and split. I parked the car and walked toward the church. Behind me I heard a voice. "Professor Marks!" I turned around. It was Debra. I put on a big smile. "How are you Debra? It's certainly a special day isn't it?" "Yes" she said. "But what are you doing here?" My ego began to taildive. I gestured towards the inside pocket of my suit coat. "I got an invitation in the mail". "Oh" was her response. She scurried inside the church. The hour was near, and she hadn't even put on her wedding gown. Maybe the wedding wasn't traditional. I walked inside the church. A booth was set up for those wanting to give presents. We had bought the happy couple a generously priced gift certificate. Our name and address were written on the upper left of the envelope. I hadn't bothered to place their names on the envelope. I reasoned that they knew who they were. The tuxedoed young lad behind the booth smiled as I handed the envelope to him. The church's sanctuary was typical. I seated myself in a pew. Soft organ music played. Why hadn't Debra known I had been invited to the wedding? Maybe the groom had invited me? I have so many students, I don't remember them all. I pulled the invitation from my suit pocket and looked at the groom's name. Nope. It did not ring a bell. Maybe they used a Christmas card list that our names were on. But I didn't recall receiving a card from them on Christmas. "Professor Marks" came a voice behind me. I turned around. It was Debra sitting in the pew behind me. "I'd like you to meet my parents". We exchanged some sort of pleasantries. I remarked how much I had enjoyed working

with Debra etc. etc. The organ music began to swell, so we ended our small talk and I turned back around. What was going on here? Debra was still in her street clothes. Maybe I was early. I inspected my invitation and my watch. Nope. Both said 2:30 sharp. It was the right church too. In came the groom and his men. They took their positions at the front of the church and fidgeting. Then Here comes the bride, here comes the bride. All eyes turned as the bride began to walk slowly down the aisle. It wasn't Debra. This girl was blonde. From the corner of my eye, I saw Debra still sitting behind me. Maybe she was a different Debra. I looked at the invitation again. I was almost certain that the last name was that of the student I had taught. The Pastor spoke. "Today we gather here to join Jennifer and William together in holy..." Jennifer and William! There was no doubt now. I was not at the wedding to which I had been invited. I expected to see Allen Funt soon. I inspected my invitation again. Time...okay. Church...okay. Date...DATE! I was one week early. Debra and Jennifer must have been friends in church. That's why Debra was there. I sat through the ceremony in total embarrassment. When over, I walked as briskly as I could to my car and left. No. I didn't go to Debra's wedding the next week. Neither have I received a thank-you card from Jennifer and William for our generous present. I do, however, now read wedding invitations more thoroughly.

### **1.1.8 JOSHUA THE PROPHET**

Prayer is not a process whereby a list of demands are presented to the Lord. We are to serve him - not the other way around. Thus, in prayer, I believe listening to the Lord quietly is of very high importance. After the boys and I had prayed one evening, I instructed them to close their eyes and maybe God would talk to them. We all did so. Jeremiah said he had been spoken to. "God told my that he loves me" he said somewhat surprised. I turned to two year old Joshua. "Did God talk to you son?" "Yes" he dead panned. "He said for you to give me candy."

### **1.1.9 AN INSIGHTFUL OBSERVATION**

Our children love to sleep with us. At five, Jeremiah still comes into our bed in the middle of the night. I was in bed one evening when Joshua shuffled in and crawled in with me. We cuddled for a moment and I was ready to go to sleep. My eyes closed and Joshua began to wiggle. My eyes opened and he was starring directly at me with a big grin. "It's time go to sleep son. Close your eyes". He responded immediately. "But then I won't be able to see very well".

### **1.1.10 BUGGED SLUGS AND BUGS**

Love. One of the most important personality traits to be nurtured in a child. Manifestation of this capacity and the inherent conflict with our fallen nature are fascinating to watch in a child. Here are three illustrative Joshua stories.

1. Joshua discovered and picked up a rather large overly slimey slug in our back yard. Express love to a slug? A dog or a cat - maybe. I can even comprehend a turtle. But a slug? After petting it and cooing to it in baby talk for a while, Joshua picked some grass and tried to feed the slug. (What would you feed a pet slug?) After playing with it for a bit, his fallen nature took over. He slammed the slug to the dirt, ground it with his heel and said "There. You're dead".
2. Jeremiah and Joshua were on the back porch gleefully stepping on ants. In an act that let me know we were successful in training our son in ethics and morality, Joshua turned to Jeremiah and said ponderingly "Maybe they don't want to be killed".
3. Potato bugs are fun. They roll into little protective balls when you touch them and are therefore easy to roll or otherwise transport. One Saturday morning, I went into the boys room to wake them. Joshua was sleeping on his stomach. I grabbed him by the shoulder and rolled him over. Still asleep, his arm

flopped to the side and his hand opened. Inside were two dead potato bugs. The insects, company for a little boy on a lonely night, had been loved to death.

### **1.1.11 BELLY UP**

My father, like myself, is overweight. We both have numerous excuses to justify our gargantuan appetites. Father can make certain abdominal sound effects which I have not yet mastered. He can, for example, extend his stomach and strike it with his fist. Thump thump. Not unlike the sound of a ripe watermelon. To justify the amount he was about to eat before Thanksgiving dinner, he so extended his stomach. "See this" he said. Thump thump. "It's empty!"

### **1.1.12 SPACE CADET**

At three, Joshua trotted up to me and stood at attention. He had on his pajamas with the booties sewn on. On his head was a husky baseball cap with the husky dog puppeted realistically on the front. Over the hat, he wore mouse ears. Under his left arm was a totally nude anatomically correct baby doll. Under his right arm was a book about Slip the Otter. He carried a miniature brief case in his right hand. Matter of-factly he said "I'm ready to go on the space ship now."

### **1.1.13 PAYING ATTENTION TO THE OBVIOUS**

1. Toast is one of Joshua's favorites. At breakfast, Connie asked if he would like any jelly on his toast. He replied affirmatively but stressed "... but only on the top".
2. Motivated, I think, by one of my cartoons, Joshua queried "Can you put your hand in your mouth and stick your finger out of your ear from the inside?" I smiled a knowledgeable smile. "No son, I can't." "Me either. My brain is in the way."

### **1.1.14 A GOOD SELF IMAGE (1987)**

Jeremiah has a good healthy self image. He's not conceited, but he knows who he is. At a gathering of small day care tots around the lunch table, unprovoked, Jeremiah jumped to his feet and reached his right hand to the ceiling. "Whoever wants to be like me raise your hand!" he enthusiastically projected. Three children hands immediately went in the air.

### **1.1.15 FROM THE HEART (1987)**

I had just watched a three handkerchief movie. A teenager had killed himself and the movie was concerned with an investigation into the cause of the suicide. Boiled down to the essence, the reason was that the boy's parents weren't open to talking to him about the things that bother young people. I thought about how I had been working too much recently and, frankly, I felt a little bit guilty. Watching those movies also gives you an appreciation for your kids. I arose from my chair and walked into the boy's bedroom. Jeremiah was asleep. Joshua was playing with a jack-in-the-box. I walked over to Joshua and gave him a big hug. He hugged back. "Joshua" I said. "Is there anything you want to talk about? Daddy wants you to know that we can talk about anything that you want to. There's nothing you can ask me about that will make me mad. We can talk about anything you want to. Is there something that you want to talk about son?" "Yes" he responded solemnly. "How do you make policeman's hats?" I plan on trying again when he's a year older.

### **1.1.16 DIVINE INSIGHT (1988)**

Did you ever wonder why there is no description of the physical appearance of Christ in the Bible? I think it's primarily because a description would detract from the message of the Good News and, in this sense, is irrelevant. I was trying to explain this to Jeremiah. The discussion was prompted by a painting of Christ on Jeremiah's new Bible. He had seen many artist's impression of the way Jesus looked, and queried whether the picture on the Bible was indeed the image of the real thing. "No son", I replied in pious dignity. "No one knows what Jesus looks like." Joshua had just entered the room. He beamed and spouted enthusiastically "I do!". Maybe so.

### **1.1.17 BEST FRIENDS**

I was driving three year old David Eitelberg to our home to visit with Joshua and making pre-school conversation. "Who's your best friend David?" He responded in an immediate monotone. "Joshua. He used to hit me but doesn't anymore."

### **1.1.18 A WAVE OF DEATH**

David and I were in the car approaching a four way stop during an impressionable period of his development. A car on my right stopped at the same time I did. As David watched, I waved the other car to go. He did and another car pulled up to take his place. As I began to pull into the intersection, I saw David out of the corner of my eye enthusiastically waving the newly arrived car. I am glad to report they didn't respond.

### **1.1.19 A LESSON ON STEWARDSHIP**

I'm still not sure if it was the pupil or the teacher. It started out when six year old Jeremiah found three pennies on the front seat of the Pacer. "Can I keep them Dad?" "Sure Son." He played with the pennies for a few minutes as we drove and soon tired of them. "Can I throw them out the window to see what kind of noise they make when they hit the road?" This was obviously a good time for a lesson either about thrift or littering. I chose thrift. "Son, do you know what the word 'stewardship' means?" Jeremiah knew a lecture was coming. He slumped into his seat and mumbled "no". As enthusiastically as I could, I related to him the parable about the servants who were given money and how their master was really proud of the one who multiplied its value. I then related how everything, including money, belonged to God. We should therefore take care of what was given us. I was quite proud of my spontaneous sermonette. "Do you understand now what good stewardship is Son?" "Yes dad, I sure do." Pause. "But can I throw the pennies out the window to see what kind of noise they make when they hit the road?"

### **1.1.20 THE WEAK LIST OF DAYS**

There are so many lists for a four year old to learn including the months, the alphabet, counting and the days of the week. Sometimes they get confused. Joshua related the days of the week as "Sunday, ummmm Monday, Tuesday, Threesday,...". Pause and ponder this incredible correlation that would never be made by a less flexible brain.

### **1.1.21 STICKS AND STONES**

There is something in human psychology that amorously lumps together people that have a similar relationship to you. For example, I'll look Joshua right in the eye and call him Jeremiah. During one of my visits to Cleveland, my brother Ray and I decided to charge my parents 50 cents each time they called me Ray or Ray Bob (Understand?) We had to stop when it became apparent we were significantly depleting their retirement and our inheritance. My Grandmother Ormeda, with five children, eight hundred grandchildren

and six million four hundred and one grand children really gets going. She'll look at my father and say "Jim, Gene, uh, Max, er ...oh, you know who you are." Connie was having similar problems recalling the name of four year old Joshua. He turned to her in disgust and, with hands on hips, said "Stop calling me names!"

### **1.1.22 TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL**

They say you should talk to your kids early about drugs since three fourths of students in high school have experimented with drugs at least once. I sat down with Jeremiah and Joshua and explained that drugs were offered to good people by bad people. If you take drugs, you will want to take them again and again. They make you feel good the first time, but if you keep using them, you can get really sick and die. You should, under no circumstances, ever take drugs. In the middle of my eloquence, I noticed that Joshua had drifted into la-la land and was picking at something between his toes. I decided to query him on the contents of my lecture. "Joshua", I said sternly to get his attention. "What would you do if someone offered you drugs?" He squinched up his face. "Take them again and again?" We went over it again and again until he got it right.

### **1.1.23 RADIO BATH**

I love a good radio preacher. On the way home from work, I was listening to Chuck Swindall deliver a message concerning Christian stuffiness. He said that life was a big juicy seedless apple and we should take a big bite and let the juice run down our chin. Never, he said, should we be so restrained that we wouldn't throw our wife fully clothed into a swimming pool and, likewise fully clothed, jump in after her. We don't have a pool, but when I got home, the sprinkler was going in the back yard. I picked up Connie, fully clothed, and began walking towards the sprinkler - not unlike Frankenstein carrying his fainted beauty. When her fate became apparent, she began to laugh uncontrollably. She mentioned something about an accident. As the sprinkler doused us, it was apparent to all that the problem was moot. We both got soaked. The kids loved it.

### **1.1.24 PIANO PAIN**

It's not what you say, but how you say it. I'll tell the boys to brush their teeth thirty six times and they ignore me. I will enthusiastically yell "Whoever gets into the bathroom first to brush their teeth gets a good sense of well being!!" and they will let no obstacle stand in the way of their goal to be in the bathroom first. After he won the race one day, I asked Joshua if he had a good sense of well being. His brow creased as he assessed his feelings. "I think so." Six year old Jeremiah was hotdogging during one of my grumpy evenings. I frowned disapprovingly and threatened "If you continue that behavior, you get ten demerits!" This scared him. "Daddy. What's a demerit?" I figured I would use the fear of the unknown. "You don't want to find out." "Is it worse than a spanking?" "Yes. Much worse." He wrinkled his forehead, looked up and thought. "You mean like a piano lesson?" I belly laughed for five minutes and was no longer grumpy. I think he knew what he was doing.

### **1.1.25 NOS MOKING**

I was attempting to pull a positive response from Joshua concerning his experiences at pre-school. "What is it you like best about pre-school son?" I asked with preppy enthusiasm. He thought a minute and said "What I like best is that nobody in my class smokes". Maybe there is someone with lower tolerance for cigarette smoking than an ex-smoker: their kid.

### **1.1.26 Jeremiah's Advice (September 1992)**

Doris came in the kitchen. Connie was cleaning and Jeremiah was setting the table. 'Can I help?' asked Doris. Jeremiah drolly replied 'If I was you, I wouldn't ask that question'.

### **1.1.27 Marilee (September 1992)**

Marilee chanced in the room as Doris was dressing. Doris started and then was relieved. 'Oh, that's all right. You're a girl', she told Marilee. Marilee turned on her cuteness. 'Oh yes, just two of us girls. That's okay.'

### **1.1.28 FOOD FAVORITES**

Have you ever heard that if you raise a child fairly void of junk food, that they will develop a taste for wholesome foods? I asked Joshua and Jeremiah their favorite foods in November of 1988. Jeremiah's was clam chowder and Joshua's was grapefruit. Really. I have it on video tape.

### **1.1.29 SAY WHAT? (1989)**

My Dad's ears are going. Everything has to be said twice. Our phone bills from Seattle to Cleveland are double that of five years ago. Discussions about hearing aids usually digress to puns concerning acquired immune deficiency syndrome. Ormeda's hearing is going also. There is no discussing hearing aids with her. She won't hear of it. Here's a true typical situation that this condition manifests. Ormeda, Dad and Mom are at the farm in West Virginia. Mom asks Ormeda a question. Ormeda turns to Dad & said "What did she say?" Dad shrugs. "I don't know".

### **1.1.30 PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT (1989)**

Marilee was sitting at the bottom of the carpeted steps crying. Connie came running. "I fell down stairs!" Marilee whined. She then thought, rose, and climbed four stairs to the exact point where she had but a few minutes earlier tripped. "I try again!" And she did.

### **1.1.31 I GOT THE JOY, JOY, JOY (1990)**

Two year old Marilee was asked if Jesus lived in her heart. She immediately said yes. She grabbed the bottom of the front of her shirt and lived it to her chin. "See!"

## **1.2 Joshua Speak**

Little Joshua had so many great quotes he deserves his own section.

### **1.2.1 THE EYES HAVE IT**

I wrestled with Josh. He smashed his nose against mine and sneered "You have beady eyes mister".

### **1.2.2 CARBURGER**

I was helping Josh with home work. There were pictures of three letter words, and the word spelled out with the middle letter missing. For example, there was a picture of a cat and the entry C\_T. Josh was supposed to figure out the word from the picture and fill in the missing letter. One had a picture of an automobile and the entry C\_R. Josh thought and muttered "a car?" and then with widened eyes and increased enthusiasm exclaimed "or maybe it's a Lamborgeeneeeee!".

### **1.2.3 A CLEAN SWEEP (1990)**

Joshua was finishing his periodic vacuuming of the living room. It was his job. He turned off the vacuum, sighed, and announced to no one in particular "To be continued".

### **1.2.4 OTHER GODS (1990)**

We were having a family reading from the Bible and had chosen to read the ten commandments. I read the commandment about having no other gods. I asked the kids if they could think of examples of other gods that some people might have. Joshua thought deeply and responded "Godzilla?"

### **1.2.5 WORKING AS AN UNDERPRIVILEGED CHILD (Christmas 1990)**

A player piano was joyfully spewing forth carols at the mall. Joshua wishfully muttered "Geez. If we owned that type of piano, I wouldn't have to practice any more".

### **1.2.6 BACKWORDS(February 1991)**

Joshua beamed. "Do you know what 'Joshua' spelled backwards is?" Dramatic pause as we thought. "Skram!" A previous conversation had been confused.

### **1.2.7 MOTHER (Mother's day, 1991)**

Joshua was chosen as one of five children to tell the church congregation what was special about Mom. "I love Mom cause she took care of me her whole life." Kind of.

### **1.2.8 FULL OF IT (August 1991)**

Josh patted his stomach after a gourmet dinner and enthusiastically proclaimed "I'm stuffed with gooooo food".

### **1.2.9 DIRECTIONS (September 1991)**

Where are your brains? Josh answered "Up your nose and to the left!"

### **1.2.10 RECYCLING (September 1991)**

Josh had poked at his gum line and it was bleeding a bit. "This is pretty neat, Dad. I just swallow my blood and don't even waste any".

### **1.2.11 King Josh (August 1992)**

While in France, we had studied castles and kings. Eight year old Joshua typically internalized the study into his active fantasy. While he and I were wrestling, I grabbed his wrist. After struggling for a while, he stopped moving, starred me in the eye, creased his brow and, in an even voice, authoritatively ordered 'Release the royal hand.' Later, when Jeremiah was doing something unlawful to Joshua's candy shop, Joshua found out and disappeared running down the stairs saying 'He is now under indictment for treason to the Crown!' These are true marks of a future leader.

### **1.2.12 The Thinker (August 1992)**

Grandpa Charlie and Grandma Doris learned of the spontaneous wit of Joshua during their visit in August 1992. Josh was tasked with the job of cleaning up his room. Charlie entered later. Josh was on the floor, his right ear and knees on the carpet and his butt stuck in the air. His arms were thread through his legs and stuck out the back. Charlie naturally queried ‘What are you doing?’. Without moving, Josh rolled his eyes up to make contact with Charlie’s and said ‘Thinkin’. This might possibly be a new pose for a followup of the famous statue.

### **1.2.13 Keeping a Clean Head (August 1992)**

Josh had bathed, or so he claimed. Charlie probed ‘If you took a bath, why is your hair dry?’. Without a missed beat, Joshua responded ‘Because I washed it first.’

### **1.2.14 A Man with Superb Taste (August 1992)**

Joshua typically did not want to finish his supper. He looked at Connie and whined ‘I don’t have the same taste buds everyone else has.’

### **1.2.15 Correction (August 1992)**

Charlie’s patience was wearing thin with Joshua at the store. He was picking up items and being somewhat rough with them. Charlie had told him repeatedly to behave. Frustrated, Charlie shook his finger at Joshua and sternly instructed ‘Joshua, I will NOT tell you again’. Josh retorted ‘That suits me just fine’ and disappeared down the aisle.

### **1.2.16 Speaking of Tongues (September 1992)**

Uncle Ray was visited and was sharing some of his more favorite food. Joshua told Ray that thinking about ice cream ‘makes my tongue juicy.’

### **1.2.17 Hampered Animation (December 1992)**

The clothes hamper had a sock hanging out of the front on the left side. Josh opened it up, and put in a dirty shirt. He moved the hamper lid up and down and made munching sounds. The hamper lid closed. Joshua grabbed the sock, still sticking half out, and slid it from the left side to the right while making a slurping sound. It looked incredibly like a tongue licking lips. ‘Mmmmmmm’, he said moving the hamper lid up and down again. ‘Good shirt.’

### **1.2.18 Waterless Tooth Brushing (August 1992)**

Charlie secretly watched Josh prepare for bed. Josh got his toothbrush and, with his hands making big circles, pretended it was a rocket zooming through the air. He got the toothpaste tube in the other hand and a battle between rockets commenced complete with explosion sound effects from Joshua. Josh then put the toothpaste tube back in the drawer and, after running water over his toothbrush, put it in its holder. He got down from stepping stool at the sink ready for bed with not a single tooth brushed.

### **1.2.19 How to Get Better (February 1996)**

This one’s pretty deep. Could make Barlett’s. Joshua wanted to make the major league in baseball instead of playing another year on a farm team. Asked why, he replied ”You don’t get any better when you’re the best one on the team”.

### 1.2.20 How Bob Seriously Stubbed His Toe Playing Scrabble (Christmas 2006)

At one time in my life, I needed a greater discernment in personal podiatry. This was brought to my attention in a most uncomfortable way.

The toenail on the big toe on my right foot had grown too long. Instead of proper foot care tools, I grabbed a pair of big cheap scissors and cut across the top. Hey, it worked. The cut was straight and the nail was now of proper length. The problem was that it left a jagged edge on the top of the toenail.

We were spread out on the floor playing Scrabble and I was in my bare feet a couple hours after the cutting. I jumped up to go get a cup of coffee. In my first step, my jagged toenail grabbed onto the carpet and the combination acted like velcro. My momentum was such that I couldn't stop. I kept on going. My toe, now attached to the carpet, didn't. My big toe folded entirely under my foot and my weight came down on the contortion as I fell. It really hurt.

My bit toe on my right foot and the surrounding area became black and I eventually lost the nail.

And that's how Bob seriously stubbed his tow while playing Scrabble.

The moral of the story is: after you cut, always file smooth.

## 1.3 Buying a Beautiful House in Shoreline

This is a story that's not really funny - but it's true. We were looking for a new house in 1988 and finally found one in which we were interested. We were toying with the idea of making an offer when we heard that Charlie Jewett was going in for open heart surgery. So Connie got a plane ticket and flew to Texas to be with him during the operation. (Q: Why do we say we get on a plane when we really get in the plane?) Jeremiah and Joshua were driving me crazy when the real estate agent called to query us about our intentions. I told him to buzz off. He handed me the pressure line that if we didn't make an offer that someone else might buy our dream house. I said so what and we ended the conversation.

When Connie returned, we decided that maybe we would go ahead and buy the house if it was in God's will. We prayed that if we were to buy this house, then everything must fall into place. We would interpret a major obstacle as a sign we weren't suppose to move. This is when things began to happen.

First, we offered \$30,000 below the initial list value of the house. Our dedicated real estate agent, after explaining he was legally obliged to inform us he was a representative of the seller, said he was embarrassed to take the offer to the house owner. He went through seven different closes to get us to increase the offer including but not limited to fear, begging, cold reasoning, threats and the old "if you want it, why not just go ahead and make a good offer!!" He did make the offer contingent on the sale of our house. We got a counter offer and settled on \$25,000 off which is what we would have taken anyway. Our agent said he had to take a commission cut to make the deal. We felt sorry for him for about seven seconds.

Now we had to fix up our house to sell. What a hassle! Connie hired Brian DeWitt, a lad from next door, to do some painting. The next day his brother Bruce knocks on the door and says he'd like to buy the house. And he did.

Next came the mortgage brokers. The first one had some of the lowest rates in town. After talking to him for four hours, he pulls out the paper work. While he's talking, I read. I ask him about "discount points" described in a government publication that he's legally required to show me. He crinkles his brow in puzzlement and says he's not sure what it means. When it becomes evident that no signing will be done before complete understanding, we find out that this mortgage has an interest rate that goes up 1.25 per cent after the first year. That explained why their interest rates were so low.

The next mortgage broker assured us that their interest rate figures did not include discount points. So we completed all of the paper work. A few days later, we got some paperwork in the mail that, among other things, our loan had a "payable on demand" feature. We called the broker who said that all mortgages had this feature. We called a third broker who said that wasn't so. It cost us a \$50 filing fee, but we canceled.



Figure 1.6: Our Lynnwood house when we moved in. Mom is standing on the top porch and Dad is in the middle. You can just make out Joshua on the same deck as Dad. Jeremiah is by the pool.

Connie asked the third broker to come to our house and bring copies of all the papers we would have to sign, now and in the future . I read them all. We got our mortgage through him. Watch those mortgage brokers! From our experience, most are either uninformed or slime balls.

We moved into our house during the first snow storm in Seattle in three years. A picture is shown in Figure 1.6.

Our house was a very very fine house.

### 1.3.1 Post Note, 2009

We moved from our house when we moved to Waco. Leaving the house was rough. It was my dream house and I loved it there. Our Waco ranch is great, but this house was incredible.

In an admitted case of freudenschade, I was glad to see in 2009 that the neighborhood had grown and my dream house was not crowded on all sides. The owners had let the house deteriorate terribly. I'm glad I don't live there any more. And the grapes were probably sour.

## 1.4 Some Lists

### 1.4.1 August 30, 1991

- Top ten things we enjoyed doing with Uncle Ray.

1. Watching the Parent Trap on TV (Joshua)

2. Swimming in the hot tub & the pool (Jeremiah)
3. Seeing Hot Shots at the movie (Bob)
4. Doing whale stamps at the Science Center (Marilee)
5. Playing Take Off (Joshua)
6. Watching Duck Tales-the Movie (Jeremiah)
7. Ray pulling my head to pop my neck (Bob)
8. Playing legos (Marilee)
9. Wrestling with Ray (Joshua)
10. Going to Jeremiah's Drive-In (Jeremiah)

#### 1.4.2 Week of August 24, 1992

- A baker's dozen of things we enjoyed doing with Grandpa Charlie & Grandma Doris
  1. Snuggling & hugging Grandma & Grandpa (Marilee)
  2. Sitting beside them in the car going to Levinworth (Joshua)
  3. Eating Grandpa's fajitos (Jeremiah)
  4. Going shopping & talking with Doris (Connie)
  5. Picking blackberries (Bob)
  6. Playing Uno (Marilee)
  7. Fishing (Joshua)
  8. Watching the Great Mouse Detective (Jeremiah)
  9. Going on the picnic at Edmunds beach (Connie)
  10. Swimming (everyone)
  11. Going to the candy factory (Jeremiah)
  12. Showing Grandma & Grandpa the Keen game on computer (Joshua & Jeremiah)
  13. Singing (Marilee)
- Top Five favorite Movies
  1. Marilee
    - (a) Winnie, the Pooh
    - (b) Dumbo
    - (c) Little Mermaid
    - (d) Land Before Time
    - (e) The American Tale
  2. Joshua
    - (a) Ewoks Adventure
    - (b) Robin Hood (Walt Disney)
    - (c) ET
    - (d) Wizard of Oz
    - (e) Gunsmoke (all of them)
  3. Jeremiah

- (a) Ewoks Adventure
- (b) Duck Tales: the Movie
- (c) Robin Hood
- (d) Absent Minded Professor & Son of Flubber
- (e) Secret of Nim

4. Ray

- (a) Raiders of the Lost Ark
- (b) Star Wars
- (c) Back to the Future
- (d) Heavy Metal
- (e) The Naked Gun

5. Monika

- (a) Gone With the Wind
- (b) The Sound of Music
- (c) Yentyl
- (d) The Way We Were
- (e) Fantasia

6. Bob

- (a) Raiders of the Lost Ark
- (b) Hunchback of Notre Dame
- (c) Star Wars
- (d) Back to the Future
- (e) The Untouchables

7. Grandma Doris

- (a) Gone with the Wind
- (b) Imitation of Life
- (c) Sound of Music
- (d) To Each his Own
- (e) Home Alone

8. Grandpa Charley

- (a) Gone with the Wind
- (b) Home Alone
- (c) Mutiny on the Bounty
- (d) Romancing the Stone
- (e) Crocodile Dundee

• Favorite Books (except the Bible)

1. Marilee

- (a) Dumbo
- (b) Winnie the Pooh
- (c) Robin Hood

2. Joshua

- (a) Robin Hood
  - (b) Peter Pan
  - (c) Jungle Book
3. Jeremiah
- (a) Box Car Children Series
  - (b) Exitorn Series
  - (c) The Run Away Princess
  - (d) DJ Dillon Series
  - (e) Pilgrim's Progress
4. Ray
- (a) Hitchhikers Guide Trilogy
  - (b) Battlefield Earth
  - (c) Memoires of Invisible Man
  - (d) Replay
  - (e) Beatle Recording Session
5. Bob
- (a) Shannon Sampling Theory
  - (b) Born Again
  - (c) The Andromeda Strain
  - (d) The Book of Lists
  - (e) The Catcher in the Rye
6. Grandma Doris
- (a) Little Women
  - (b) Ashes in the Wind
  - (c) To be the Best
  - (d) Wuthering Heights
  - (e) Windmills of the Gods
7. Grandpa Charlie
- (a) The Black Rose
  - (b) Robinson Caruso
  - (c) A Man Called Peter
  - (d) Ninja
  - (e) Shane

### 1.4.3 December, 2008

A *dead pool* is a list of celebrities you think will die the next year. Here is the list we made during December 2008 for the year 2009. There are lots of spelling mistakes.

1. Ray Marks
- (a) Jack Nickelson
  - (b) Keith Richards
  - (c) Elizabeth Taylor

- (d) Dick Clark
  - (e) Bill Cosby
  - (f) Phil Spector
2. Joshua Marks
- (a) Barach Obama
  - (b) Lensi Lohan
  - (c) Bob Sheifer
  - (d) Fidel Castro
  - (e) Don Rickles
  - (f) Magic Johnson
3. Charley Jewett
- (a) Ted Kennedy
  - (b) Vladimere Putin
  - (c) Osama Bin Laden
  - (d) President of Pakistan
  - (e) Mike Wallace
  - (f) Sam Donelson
4. Jeremiah
- (a) Abenijab, President of Iran
  - (b) Amy Winehouse
  - (c) O.J. Simpson
  - (d) Patrick Swasey
  - (e) Paul Harvey (DIED)
  - (f) Blago
5. Leslie Marks
- (a) Alan Greenspan
  - (b) Michael Jackson (DIED)
  - (c) Queen Elizabeth
  - (d) President of Zimbobwa: Mugaby
  - (e) Dian Ream
  - (f) Donald Sutherland
6. Marilee Marks
- (a) Ozzie Osborn
  - (b) Fifty Cent
  - (c) Nancy Reagan
  - (d) Chavez

- (e) Courtney Love
- (f) Billy Graham

7. Bob Marks

- (a) James Arness
- (b) Peter Graves
- (c) Stephen Hawking
- (d) Robert Byrd
- (e) Jimmy Carter
- (f) John McCain

## Chapter 2

# When Sumos Fly

### 2.1 Fish & Eggs: Raw Raw Raw!

It hit me clearly for the first time that Japan was truly different from America. The traditional Japanese breakfast was placed before me. Fish and eggs - both raw. Then there were the other things.

Russ Eberhart, the Vice President of the IEEE Neural Networks Council (NNC), and I, the President, were in Tokyo to settle a problem caused by a Japanese-American cultural misunderstanding. The NNC was sponsoring a major conference in Japan (The International Joint Conference on Neural Networks). We had approached the problem in an American way. A highly visible, energetic internationally visible hot shot was chosen to be the Chair of the conference. The person we chose, Toshio Fukuda, was the youngest person to ever be appointed the rank of full Professor at an imperial university in Japan.

Toshio is a continuing explosion of creative and political energy. He is also politically and socially savvy. Toshio claims that, to westerners, the faces of Japanese men look younger than their true years. He thus sports a full jet black beard to make him look older. Toshio travels to the United States numerous times each year. He has three homes. One is in Tokyo where his wife and children live. The second is in Nagoya near his University. The third is aboard Northwest Airlines.

Choosing a young energetic ball of fire like Toshio to lead a major event is not the way things are done in Japan. There, all the people working in the field of the conference are lined up and their wrinkles counted. The one with the most wins. When young Toshio is named, we hear loudly from Professor Sun-Ichi Amaris subordinates. Amari is the most senior researcher in neural networks in Japan. (His work is also outstanding.) It is highly improper and undignified for the Dr. Amari to express his outrage at the support of Fukuda directly. His pawns serve this purpose. We are told in no uncertain terms: if Amari hexes the conference, the important researchers in Japan will not attend. The conference will be a failure. This is the problem Russ and I face.

Jet lag wakes me well before sunrise. We are staying at the Ginza Da Ichi hotel in the Ginza district of Tokyo. The cost is \$180 per night for a room smaller than a Motel 8 - for that matter a Motel 2. The room is hot and muggy. There is no air conditioning and I can't figure how to open the window or operate the telephone. Slippers and a housecoat are provided. There is also this two foot long shoe horn. Every Japanese hotel I ever stayed at has a two foot long shoe horn. They are great. You can use them without bending over thereby reserving the cardinality of your quota.

Our pre-meeting breakfast is in a small private meeting room in a cute Tokyo restaurant. Russ said I sit at the head of the table to establish that I, as the NNC President, am the big bean curd. We hang the NNC banner behind me. Russ says there are Japanese cultural reasons behind doing this and our guests will be impressed. In they come - Toshio, Dr. Amari and all Amaris lieutenants. The greetings are very un-American. Americans would be formal, apprehensive, stuffy and all business. These guys smile big toothy grins, say greetings with thick accents and voices that go up and down the tone scale. Their heads and upper



Figure 2.1: Russ Eberhart and me in Tokyo in 1991 to address a Japanese-American cultural misunderstanding.

torsos bob up and down like members of an unsynchronized aerobics class. The deeper you bow, the more respect shown. The young guys bump their noses on the floor. Russ and I try to emulate the custom - except , with my full boned body, I do not bend well. I bow as low as I can without audible grunting.

Russ said our hosts would be impressed if we ate a traditional Japanese breakfast. They are indeed impressed and even say so. The food doesnt taste that bad. The raw eggs and raw fish are simply hard to look at. As a famous wart hog in Disneys Lion King said, "Slimy but satisfying!"

Discussion starts. With a big hospitable grin, I say the conference should be in Nagoya with young Toshio Fukuda as the Chair. Toshio has been appointed by the sponsoring organization and was well qualified for the position. Russ looks at me, smiles, bobs his head in approval and looks around the table, smiles and bobs his head some more. Russ has read this was the proper thing to do. I also nod my head like an idiot when he and Toshio talk. I feel like a toy dog glued on the back dash of a '69 Mustang.

Amari smiles, nods, and says 'yes. Their nods are not as enthusiastic as ours.

But wait a minute! Hold your egg rolls!

They said 'yes?

Incredible. I could have made this brilliant fifty second oratory over the phone. Had we wasted a trip to Japan? No. I later learn that saying 'no in Japan is considered rude. When 'yes is said, it means the comment is understood. You could say "Youre so ugly, your mother had to rub raw squid on your face so the dog would play with you" and they would smile, bob their heads, and say 'Yes, yes. This didnt mean that they agree. It meant they had heard what you said and, 'yes, your opinion was understood.

Amari says he understands, but the conference would be better if held in Tokyo. All his flunkies smile like this was the greatest thing they ever heard and start with the enthusiastic head bobbing. The implication is that Amari, being the senior neural networks guy from Tokyo, would be the top soy bean. Toshio, from Nagoya, wants the conference in Nagoya.



Figure 2.2: At the Nagoya IJCNN. Toshio Fukuda, Kunihiko Fukushima, Shun-ichi Amari, and Bob

We end the meeting all smiles, saying ‘yes, yes, we understand the other guys position. The only consensus we have is this was a Japanese problem and needed to be solved by the Japanese. In other words, Toshio and Amari have to meet and work things out. They did. The conference was held in Nagoya with Amari as Chair. Toshio was the ‘Steering Committee Chair which is like the head person - but not really. I dont know if its a Japanese saying, but should be.

‘To save face and solve conflicts, obfuscate.

## 2.2 Big Foot Sighted in Tokyo

That afternoon, our host, Toshio Fukuda, takes us on the town in Tokyo. Our first stop is a restaurant for lunch. Traditionally, shoes are removed and placed in a secured cubby hole before the dining room is entered. The Japanese apparently have a thing about shoes and cleanliness. At the restaurant, I dutifully remove my shoes and am relieved to note that (a) my socks contain no holes and (b) match. The hostess takes my shoes, says something in Japanese, and bows. She places them in the shoe cubby and tries to close and lock the door. The problem is that I wear a size 13EE. The door to my shoe cubby does not close. She begins a more high pitched and animated monologue in Japanese as she bends the toes of my shoes and forces the door to close. She turns, starts bowing at me and keeps babbling.

Toshio translates. ”She is saying I am so very sorry. Please forgive me. This is all my fault. I am so sorry. ” Russ laughs.

It really is not that big of a deal.

For lunch, we sit cross legged on the floor in front of a low table. The heels of my feet totally overhang the back of the slippers provided by the restaurant.

In truth, I love Japanese food. I am fond of sushi bars and go often with my son, Jeremiah. The rest of my family stays home. I once tried to make sushi at home. I got some green sheets of seaweed from Safeway and placed them flat on the chopping block. Freshly cooked sticky rice was placed on top. When I smoked, I occasionally rolled my own cigarettes. Making sushi, I reasoned, couldnt be that much different. I was

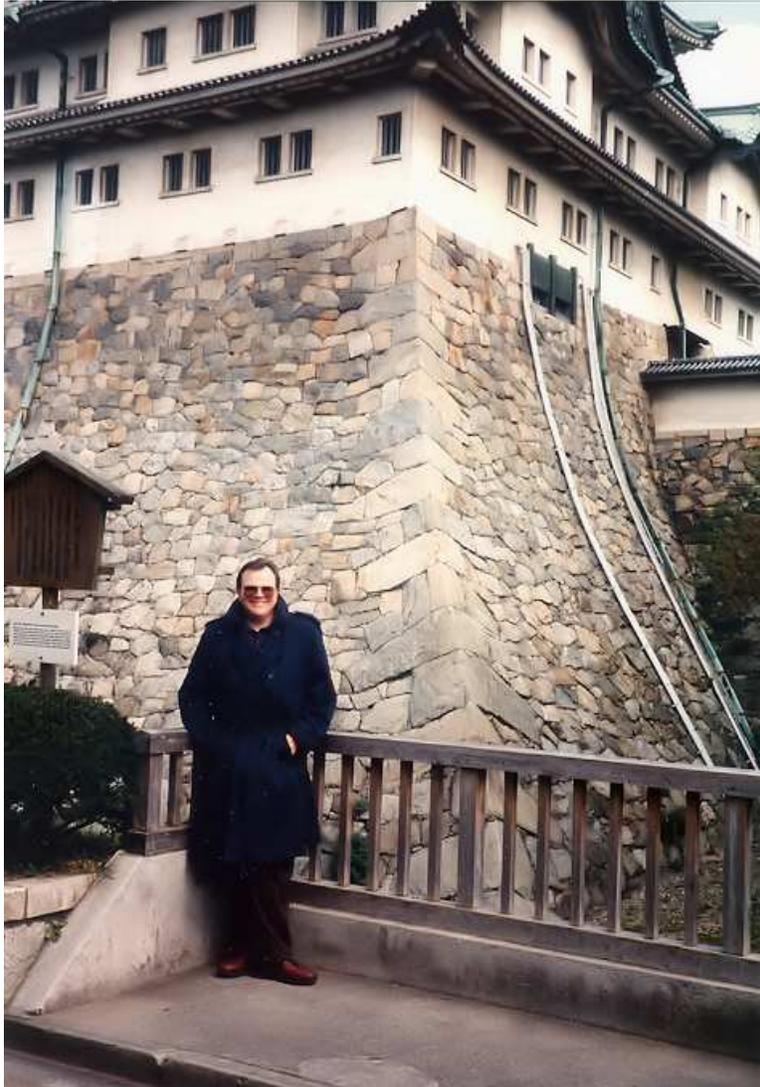


Figure 2.3: Bob in front of the Nagoya castle.



Figure 2.4: Some of the organization committee at the 1993 Nagoya IJCNN. Can you find the round-eyes?



Figure 2.5: Me making rubbery sushi.

afraid of using raw fish purchased at Safeway for my sushi, so I bought a couple cans of cooked sardines - packed in fresh spring water. My sushi, for some reason, was about three times the diameter of normal sushi. Because I used warm rice, the seaweed became rubbery. Not even Jeremiah liked it. I ended up eating it all as a matter of pride. I don't make sushi anymore.

I explained to one of Toshio's students the dislike of sushi by some Americans. Were there any American foods that repulsed Japanese? His response was immediate.

"Cheese"

For some reason, he was repulsed by the idea of eating the waste discharge of milk-eating bacteria.

In the evening after the nonconfrontational confrontation, Russ, Toshio and I go to a classy Japanese restaurant and eat shabu-shabu. Shabu-shabu - what a great Japanese word! It could be used everywhere. You bump into someone accidentally. You turn, smile apologetically, bow and say 'shabu-shabu. When you put grandma on the plane, you wave as she walks down the ramp. When she turns for that last eye contact, you energize the waving and yell 'shabu-shabu. The phone rings. You answer with a friendly 'shabu-shabu. Here is what it really means. A boiling pot of water is placed in the middle of the table on sterno fire. Using chop sticks, thinly sliced pieces of beef are dipped into the bubbling water. Once cooked, the beef is dipped

into a yummy sauce and eaten. After a lot of beef is cooked, the water becomes a tasty broth. The waiter brings vegetables and other goodies and makes soup. It is very good. Dessert was green tea ice cream. I know the place is classy because Toshio pays over \$1000 (in yen) for the three of us. The meal is the most expensive I have ever eaten. Shabu-shabu.

Conversation over dinner is a wonderfully pleasant international passtime. I ask Toshio a question most westerners (like me) cant answer but often ponder. Can a Japanese person look at a Chinese person and tell by appearance the man is Chinese? Or Korean? I cant tell the difference. Toshios explanantion is great.

”Can you tell the difference between a Swede and a German?”

I tell him ”Sometimes”.

”Same thing,” he says. ”When they speak, though, I know their nationality immediately.”

”Same thing with the Swede and the German,” says I.

”Exactly. You know,” he smiles. ”You Europeans all look the same to me.”

## 2.3 The Conception of FUZZ-IEEE

Japan is the birthplace of fuzzy logic applications. The discipline has lived controversially in western journal papers since 1965 when American Lotfi Zadeh published his seminal paper. The Japanese put this controversy to rest (at least for sensible people) by successfully applying fuzzy logic technology to items from rice cookers to bullet trains. Arguing with success is futile.

I first hear of the Japanese technical revolution from Bernie Widrow, a pioneer in neural networks (e.g. the Widrow-Hoff algorithm) and former President of the International Neural Network Society. Bernie said the Japanese fuzzy technology was awesome and if we (the United States) didnt do anything, the Japanese would dominate the worlds business in fuzzy logic applications.

Russ, Toshio and I discuss this during breakfast at the Ginza Da-Ichi Hotel lobby cafe in Tokyo. It is the morning after shabu-shabu night. I am the President of the IEEE Neural Networks Council, Russ is vice-president and Toshio is the Secretary. The NNC had recently started an NNC Forum Series where minor workshops could be sponsored by the NNC in areas related to neural networks. Russ has long favored having an NNC forum on fuzzy logic and neural networks. At that breakfast meeting, over green tea and tofu bean soup, we decide a major international fuzzy conference is needed. The IEEE Neural Networks Council will sponsor.

But who will be the lead person and where will the conference be held?

Toshio has done work in fuzzy systems and is well connected with the Japanese community. Toshio says, though, that the first conference should be held in the United States. Even though the Japanese are a formidable technical force, the United States still dominates the world in technical presence and status. Neither Russ nor I know enough about the topic or the major players to be top dog in the United States. The only NNC officer who isnt at the breakfast was the Treasurer, Patrick K. Simpson. Pat had done a lot of recent work in fuzzy systems. He had the drive and the knowledge to pull this off. It is settled. Patrick will be the first Chair of the IEEE International Conference on Fuzzy Systems. Russ, Toshio and I are excited! When I return to the States, I call Pat and tell him why he should be excited too. The problem was, after the high of the flattery faded and after Pat realizes he will be doing all the work, he decides to decline the offer. In retrospect, Pats decision is wise. The first Chair should be a well connected experienced fuzzy guy.

Pat calls Jim Bezdek, an endowed Professor at the University of West Florida. Jim also used to work at the Boeing High Tech Center. None of us know him but he was quoted in a recent IEEE Spectrum article about fuzzy systems. To say that Bezdek was enthusiastic is like calling Einstein smart. He had approached other IEEE organizations about sponsoring a fuzzy conference and had gotten nowhere. All that was left was to tell Jim IEEE rules and get out of the way. Jim is well connected. He knows all the main fuzzy guys and gets them all to participate by convincing them this is their one chance to get a toe hold in the prestigious IEEE. Bezdek coins the phrase FUZZ-IEEE as shorthand for the IEEE International Conference on Fuzzy Systems. It is the best short title for a conference ever conceived. The first FUZZ-IEEE at the

Town and Country in San Diego in 1992 was a monumental success. Four years earlier, the same location hosted the first of neural networks biggest annual conference - the IEEE International Conference on Neural Networks (ICNN). Now, FUZZ-IEEE is the largest international conference on the topic. Toshio got his chance to Chair FUZZ-IEEE in Yokohama, Japan in 1995. It was the largest fuzzy conference ever held in Japan.

Fuzzy guru Jim Bezdek went on to be the founding Editor of the IEEE Transactions on Fuzzy Systems. I first suggested the idea to him in a phone conversation. The IEEE ICNN conference sequence had spawned the IEEE Transactions on Neural Networks. It only made sense the successful FUZZ-IEEE conference should also spawn a journal.

"You bet. Tell me what to do," was his response.

I had been on the committee that drafted the proposal for the IEEE Transactions on Neural Networks. Herb Rauch, the founding TNN Editor, was the Chair. I sent Jim a copy of the documents, told him the hoops he had to jump through and got out of the way. The proposal went through IEEE flawlessly. The journal now has a circulation exceeding the combination of all other fuzzy journals.

## 2.4 Bow Bow Black Sheep

I learn more about Japanese business practices during my second visit there two years later in 1992. Business cards in Japan, for example, are necessary for formal introduction. There is a ceremony in their exchange. The junior guy goes first. He holds his card upside down with both hands at waist level in a half bow so the senior guy can read it. The senior guy accepts the card and examines it. It is proper that something be said concerning the card, like "So. You are the head tuna man at the Yokohama fish works." Placing the card in your wallet and then in your back pocket is an insult. You are, in essence, mooning the card. When seated, one good idea is to place the cards in the same geometry as those seated at the table. Remembering names no longer is a problem.

After the senior guy properly accepts the card of junior, the roles in the ceremony are reversed. The ceremonial introduction is now complete.

The first time this ceremony was appropriate for me was when meeting Isao Idota, the Executive Director of the Japan Technology Transfer Association. First, Idotas lowest flunkies come in. All are dressed in thousand dollar suits and starched shirts. Most have apparently never experienced a bad hair day. We go through the ceremony, one at a time. Some do not speak English and have cards that are totally in Japanese. I smile until my dimples cramp, letting them know I think they are the neatest guys in the world since Hirihito. They smile back and bow like crazy. Finally, it is time for Idota. Since he is the senior samurai, I get my card ready, bow slightly, and ready myself for the ceremony. No way. Idota comes through the door with a brisk confident pace. His right hand is outstretched for a handshake as he says in a resonant enthusiastic booming voice "Bob Marks! Good to meet you!" Obviously, Idota was much better practiced in American customs than I was in Japanese.

We have a Chinese dinner that night. There are a bunch of hot shots sitting around the dinner table. Besides Idota, Fukuda and me, Harold Szu, President of the International Neural Network Society (INNS) was there. (Szu is pronounced as in "A boy named Szu".) Dr. Szu is an American who works for the Navy. Professor Harashima, Dean of the college of engineering at Tokyo University and the mentor of Toshio Fukuda, is also there. Harashima is a pacifist of sorts. He proposes that Japans wealth needs to be shared with surrounding third world countries. He also likes the fact that Japan has no army. It is prohibited, I believe, by provisions imposed at the end of World War II. We speak in generalities about the effect of Japan having no army or navy. In a very uncomfortable moment, Harashima, who until that time had been controlling himself, makes an in-your-face pronouncement.

"The world does not want to see again what the Japanese soldier can do!"

To put this statement in better context, an explanation of oral confrontation in Japan is needed. First, in- your-face phrases in Japan are typically growled rather than spoken. In many instances, the final word

or phrase is raised both in pitch and intensity and abruptly cut off at the end.. Phrases are said quickly with pauses between. For example, in growl talk, an insult would be as follows. "I do not want to HURT you! I simply want to run you over with My SUBURU! And throw off Mount FUJI!" Read this again out loud and emphasize the capitalized words quickly using a growl voice. On the capitalized words, also attempt ejecting high velocity bits of spittle while leaning forward. Any incidental expectorant splats into your opponents face. Your point is made abruptly and effectively! Thats oral Japanese confrontation. (If you desire further explanation, rent a subtitled Japanese action move, like "The Seven Samurai". Theres a lot of great growl talk.) At the dinner table, Harashimas comment, with emphasis, was more like;

"The world does not want To SEE AGAIN! What the Japanese soldier Can DO!"

A bit of spittle arcs over the table and lands in my shark fin soup. Very intimidating. The statement is followed by awkward silence. Russ Eberhart breaks the silence commenting that now is a good time to exchange gifts.

Exchanging gifts in Japan is traditional. For some reason I dont understand, gifts should be given in odd numbers. I am rude at this meeting because zero is an even number. Dr. Szu presents Idota a fifth of American scotch. Russ is a bit more culturally clever. He knows many Japanese love baseball. Russ lives in North Carolina - home of the Durham Bulls. A Kevin Costner picture had been made about the Durham Bulls - the most financially successful in minor league baseball. Russ presents Idota with a Durham Bulls baseball. Idota loves it! He rolls in his hands, held it up, looked at it, and smiled.

"This is really it, isnt it? This is really it!"

Idota beams and rolls the ball some more admiring it like Wimpy with a hamburger. Russ present has resonated. Harashima doesnt speak much more at dinner. I dont eat my shark fin soup.

How COULD You?!?

On my third trip to Japan, Harashima and I have a polarizing debate about the dangers of America. We sit at a bar at the conference sight of the 1995 FUZZ-IEEE in Yokohama. Harashima has put away a few sakes. I have chugged four warm club sodas. He is feeling the effects of the alcohol and I the pressure of carbonation. We are ready for a verbal spar.

Harashima started. "I will never come to America again. It is Too DANGEROUS. How could you? When I was the Treasurer of IEEE, I came to America often. Now a Japanese boy is shot when he chooses a wrong house. How COULD you?! This would never happen in Japan. We have no guns. They are OUTlawed. There is no crime in the streets of TOKYO. EVER. How COULD you?!" He liked saying "How COULD you?!".

I am very supportive of an Americans right to own hand guns. It goes with liberty and freedom. (You may not agree - but I bet you have just now abandoned any plans to break into my house.) The Japanese say they have no crime in their major cities because they outlaw guns. It probably has more to do with their homogeneous culture. The First Amendment was not written to protect the rights of target shooters and hunters.

"Guns for peace!" I say!

I lucidity explain to Harashima my philosophy in detail. He orders another sake and, due to my flawless logic, changes the subject.

"Panama. How COULD you?! You invaded Panama, a sovereign country, to kidnap their leader. How COULD you?! How does Japan know you will not do this to Japan. This is bad. Very BAD."

Harashima keeps looking down at his sake and shaking his head in sadness. Then he undertakes a monologue about Operation Desert Storm and how, again, the United States had invaded a sovereign nation. His solution is to give Iraq money. If you give someone enough money, they will become nonaggressive, he argues. This is how todays Japan would respond, he says. Arguing with some people is like sweeping a dirt floor clean. This, I soon realized, was the case with Harashima. I excused myself. Even though I explained to him I did not invade Grenada, a few steps away, I hear him again mutter

"How COULD you!?"



Figure 2.6: A panel of standards. From left to right: me. Shiro Usui, Teuvo Kohonen and Rolf Eckmiller.

I whimsically contemplate feigning violence. Possibly Harashima would then offer me a generous sum of money to go away.

I recently learned that Harashima started traveling to the United States again. I believe his duties as Dean were the real reason he no longer traveled to the United States. Either that, or he gave further consideration to my lucid points and changed his political thinking.

When sumos fly

## 2.5 The Nagoya IJCNN & the Standards of War

The Nagoya IJCNN conference discussed with Amari over a traditional Japanese breakfast in 1990 became a reality in 1992. It is a great technical success - with over 800 attendees. I participate in a session on standards organized by the NNC. Standards are important. Imagine, for example, if there were no standard for electric wall sockets in the US. Use of electric appliances plugged into the wall would be one large connection headache. A hair dryer with a plug fit for the wall socket in your home may not work with the hotel socket of your hotel room. Fortunately, there is a United States standard for wall sockets and every manufacturer of things you plug in the wall knows how to design the electric plug. Other examples are numerous. The special panel session topic at the IJCNN conference was on the need for standards in the field of neural networks. Participants were Teuvo Kohonen from Finland, Rolf Eckmiller from Germany, Yoshida Uchikawa from Japan and me. Yoshida, or Yoshi for short, was a good friend of Toshie Fukudas. I encouraged them that if they ever failed in academia, they could open a string of teriyaki bars called Toshie and Yoshis.

Yoshi started the session out by stating that Japan had lost World War II because of lack of manufacturing standards. There are some uneasy chuckles from the audience. Airplane parts manufactured in one factory did not fit into those manufactured in another. Therefore, he concluded, standards were very important.

Eckmiller the German stood. Rolf is a proper and tall with a quick wit and good posture. "Germany", he says spontaneously, "lost the war because of too strict of standards". He goes on to explain that too strict of standards can repress individuality and innovation.

Now its my turn. I am nervous. I want to proudly defend and represent America in this technical-

turned-political discussion. My mind churns for bold sophisticated and clever words that will guilefully continue this theme.

"Like the story of Goldilocks and the three bears, US standards were neither too loose or too strict. They were just right! That's why we won the war."

I don't say that.

"Japan did not lose World War II because of lack of technical standards. It had more to do with the astonishing fighting power of the Allied forces and the dropping of the atomic bomb".

I don't say that either.

"There are those who question whether the time is right to develop standards for neural networks. They say we should wait. We must ask, though, what more will we know in five or ten years about development of basic standards that we do not know now?"

This is what I say. A golden opportunity lost for a true patriot. Pure wimp-out.

Mr. Big

Have you read Michael Crichton's book *Rising Sun*? The book is pretty good - but the movie got a thumbs down from me. It contains a lot of Japan bashing. I'm not a believer in a Japanese conspiracy. I do think, though, there is a lot of national pride in Japan. Sometimes it manifests itself in American bashing. The conference banquet speaker at the Nagoya IJCNN does just that. He is the CEO of a Japanese company that manufactures tools. He claims the Japanese, in business, are like farmers. They look at projects in great detail and spend significant effort in perfection of precision. The Americans, on the other hand, are hunters. Americans are always on the lookout for new inventions and ideas. He illustrates the point with an application of their battery operated drill.

"In Japan", he says, "we would never have innovatively conceived a use for our battery operated drill as clever as this."

The lights dim, heavy metal music blares and two big screen televisions on both sides of the banquet hall dimly illuminate the audience. The picture is of a heavy metal American band named Mr. Big. The lead guitarist is operating a battery powered drill. Where the drill bit should have been, a circular array of guitar picks rotates. When the drill operates, the guitar picks pluck the guitar strings. The result is a flurry of fast short notes. It actually sounded pretty good. The audience, mostly Japanese, roars in laughter at this American innovation of Japanese technology. I thought it was a pretty clever idea.

## 2.6 Japan is a Gas

The International Conference on Fuzzy Systems (FUZZ-IEEE) is held in Yokohama in March 1995. Toshio Fukuda is again the guiding force behind the conference. Although this is the third FUZZ-IEEE, it is the first IEEE conference on fuzzy logic ever held in Japan - the country that pioneered fuzzy logic applications. It is also the largest technical fuzzy conference ever held in Japan.

My train ride from Narita airport outside of Tokyo is uneventful except for two things. First, some Japanese whackos gas the subway from Tokyo and Yokohama killing some and injuring a lot. This is the same day I am travelling between Tokyo and Yokohama. My family in the US hears the news and is scared. There are seven notes waiting for me at the hotel asking if I am still alive. I call my wife Connie in the US and replayed the old Mark Twain comment, "Rumors of my death are greatly exaggerated."

The second problem I encounter with my trip is getting off of the train one stop early. I walk about with all my luggage looking my role as a lost tourist. I am approached by a friendly Japanese man who asks where I was going. I showed him a flyer from the conference and he laughs.

"You got off train too soon. No problem"

(side bar: Japanese and Chinese have difficulty distinguishing between rs and ls. That's why you'll hear Oriental accent parodies with ls replaced by rs, like

"That's reary rovery," and visa versa, like "I'd like some flied lice in my loom."

Americans aren't much better though. I've had a Vietnamese student say six different Vietnamese words to me that all sounded like a short "a" and swear she had pronounced them all the same. Most languages apparently have blind sounds in other languages difficult to distinguish. Try saying the following quickly to someone - "In mud eels are. In clay none are." They will have no idea what you are saying. End of sidebar).

The friendly Japanese man - I forget his name so let's call him Teriyaki - picks up my suitcase and motions for me to follow. He puts some coins in a train ticket vending machine and purchases passage for the both of us to the next train stop. Teriyaki insists on carrying my suitcase to the train and riding with me to the next stop. On the train, I smell his breath for the first time. He is drunk. Obviously, he is the type of drunk who becomes friendly when he drinks. We arrived at the proper stop and Teriyaki carries my bag to the hotel.

"I buy you drink" he offers.

I say I'd love a glass of mineral water - so my new friend and I are off to the hotel bar. I learn he is drinking to cover the sting of receiving his oldest son's latest test scores. In Japan, students are given tests at various points in their matriculation. The outcomes determine life long vocations. If they flunk the first test, their career ceiling is, say, window washing. If the second test is failed, their careers are chosen to be at some higher level profession. Teriyaki's son had just flunked one of these tests and could not now go to college. Teriyaki has lost face due to this and is chugging sake to forget. He says Japan is bad. The houses are little, the tests are unfair and the government keeps everybody poor so the country can be financially prosperous. Here is a guy that needs cheering. I tell Teriyaki the old story about the best carnal life in the world. It includes French food, a Japanese wife, British law and an American home. The worst life is French government, a Japanese home, British food and an American wife. (An exception, of course, is my wife. I love you honey!) Teriyaki laughs hard and takes another swig of sake. We talk some more and part with a handshake and a few deep bows.

Although I don't condone Teriyaki's drinking solution to purge problems, it beats the more traditional samurai solution.

Karaoke

Karaoke is the best thing Japan ever invented. Americans screwed it up. In America, you go into a bar and sing in front of a bunch of people you don't know. In Japan, it's different. You rent a room with a karaoke machine. Only you and your friends go into the room. You can bring in your own drinks and munchies. Your sour notes are heard only by those you know. If you are only acquaintances when you start, you will be back-slapping friends after an evening of karaoke. There is no way two people can sing in front of each other for a couple of hours and not be good buddies. Karaoke, I am told, means "empty orchestra". It has the same root as karate which means "empty hand".

At the Nagoya IJCNN conference, Toshio Fukuda invites all the organizing committee for the conference to a karaoke room. It's a who's who in neural networks, including David Rumelhart, Sun-Ichi Amari, Robert Hecht-Nielsen, Shiru Usui, Fukushima and Teuvo Kohonen. Hecht-Nielsen, president and founder of RHN (Robert Hecht-Nielsen) Inc., the most visible of the neural network companies, begins with a monotone version of the Beach Boys "Surfin USA". Everyone howls. Robert does a mock bow. Every person in the room takes their turn except for one guy from the World Bank who was into neural networks and finance. He was right to do this. It would have totally blown his stuffed shirt image. Me? I did the Tokens "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" complete with falsetto. For my highly demanded encore, I belted a rousing "House of the Rising Sun".

Robert Hecht-Nielsen singing "Surfing USA".

My most memorable karaoke experience was at the Yokohama FUZZ-IEEE. Toshio took seven people to a karaoke room. There was Toshio, Shibata (one of Toshio's students), two guys from Russia, a German, a Norwegian and me. In thick accents, the Russians did a spirited duet of the Beatles "Back in the USSR". When they got to the line "those Moscow girls really knock me out," they rolled their eyes in mock passion. I split a gut laughing. We ended the evening exploring Yokohama like life long friends.

Do you want harmonious diversity? An end to nationalism and racism? Karaoke may be the answer.

Sianara

As a boy, I knew only that America beat Japan in the second World War. The atomic bomb that ended the war probably saved the life of my Uncle Junior McHenry who would have been in the Allied invading forces. Harashima is right. The Japanese are fierce warriors. When I ask Toshio Fukuda about the war, he offers an animated shrug, an extended lower lip and the explanation "It wasn't my fault. I wasn't there!"

I like today's Japan. The people are directed, homogeneous and disciplined. I have a Japanese television, a Japanese video recorder, a fondness for Japanese food and a cat named Tokyo. I also have a number of good Japanese friends.

Also, all of the bowing these last few years has made my abs tighter.

Shabu-shabu.

The RNNS/IEEE Symposium on Neuroinformatics and Neurocomputing was held in Rostov-on-Don in Russia from October 7 through October 10, 1992. I flew into Moscow with Wes Snyder of Bowman Gray School of Medicine who served as the Symposium Program Co-Chair (the most demanding position in the conference) and Dmitry Kaplan of Quantum-Siemens, who was the Finance Chair (the second most demanding position). Dr. Witali Dunin-Barkowski of the Neurocybernetics Research Institute, Rostov State University, Russia, served as the conference's General Chair. I was the International Chair.

The Moscow airport appeared glum, gray and gloomy. Uniformed immigration officials sat in bleak glass cages with "do not bribe the officials" signs on them. I had read that officials had been requiring tourists to pay money to pass. The signs were a response of the government to dishonesty. Honesty is always impressive. The official looked at my passport photo taken six years earlier when I had a beard and longer hair. He looked at me, crinkled his brow and rubbed his chin - indicating I no longer had a beard. I smiled uneasily, waiting to be tapped on the shoulder by a KGB agent. I made some motions that were supposed to resemble shaving and smiled meekly. Confrontation was to be avoided at any cost. Later, as I learned more about the people, I became quite comfortable in Russia. Their culture remarkably resembles that in the United States. At the airport, though, my impressions were based on my vast experience of Russian culture based on Dr. Zhivago, the Cuban missile crisis, and H-bomb drills they made me do in grade school. The immigration official put the card down, and did nothing. Nothing. For about half a minute. Later I found out that some Russian workers do this to kill time so they don't have to work hard. My visa was stamped and I was waved through.

Immediately inside the airport terminal, there was a cluster of about fifty people, some holding signs with people's names on them. The group was divided by an aisle traveled by newly arriving passengers. There was no sign for us. We retrieved our luggage and stacked it in a safe place. While Wes and Dmitry stood guard, I returned to the crowd and began to look for the sign from the side. People were packed, groping to see the new arrivals. I was pushed from behind with a number of short abrupt bumps. Somewhere, I had learned to associate this with pick pockets. Sure enough, when I focused attention, there were fingers doing a dance around my posterior cheeks. I swung around and came eye to eye with the pick pocket. I glared at him. He froze, turned his head, walked away, stopped, looked at me, gazed away, fidgeted, pulled out and lit a cigarette, looked at me, turned, and walked away - a classic study on how to look guilty.

Wes had found our ride. Our driver was accompanied by Dr. Dunin-Barkowski's wife whose name was also Dr. Dunin-Barkowski. She lives in Moscow and is an MD, but speaks little English. Dmitry, though, speaks native Russian. He was born in Kiev and immigrated to the United States as a teenager. The trip would have been incredibly awkward without Dmitry. He confided that his return to Russia, the first after his immigration, was done with apprehension. Although he intellectually knew there would be no problem, his memories of the oppressive Soviet system were deeply rooted.

The next day we flew Aeroflot from Moscow to Rostov-on-Don. The only good news was that smoking was banned on the airplane and we arrived safely. In an apparent move to cut costs, Aeroflot planes have no oxygen masks. The floors of the plane are made of wood overlaid with a peeling rubber floor cover. Aeroflot also has no enclosed overhead bins. Carryons are placed in an open rack above your head - the kind you would find on a bus. Most airlines require enclosure. In turbulence, falling luggage can really hurt.



Figure 2.7: Left to right: Dmitry Kaplan, Witale Dunin-Barkowski, Wes Snyder, Boris M. Vladimirsky and me in front of the A.B. Kogan Institute for Neurocybernetics at Rostov State University. Witale is the director.

The refreshment on our short flight was club soda served in a plastic bowl. In Europe and Russia, mineral water comes with or without “gas”, meaning CO<sub>2</sub> bubbles. The smell of some kind of soup was in the plastic of the bowl that held my colorless soft drink - probably the aura of refreshment from some previous longer flight. It added flavor to the otherwise tasteless mineral water.

Rostov is a city of about a million people. We were met at the airport by Witale and some of the local arrangement volunteers on the organizing committee. Witale is a delightful man, full of energy and prone to eruptions of deep guttural laughter. He is fun to be with.

I first met Witale in Seattle. When I served as President of the IEEE Neural Networks Council, we hosted a Presidents Dinner at our annual meetings. Witale, as President of the RNNS, attended this dinner at the 1991 Seattle IJCNN (International Joint Conference on Neural Networks). With Wes Snyder and Dmitry Kaplan, we put together the Rostov Symposium and got it approved by the Council. Witale later returned to the United States and, in order to work out the details of the conference, stayed with the Snyders in North Carolina. During his visit, the attempt was made to kidnap Gorbachev and overthrow the government of the Soviet Union. There was apparently no connection between this and Witale’s visit.

Our Rostov hotel was nice. Each floor of the hotel was graced by a “key lady” who sat at a desk close to the elevator. It was her responsibility to guard your key when you left (if you wanted her to) and sell you sundries, such as cigarettes and mineral water (with and without gas). A key lady was on duty 24 hours each day.

Breakfast at the hotel was great. Three of us had a breakfast of rice pudding, scrambled eggs, sausage, grape juice and coffee for 34, or about 11 each. I graciously agreed to pay, under the condition that Dmitry pick up the lunch tab in Copenhagen on our way home. The low price was due to the weak ruble. When Dmitry was a boy in Kiev, a Ruble was worth about a dollar. During the conference in Rostov, \$1 cost about 360 rubles. About a month later, it cost 400 rubles. In 1992, a professor in Russia made about \$160 per year. It has gotten worse.

The conference was great. I learned a few things about technology and a number of things about Russian people. On the first day, we held the opening ceremonies with greetings from the mayor, conference chair,

etc. Due to the dominance of American technology, English is the official language of all international technical conferences. This was the first meeting in English that had been held in Rostov this century, or, for that matter, ever. At the opening ceremony, Witale feverishly translated the comments of the Russian speakers into English and the English speakers into Russian. During my stay at the podium, I gave the obligatory positive remarks about the conference. I then related a story, not original, about the common labeling those who knew many languages as “multilingual”. Similarly, those who knew two languages were referred to as ‘bilingual’ whereas those knowledgeable of only one language are known as “Americans.” Witale gazed up, searching his memory bank for equivalent Russian words as he translated in parallel. At international conferences, I have found a mild and reserved resentment of the forced English language. Properly conveyed self depreciating humor can transform this into good natured back-slapping collegiality. The audience laughed at the Russian translation and many smiling heads bobbed, acknowledging truth in the humor.

In the middle of the ceremonies, I was whisked outside to be interviewed on a local television station, Rostov TR (television-radio), Channel 2. A young English professor from Rostov State served as the translator and stood between me and the Russian speaking reporter. We stood in the sunlight on the entrance to the convention sight in front of a cameraman. Only benign questions were asked, and I gave standard diplomatic answers. “What are neural networks?”, “Why is this conference being held in Rostov?”, “What do you think of Russia?”. Watching the interview on television later was strange. They only aired the last few words of my eloquent response to the questions. Then the translator would talk at length in Russian to the reporter. The reporter then asked a prolonged question in Russian. The translator turned to me and only got out about half a sentence in English. Cut to me giving the last half sentence of my response. They had, for reasons now obvious, edited most of the English out of the interview. Almost none of their audience spoke English.

The Russian Neural Network Society (RNNS) is one of many national professional neural networks societies. There is also the ENNS (Europe), ANNS (Australia), SNNS (Swiss), JNNS (Japan) and the CNNC (China Neural Networks Council). At the Rostov Symposium, I met Dr. Alecsander F. Lavrenjuk, President of the Siberian Neural Networks Society. Dr. Lavrenjuk is with the Tomsk Polytechnical University and is doing research on implementation of neural networks using neutron beams. He was specifically interested in whether the IEEE Transactions on Neural Networks, a publication of the IEEE Neural Networks Council, would be open to publish such research. (It is). I whimsically asked if he was doing any research in applications of superconductivity to neural networks. In Siberia, I smiled, it could be done outside. He smiled politely and gave a polite and obligatory chuckle. He had probably heard this and similar Siberia jokes hundreds of times. We continued to talk for quite some time. The caricatured view I had was irreversibly changed. (Although I did I learn that, in Siberia, milk is delivered to your front porch in large unwrapped frozen blocks.)

The conference banquet was a fascinating example of the importance of alcohol in Russian culture. An associate director of Witale’s lab, Boris M. Vladimirsky, arose, and introduced Westerners to a Russian tradition. Witale translated. Throughout the banquet, toasts would be offered at intervals of ten minutes. Intervals shorter than this were not acceptable. The time between toasts was to be used to coat the stomach with food, so that more alcohol could be consumed. He made a toast to the conference, drank, and sat down. Around the banquet tables were numerous bottles of Russian vodka and champagne. As a nondrinker, I filled my glass with some queer tasting Russian mineral water and joined in the toast. As forecast, the MC rose again in ten minutes. Witale hurriedly chewed and swallowed as to not be late in the translation of the toast. The MC said that he was sorry that he did not know English, but was proud to learn this day that, as a result of knowing only one language, he was an American. A toast was offered and nearly all drank. Ten minutes later, Witale offered a toast in English, and did his own translation. Ten minutes later, Wes Snyder was called upon to offer a toast to the conference and friendship of Russians and Americans. The next toast, it turned out, was mine. As a nondrinker, I tried to shrug it off. Witale insisted. I stood, hoisted my glass, and bellowed “To sobriety!”. By his expression, it was clear that Witale did not know the English



Figure 2.8: Russians giving papers in English to other Russians.

work “sobriety”. He bent, and Dmitry whispered Russian in his ear. Witali smirked, stood tall, raised his glass and gave the translation. There was a smattering of chuckles as many drank to sobriety. This toasting lasted long into the night.

The next night, there was a reception. I talked at length with a Russian researcher whose name I do not recall. He lamented that, since the passing of the cold war, it had becoming increasingly difficult for him to find the funding to support his work in artificial neural networks. I told him the same thing was happening in the United States. Defense budgets were being reduced, and previously strong funding programs were being cut. He slapped me on the back, and said with his thick Russian accent, “Yes. It was much better when we were trying to blow each other up”. He laughed at his own black humor and I involuntarily chortled.

The Americans at the conference were asked to talk to the Deputy Chief of Rostov Region Administration, Mr. Aleksei A. Khomyakov. There were about a dozen of us. Mr. Khomyakov is kind of the CEO of Rostov. He made a presentation on the attributes of the Rostov region and its willingness to interface with American business. This attitude of business cooperation willingness seems prevalent throughout Russia.

One of the most interesting people I met at the conference was Dr. Alexander I. Galushkin, Director of the Scientific Centre of Neurocomputers in Moscow. There are a number of cases where technical concepts have been developed independently in parallel in the United States and the former Soviet Union. The work of Dr. Galushkin and his institute is an example of this. He was training multi-layer perceptrons in the early seventies, long before they became popular in the west. His implementation of neural networks optically and with transputers is quite impressive. His work needs to be studied and placed properly in the young history of artificial neural networks.

A “fresh air” conference session was held aboard a boat that sailed down the Don river. The Don is said to separate the European and Asian continents.

Corners of the ship were roped off for a number of parallel technical sessions. I wandered around the boat catching portions of different talks. One scene was quite curious. A Russian researcher was giving his paper in broken English. Listening were a half dozen Russians, each straining to understand the speaker. (I snapped the picture reproduced in Figure 2.8.) It occurred to me that this was proof positive that the cold war was, indeed, over.



Figure 2.9: Me and some sheep on the Rostov countryside. (I'm on the right).

The boat docked, and we all deboarded. We formed a loose line, and walked about a half a mile to see a Russian church in the middle of restoration. The countryside was great. There were sheep and goats and old Cossack buildings. Two older ladies, who sat on a bench outside of a barn, were living caricatures of Russia, with their head scarves, multi layers of sweaters and chubby dome-like figures. I took their picture. They looked up and said something. Dmitry, who was with me, said something back. We continued to walk down the path and Dmitry explained, 'They asked why we were taking their picture. They said they have nothing.'

When the conference ended, we flew Aeroflot back to Moscow. Witale's aunt, Natalia (translated Natasha) Kucherov picked us up at the airport with our driver. We spent the day taking a fantastic tour of Moscow, including the Kremlin, Red Square, and other tourist magnets. The Kremlin now charges admission. The sixtysomething lady in the booth selling tickets took our money, and, like the man at the airport, did nothing for about thirty seconds. I have had similar service in American post offices.

The highlight of my trip was dinner at Natasha's apartment with Wes, Dmitry and Natasha's family. The apartment was in one of the countless high rises built around Moscow. The architecture, like most buildings built in Russia this century, is gloomy. The apartment building looked like it had been built in the 1950's. It also looked quite neglected. As we pulled in the building's parking lot, a half dozen men standing around a hole in the ground, glared at us. Although dressed in work clothes, none of them were working. We entered the building and climbed the stairs - there were no elevators - to Natasha's apartment. Inside the apartment, the atmosphere was totally different. Although small, the apartment was filled with the warmth of a home. Natasha's teen age son was there. He had been practicing his English, and we talked a bit. We were soon joined by Natasha's husband, Anatoly. We later learned he had spent the morning looking for tomatoes for our lunch. Anatoly is a computer programmer who is working for a new private company specializing in optical pattern recognition. Natasha was working to establish a Christian school in Moscow, and asked Dmitry to mail some fund raising material for her in the States. There is currently a greater freedom of religion in Russia than the United States. Actions, for example, have been levied against the University of Washington's chapter of Campus Crusade for Christ because the organization does not conform to some modern concepts of political correctness. Christianity and other religions, on the other hand, are discussed openly and embraced in Russian education and government institutions. Natasha's attempt to

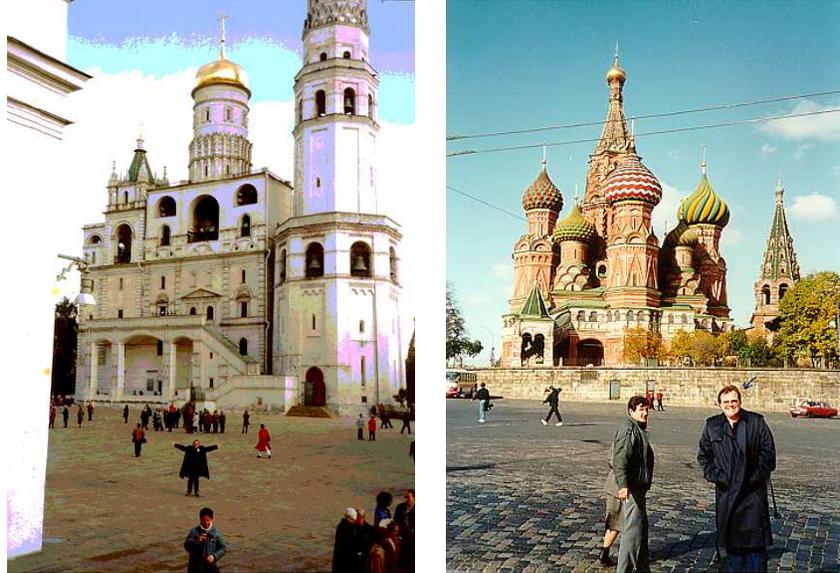


Figure 2.10: LEFT: Expressing my exuberance in the Kremlin complex. Why is everyone walking away? RIGHT:Me (I drew an arrow to help with identification) in front of those famous onion topped buildings at the Kremlin in Moscow.

open a private Christian school in Moscow was impressive. She and Anatoly had been secret Christians throughout the rule of intolerant atheistic communism. Anatoly told me in broken English that “Russia has lived too long without Christ.”

The lunch was splendid. Natasha fixed a turtle cake, which looked like a bunch of pancakes sprinkled with powdered sugar stacked in a mound. (“Turtle” refers to shape rather than content). Sometimes, Dmitry said, turtle heads were fashioned out of a pancake and added to complete the image. We talked continuously over lunch. Poor Dmitry didn’t get much of a chance to eat. He was the only always translating. The time spent at the Kucherov’s was warm and open. Except for the language difference, it was like visiting old friends in America.

Natasha and the driver later drove us to the Moscow airport for our evening flight to Copenhagen. (No, Dmitry did not buy me lunch there). We were home in two days.

During his visit to Seattle, Witale said, in regard to the government of the former Soviet Union, “They lied to us about America. They lied to us”. In describing his feeling about his home in Kiev, Ukraine, Dmitry taught me “There is a difference between love of country and loving your government”. Despite formerly oppressive rule, Russian people are wonderful and more American in their culture than many realize.

Most, for example, know only one language.



Figure 2.11: LEFT: Wes Snyder, me and Dmitry Kaplan in front of the Tsar's Cannon at the Kremlin in Moscow. This is suppose to be the world's largest cannon RIGHT: Moscoe Stae University is enormous. Take a look at how diminutive me traveling buddies are. (Dmitry is on the left.)



Figure 2.12: Bob in front of the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow.

## Chapter 3

# Travels with My Family and Mom

### 3.1 Germany

Lenore, Connie, Marilee and I went to Europe in June of 1988. It was the first time off of the North American continent for three of us. What a delightful time! We arrived in Dusseldorf and rented a car. I upgraded one step from the subcompact that my grant would cover to the next largest car. Hertz didn't have what we ordered and let us have an incredible Mercedes for the same price. We drove to Duisburg on the autobahn at times over 110 mph.

In Duisburg we got a hotel. Because of the exhaustion of travel, we immediately went to bed. Mom, as usual, was the first up. She dressed and toured the hotel to let the rest of us sleep. Connie and I were wakened with her return and her enthusiasm for the new day. We got up and began to dress when we noticed that the twilight of morning, contrary to what we were anticipating, began to darken. The reason was that it was the twilight of evening.

The monetary exchange in foreign countries can be confusing and, when the American dollar is weak, frustrating. Connie and Mom were shopping and excitedly bought a trinket. About 50 yards (or should I say 50 meters) from the vendor, Mom examined her change and muttered "I think that man cheated me". Sound must travel better in German air. The man yelled "I DID NOT! I NEVER CHEATED ANYONE IN MY LIFE!". He was enraged and red faced. Must be all of that bratwurst diminishing the blood flow in his capillaries.

The most beautiful part of our trip was the drive down the Rhine river. The way they were able to plant crops on the slopes of hills was fascinating. The rows went from the top of the hill to the bottom instead of horizontally. It seems that horizontal rows would be more immune to erosion. We thought maybe vertical rows got more sun. We related this curiosity to Gene Marks during a visit to Cleveland. He maintained the same practice of planting rows of potatoes from the hill top to the bottom was practiced widely in the hills in West Virginia. When the potatoes are ripe, you just dig a little hole at the bottom of the hill and the whole row rolls down the hill and into your basket.

The most memorable sites along the Rhine were the castles. I expected Dracula to walk out of some of the ones that were half in ruins. These castles were ancient. One was named Marksburg. "Aha!" I thought. "I have found my roots!" No such luck. The castle was named for St. Mark who wrote the gospel bearing his name. But then again, we may be also.

At the end of our trip down the Rhine was Weisboden, the city of Connie's birth. We found the U.S. military hospital in which she was born. The drawl of the uniformed sentry was out of place in Germany. We explained our circumstances and showed him our passports. He let us in under the condition that we not trespass on any of the areas marked RESTRICTED. We found the building in which Connie was probably born. Connie and Marilee posed and I took a picture. We thought it would be great to take another picture at the entrance gate with The Weisboden Military Air Force Hospital sign in the background. Connie was

posing when the guy with the drawl came rushing out of his little building by the entrance gate. "You all can't take pictures in here!". I smiled pleasantly. "Could we just take one of the sign at the entrance". He responded unpleasantly. "If you take another picture, I'll have to call the Weisboden police." We weighed the alternatives, got in our car and left. Two days later when we were leaving Weisboden, however, we drove past the installation and Connie took a picture of the sign out of our car window. I guess it was the challenge of getting in the last word.

Marilee learned to walk in Germany. It took us three months to get her to quit doing the goose step. (Just kidding).

## 3.2 Finland

We had a fascinating time with European elevators. They require a much higher intelligence for operation than our American counterparts. Connie and Mom got on one in the Helsinki airport. The volume of our luggage prohibited my joining them. The door closed and when the elevator left, I pushed the down button so I could be in on the next trip. In about a minute and a half, the elevator door opened and there were Connie and Mom just as I remembered them. Almost synchronously, they looked at me, covered their mouths with an open hand and bent over at the waist in laughter. The door closed again and, I am happy to report, when it opened a few moments later, the elevator was empty.

Because of a weak U.S. dollar, Helsinki was expensive. I met a man at the conference who was booked into the same hotel in which Reagan had stayed a few weeks earlier before going to a summit meeting at Moscow. The poor guy went down to dinner and they sent him back to his room for a tie. He returned, opened the menu and noticed that an apple cost 28 Finnish marks (\$7). He closed his menu, walked to his room and decided that prudence was the best policy that night. In Europe, however, buffet breakfasts were included in room rates. We therefore typically porked out in the morning and even stooped so low as to swipe a few sweet rolls for our evening meal. I met a man from Switzerland at the conference who had purchased a house for over one million dollars at 5% over one hundred years. His kids would probably end up paying it off. The low tax rates and beauty of Switzerland had really driven up the cost of living. He smiled when he explained how it was built out of bricks rather than wood.

Helsinki's hotels are booked solid during May and June. We ended up downtown and I had to take a bus daily to and from the conference. The first day I got on the bus marked 192 and asked the driver "English?" He lifted his right hand, palm down and rotated it slightly back and forth at the wrist. "A little". I showed him a picture of the institute where the conference was being held. "I want to go here". He motioned for me to sit down. "I tell you" he said. And he did. Before I got off the bus, I asked: "To get back downtown, do I take this same bus?" He nodded yes. After the conference, I returned to the bus stop. The first bus was 192. I waved at the driver in an exaggerated manner as I had seen other Europeans do. I got on and queried the new bus driver "English?". He looked at me disgustedly, shook his head no and motioned for me to sit down. I offered to pay. He again shook his head and motioned for me to sit down. I sat in the front most seat of the bus. The bus moved on to the next stop and about half of the people got off. It went to the next stop the rest of the people got off. Before the last passenger got off, he looked at me and then at the bus driver. The driver placed both palms up and shrugged his shoulders. The passenger again looked at me and said with a thick Finnish accent "This is the last stop". I explained to him that I was told that this bus would return me to downtown Helsinki. He conversed briefly with the bus driver in Finnish and turned back to me. "You were suppose to cross the street". I could feel them both thinking 'Dumb foreigners'. "You can get off here and cross the street" he continued. "There's a bus stop right over there". When I got off of the bus, it pulled into a turn off about 100 feet away and parked, probably to wait until the time of the next scheduled run. The bus and I waited patiently on opposite sides of the street for about ten minutes. At the appointed time, the bus did a U-turn and stopped for me. I got on and we drove to downtown Helsinki.

We got the hell out of that city. Now they call it Sinki.

### 3.3 France & the Mona Lisa

The Louvre in Paris is the largest museum in the world. It contains innumerable sculptures and paintings of priceless value. Included are the statue of David that is void of the arms and the Mona Lisa. The six of us worked our way through a multitude of rooms containing delightful renaissance paintings and sculptures of half clothed muscular men and fat women. Arrows pointing the way to the display of the original Mona Lisa were our guide. We walked into a dimly lit room, and there, on the wall, in a large glass case, was the original Mona Lisa. A small crowd of people were gathered about admiring the original of probably the most recognized painting in the world. I elbowed my way to the front. The beauty of the original, although marred by age, was indisputable. Small cracks had appeared in the paint. The museum had determined that even light had a degrading effect on the longevity of the masterpiece and had decreed that no flash pictures of the painting were to be taken. About the glass enclosure were three signs picturing a camera flash encircled in red with a diagonal red slash: an announcement in all languages that there were to be no flash pictures. A number of camcorders hummed and a few flashless shutter clicks were heard. Then - there was a flash of light. All heads turned to the source. The lady whose job it was to sit and guard the Mona Lisa shot from her seat and yelled a phrase in French that probably contained a few expletives. I turned to see who had taken the picture. It was Mom. She had forgotten that her camera adjusted for the light level and used a flash if needed. I was certain that we would be arrested and deported from the country by the French Ministry of Culture. The verbal reprimand, however, was apparently felt sufficient. We left the room with our tails tucked between our legs, our encounter with the immortal Mona Lisa forever etched on our memories. We later got a copy of the picture. It is delightful. The 'no flashbulb' signs, in particular, came out well.

### 3.4 THE KEY TO THE SITUATION (invited submission by Lenore Marks)

It was a beautiful March day in France. The plans for a trip to visit the "Brittany of the Standing Stones" were complete, three adults and three children dressed and excited, ready for hour long drive on Sunday. Suddenly Bob announced,

"I've lost my office key. I won't go until we find them."

The GREAT SEARCH began. Every suitcase, coat pocket, drawer, each nook and cranny searched. Emotions ran high. The children's patience and expectations squashed, Bob's ego suffering defeat as he faced the realization of reporting it to the powers that be, Connie and I accepting the fact he would not find it when, just as suddenly as before, Bob announced,

"Let's go."

We went to Cathedrales of Nantes nearby. We felt near to God as we witnessed the beauty of this mammoth cathedral, having its origin in 1434. We each worshipped silently in our own way. Our trip back to the apartment at Irestre university was somber. almost conversationless. We got out of the van and started walking to the apartment. Bob, walking ahead of Connie and I turned, crooked his finger at us and said, "Come see." This key could have been in Chateaubriant, miles away, or in one of many shops in Nantes Centre, but there it lay in the grass, only few steps from the entrance. Was this coincidence or had God answered prayer? We all hugged Bob, holding back tears.

### 3.5 Spain

I traveled to Madrid, Spain in September 1992 to teach a short course for Decisions Systems International. I went with no family.

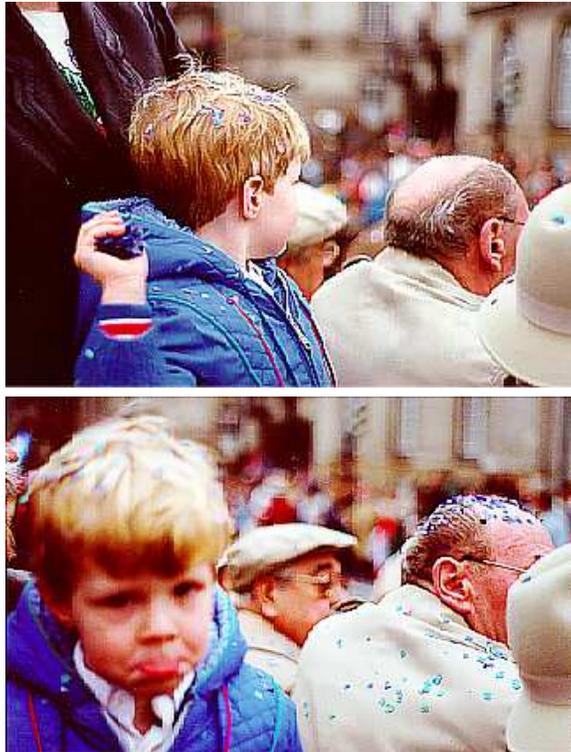


Figure 3.1: This is one of my favorite pictures. We were in France in 1992 and there was a parade in Nantes. We were visiting a university there. Josh grabbed a hand full of confetti to throw at the passing parade and this picture tells the story. The bald guy who got confetti all over his head reacted by turning around. He looked back at the parade and resumed like nothing at happened. The photo and Josh's reaction still crack me up.

Madrid reminded me of Mexico city. While walking in downtown Madrid at night, the auto fumes were so powerful that I became light headed. Also, instead of blowing out the gas generated by sewage, the Spanish prefer to vent their sewers. Thus, in addition to the auto fumes, we were treated every hundred feet or so to the aroma of vented gas from raw sewage.

The Spanish, though, are great people. Very friendly. Mohamed El-Sharkawi, with whom I taught the course, was particularly enthusiastic after a walk.

‘The locals are very friendly! Many natives came to me and acted quite friendly. These people are much more friendly than they are in America.’

A native Spanish participant in the course asked Mohamed if the friendly natives were male. Yes. What was the street? Mohamed told him. Turns out it was the district in Madrid frequented by promiscuous homosexuals.

Spanish people are extremely laid back. They rise at nine, work until noon, and have a siesta-lunch for three hours. They work some more and eat dinner at ten PM. Then they stay up all night. We saw children with their parents on the street in the wee hours.

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### 3.7 A US Story

I had a terrible problem with air travel on my summer ‘89 voyages. First, I had to cancel one of those tickets that can’t be cancelled. I got the new one and flew out of Seattle for Charleston, West Virginia. I missed my connection in Chigaco and spent a benign night in that town. Mom & Dad had driven from Cleveland to the Charleston air port to meet me and drive to West Virginia University in Morgantown. What a mess.

I had read in a book titled *Don’t Get Mad - Get Even* or something like that, where they say that physicians get preferential treatment nearly everywhere. In order to maximize my impact, I have the word Doctor on my checks and credit cards. I soon wearied of answering the question ”What kind of doctor are you?” in supermarket check-out lines. It takes too much time to give the full explanation. Anymore, I just tell them I’m a neuro-surgeon. Anyway, I’m at the Chigaco airport, I’ve missed my plane and I’m tired. With the status of doctor in mind, I approach the ticket agent . ”I’m a doctor and I need to get to Morgantown tonight!” says I.

She looked at me unimpressed. I like to travel comfortably and was dressed in an old shirt and blue jeans. I played with the idea of telling her that I was scheduled to perform neural surgery at the West

Virginia University hospital that evening, but I'm happy to report that my moral fiber won the battle. I ended up staying in Chicago that night without my luggage. No one was quite sure where it was at. I flew to Morgantown the next morning. They charged me an extra \$47 for a shuttle flight. I arrived at the Morgantown airport in the morning and was met by Mom & Dad and a Professor from West Virginia University named Aziz. They had rescheduled the whole symposium around my tardy appearance. Aziz told me that over 100 people were in attendance at the workshop - many more than were anticipated. I told the Aziz I needed to change into my suit and freshen up before I gave my lectures. Unfortunately, no one still knew where my luggage was. I gave my lectures to a totally suited audience in my jeans and an old shirt. Borrowing from Martin Luther King, I told them to "Judge me by the content of my presentation and not by the cut of my clothes". Pretty cute, eh?

You'll be happy to know that my clothes were located in Charleston and I got them that night. I asked the airline representative whether or not my luggage qualified for frequent flyer mileage. She smiled.

"Of course. We'll send your luggage free of charge to anywhere in the contiguous United States that you desire."

She was quick.

Mom, Dad & I visited Junior & Justine McHenry and Brenda Miller in Charleston that night. We went to the dog races. I developed a handicapping scheme based on the "frisky factor" and won \$26.

I flew from Charleston to Washington D.C. where I spent a week at a conference. My return flight from D.C. to Charleston was cancelled. Mom & Dad were again waiting for me at the Charleston airport. They were less than delighted.

We finally connected and began to drive to Ormeda's. It began to rain in a manner unknown to mortals since the time of Noah. The gas gauge was on empty. The night was dark. The rain was as thick as - whatever. We stopped at a gas station and were waved on because their electricity was out due to the storm. We drove onward, fueled only by faith. A road sign announced "Sutton", the city in West Virginia in which I was born. I remarked "Wouldn't it be ironic if we were to crash and I died here?"

Nobody laughed - and we didn't. Neither did I - yet.