

(cover to be determined)

Alonsoville Voice

It's a Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood

Issue No. 15

Brought to you by:

David Bolton
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In this Issue:

Featured Neighbors

Larry Grubb:
Toy Master

Jim Burger

Nick Sheridan

Princess Filippi

John Dean

Pat Gearhart

News and Notes

Please don't forget that it's time to pay your **annual KIA dues**. These help fund the picnic and other events and cover the cost of our insurance. Dues are \$40. Checks can be dropped off at 500 or 502 Wingate road. We have a Venmo Account as well, listed as follows:

KIA/Alonsoville
@KESWICK_BMORE

Please put your address in the notes with the payment if you use Venmo.
Thanks for supporting the KIA.

Be careful sending a check through the mail. Several Alonsoville neighbors have been victims of fraud. Crooks can “white out” letters and numbers and apply their own info so they can cash the check at a bank. My \$100 check to a friend became \$7500. Fortunately, Bank of America redeemed the lost money. Now I use Paypal.

March 9, Daylight Saving Time

March 31, Orioles Opening Day in Baltimore

April 3, Twitchy Fingers will be playing at the Towson Art Collective. Neighbors are welcome at the art party. Some of your neighbors may have paintings displayed..

David Bolton’s Towson novel, *Whispering Pines*, has been accepted by Rare Bird Books. Publication will be late ’25 or early ’26.



Washington on Trump inauguration day.
Photo by John Dean

Larry Grubb: Toy Master

By David Bolton and Larry Grubb

Larry was conceived on April Fools, 1953. His father had just installed stereo speakers in the master bedroom. His brother, Billy (3 years old), was playing at a neighbor's house, and his sister Cindy (1 year old) was napping. Larry's father, Bill, put a Frank Sinatra LP on the stereo and one thing led to another. Nine months later, Larry came into the world, an unplanned love child.

“Leave It to Beaver” Childhood

There was a Quonset hut in the suburb of Peoria, where Larry grew up. It contained a kindergarten and the volunteer fire department. His Dad took him on a tour of the fire department (He was a volunteer). When they got to the kitchen, Larry noticed a shelf of coffee cups with the firemen's names on them. He was looking for Dad's cup but couldn't find one with “Dad” on it. “Which one is yours?” he asked. His Dad replied: “The one that says Bill.” Larry realized his father had a life outside of being Dad.



Larry at 8

His Dad enjoyed an Old-Fashioned cocktail before dinner. Larry would wait patiently for him to hand over the maraschino cherry. After a while, Dad said “You know, there’s a whole jar full of these in the fridge.” Larry replied, “But yours taste better.”

Larry was close to his mom, Leona. She kept house and didn’t work. Her French toast was excellent, as were her PB&J sandwiches. Larry retains a taste for both to this day. He was small and shy as a child and appreciated the mothering she gave him.

During Middle School, for three consecutive summers, the family took three-week vacations camping and visiting National Parks in the West. The world changed for a boy who had only seen the cornfields of Illinois. Mesa Verde, Zion, Sequoia, Yellowstone, Glacier, Bryce and so many others were revelations of the beauty of nature and the effects of deep time on the landscape.

When Larry was a freshman in high school, his father was transferred to Philadelphia for a three-year stint. In the new school, the Midwestern boy did not make a lot of friends. He was usually the smallest, shiest, smartest kid in the class. Not exactly what you want to be if you want to be popular. The best thing about Philly was a coffee shop called the Main Point that his sister Cindy had found. They had live music, mostly up and coming folk singers. Larry saw soon-to-be famous musicians such as Tom Rush and James Taylor before they released their first albums. Larry remembers “James Taylor hitting me on the head with his guitar.” No, it wasn’t because Larry hit on James’ girlfriend; James accidentally struck the back of Larry’s head on his way from the bar to the stage. Fortunately it was an acoustic, not an electric guitar. James apologized.

Adulthood

Larry went to college at the Virginia Tech School of Architecture, a life-changing experience. For the first two years, there were no assignments like “Design a house”; instead, a typical assignment was “Make a perfect cube” or “Do 30 seconds of animation.” These assignments were intended to make you learn how to think and solve problems. After a third year of learning about structure, plumbing and electricity, the fourth and fifth years were spent combining the things you had learned to design buildings.

In his 5th year, he met Jayme (who would become his first wife) at her son Justin’s first birthday party. Larry fell in love with both of them and often took Justin to the School of Architecture on evenings and weekends when Larry was working on his thesis. There was a Visiting Professor from Baltimore, Richard Chase, a psychiatrist at Hopkins, specializing in early childhood development. He had convinced Johnson & Johnson that a line of toys could be designed to support and encourage the developmental stages of infancy. Larry interviewed for the job, got it and moved his family to Baltimore. The job consisted of making the toys in the company’s

workshop and then watching babies of various ages play with them, making revisions and perfecting the toys to be what the babies wanted. It was a great job that lasted about 15 years.

Genealogy

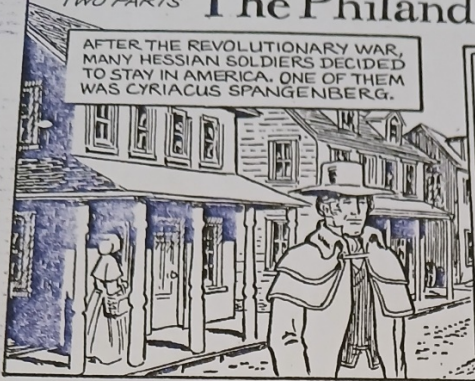
My Dad got interested in genealogy during the 1980s (Well before Ancestry.com). He was still living in Illinois and had traced our family back to Baltimore in the early 1800s. He asked me to see what I could find in the MD and DC archives. I did and got hooked on genealogy in a big way. I ended up tracing our line back to our immigrant ancestor, who came to the colony of Pennsylvania in 1749 from what is now Germany but was then The Holy Roman Empire. I also found that my 6th great uncle was the victim of a stabbing that resulted in his attacker being the first man to be hanged for murder in Pennsylvania.

The cartoons, published in a Sunday paper around 1985, illustrate what occurred. I think the series was called "True Stories from Pennsylvania History". I was researching at the Moravian Historical Society. One of the librarians gave me copies because she remembered I was researching the Glassmore family.

FIRST OF TWO PARTS

The Philandering Preacher

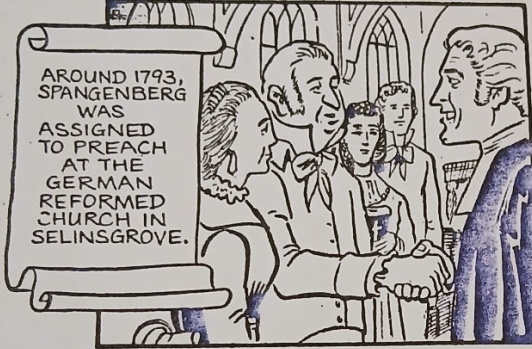
AFTER THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, MANY HESSIAN SOLDIERS DECIDED TO STAY IN AMERICA. ONE OF THEM WAS CYRIACUS SPANGENBERG.



SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, A MINISTER NAMED PHILIP J. MICHAEL TRAINED AND ORDAINED SPANGENBERG AS A MINISTER.



AROUND 1793, SPANGENBERG WAS ASSIGNED TO PREACH AT THE GERMAN REFORMED CHURCH IN SELINSGROVE.



HIS CHARM AND GIFT OF GAB WON THE HEART OF A LOCAL GIRL, AND A DATE WAS SET FOR THEIR WEDDING.



HOWEVER, SOMEBODY FOUND A LETTER FROM EUROPE ADDRESSED TO SPANGENBERG,



SIGNED BY HIS WIFE IN GERMANY!



WHEN WORD GOT OUT, THE CONGREGATION DROVE REV. SPANGENBERG OUT OF TOWN.





Our family was among the founding members of The Old Otterbein Church on Conway street downtown, the oldest church still standing in Baltimore. There is a box in the National Archives from the 1870s containing letters from neighbors attesting to both the good moral character of George Washington Grubb and his mom's poverty. He was born on Washington's birthday and

died fighting for the Union in the Civil War. She had applied for his Civil War pension and had to prove he had no children out of wedlock and that she was destitute.

I really enjoyed the hunt for ancestors and sometimes imagined myself as the Sam Spade of Genealogical research. (See “The Strange Case of the Moroccan Dresser” on **page ?**)

Larry’s first marriage ended about the same time as his first job. The company was closing the Baltimore office. He could have stayed on in their New York City office, but he wanted to stay in Baltimore so he could see Justin regularly. He applied for a job at the only toy company in Baltimore, Life-Like. He was hired as head of R&D and stayed there for about 15 years.

The most important part of the job was making prototypically correct locomotives and freight cars. These were in HO scale and had to be correct down to the number of rivets on a particular car. Paint schemes had to be matched to the correct year for the cars. There was a whole society of “nit-picking train nerds” that needed to be satisfied if the product was to be successful.

Feeling the need for female companionship, Larry put an ad in *Baltimore Magazine*’s “In Search Of” section: “Toy designer in search of lifetime playmate”. Cyndy Serfas, a smart, talented and creative woman who ran her own advertising agency out of a three-story deckled edge row house in Charles Village, was everything he hoped for and more.

They were soon living together and indulging in their common love of travel, visiting many of the National Parks Larry visited as a child. Cyndy came along on business trips to Hong Kong (With a side trip to Guilin, China.) and Salzburg, where they continued on to Prague and Vienna.

Larry had bought and was renovating a vacant crack house in Hampden. Five years into his two-year plan, it was finished. He and Cyndy started looking for a house to share. After 18 months of not finding what they wanted, Cyndy happened to be dropping off a file on a disc (still no internet, thankfully) at John Stack’s house on Wickford Road. Across the street, there was a for-sale sign at 4403 Wickford Road. It had everything they were looking for. They bought it.



Alonsoville

In 1996 they moved in and on May 3rd, 1997. They were married in front of their fireplace. Two neighbors, at 4403 and 4401 Wickford, were on vacation at that time and gave them use of their homes, with Cyndy's family staying in one and Larry's family staying in the other. They knew they had found the perfect home in the perfect neighborhood.

Larry had heard rumors about The Sedgwick Society, a "secret society" founded by Jim Burger and his wife Anne. He learned the purpose of the Society was to contribute to the debauchery of Alonsoville. It wasn't enough to become debauched yourself; you had to help debauch your neighbors. Larry earned his membership by starting the tradition of the NYE crab drop, which continues to this day. Jim started the tradition of T-shirts at the Alonsoville picnic, coming up with classics such as "Alonsoville: It ain't Roland Park, but its close" , "Alonsoville: Where every hour is a happy hour" and "Alonsoville: Someday all neighborhoods will be named after bars".



Eiffel Tower, Larry's creation; bamboo from Stony Run; photo by Cyndy Serfas

By this time, Justin was an adult living in Baltimore and a member of the band Ego Likeness, which toured the US and Europe. He settled down in Lauraville with Amy, his partner of 20 years, and he now works in the tech sector.

When Life-Like was sold in 1999 to a company from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, there was no way Larry & Cyndy were going to leave Alonsoville for the cold Midwest. So Larry got a job (A paid position, not a volunteer) at Habitat For Humanity, located in the old BMW dealership on Keswick Road in Hampden. He was responsible for everything that needed to be done before the volunteers showed up to construct the house: purchasing the lot or house; designing the new house; drawing floor plans & structural drawings to get building permits; getting water and electricity to the site and lining up contractors for demolition and waste disposal.

Negotiating the Baltimore City permits department was a nightmare punctuated by moments of hilarity. Once when he was paying a fine on a property due to its long-term vacancy, he let the clerk know that Habitat owned several other similar properties. She replied, "Honey, don't go looking for trouble," her way of saying, "It is 4 o'clock and I don't need any more work today."

After five years with Habitat, Larry became Executive Director at One House at a Time, a nonprofit that sold vacant houses in Baltimore to people with the skills and money to rehab them. These were problem houses open to casual entry that had become nuisances to the neighborhood, typically owned by failed LLC's or real estate speculators, never little old ladies that couldn't pay their mortgage.

After three years, Larry wanted to retire but not suddenly. He had prior experience in home improvements, so he applied for an MHIC license. Strangely enough, to get the license you don't have to prove you are good at doing the work. You just had to prove you understand the laws governing home improvements (by answering 70 out of 100 questions correctly!); and, you had a big pile of money so your clients could sue you if you screwed up, usually a million-dollar bond that cost about \$200 a year. Not exactly the craft guild he was expecting to qualify for.

Wickford Woodworking was born. He started out working for folks both in and out of the neighborhood and soon built a business that kept him busy full time. After a few years he stopped looking for new clients and the business tapered off until he retired for good.

Retirement: "The best job I've ever had."

Since retirement, Cyndy & Larry have indulged in their love of dogs and travel. Two organizations, Rover.Com and Trusted Housesitters.Com, made this possible. Using Rover, they pet sit small dogs in their house for nearby families. "It's like being a grandparent. It's fun to play with the dogs and then you get to give them back in a few days." They have several repeat customers as well as many new ones.

Using Trusted Housesitters, they sit pets at their owner's homes, living there free of charge in exchange for looking after the pets. They usually go for a month at a time, and some of the best sites have been in Edinburgh, Scotland; Sonoma County, California; Vancouver, Canada and *San Miguel de Allende*, Mexico (5 times, 3 times with Alonsoville neighbors). Upcoming trips this

year will include The Cotswolds in England (looking after two sheep), San Diego, California and probably *San Miguel de Allende* again.

Cyndy stays creative doing art, sewing, knitting and gardening, Larry spends a lot of time in the workshop making furniture and birdhouses and some other stuff, mostly kindling and sawdust. And gardening. And setting off fireworks and dropping the Crab on New Years Eve.

They love their life in Alonsoville.

Quote of the Day

Beware the hobby that eats.
~ Benjamin Franklin

The History of the Sedgwick Society

By Jim Burger

In 2000 I began writing a column for the now-gone *Baltimore Messenger*. I was to provide news of Keswick in a similar fashion to neighborhoods like Roland Park, Guilford, and Homeland. My first action was to refer to Keswick as Alonsoville. All my reports were far less stodgy, far more breezy than my fellow columnists. Also, not as many facts. I loved to embellish, and I was always making up neighborhood organizations that didn't actually exist – one of them was a men's club, "The Knights of Sedgwick."

The idea stuck with me, and in 2002 I decided to launch The Sedgwick Society. I had discussed my feelings earlier with Carol Herndon, my across-the-street neighbor on Sedgwick Road. We agreed there was something special about Alonsoville. I was originally from a small neighborhood in a small town in Pennsylvania, but even there it lacked the sense of community we had here. I designed an enamel pin (featuring a Martini, of course) and ordered 100 of them. Finally, I named myself founder and president, and my officers; Anne Burger (my wife), and Chris DiPietro (our neighbor).

It's not a secret society, although the inaugural class of inductees had no idea what they were getting into the night I called them together. They thought it was just another party at the Burger's house at 4413 Sedgwick Road. After the cocktail hour, I stood on the steps and looked out over the crowd in the living room. It was then I told them why they were there. The reason was simple – everyone in some way had contributed to the overall livability of Alonsoville through any one of these three basic tenets: Liberty. Fraternity. Debauchery.

One by one I called their names to come forward, sign “The Book of Sedgwick,” and be pinned by the officers. As they did, I read into the official record their achievements.

Among those in attendance:

Carol Herndon, the matriarch of Sedgwick Road, and her husband, Al (posthumously). They were the original neighborhood hipsters.

Vic and Nancy Romita for their Christmas caroling parties.

Rene and Mary Gunning for adding an air of dignity to our Pirate Crew. Also, Rene’s sound legal advice.

Ted and Lanny Gans for three words...Holiday Open House.

Tim and Marina Windsor for marinating and cooking hundreds of pounds of chicken for the early Alonsoville Festivals, founding the “Dining with Neighbors club,” and helping to write a history of the neighborhood.

Greg and Angela Simmons for hosting a babysitting party with beer.

Larry Grubb and Cyndy Serfas for creating the New Year’s Eve Crab Drop at the Wingate Circle.

Jim Kutcher and Cindy Leahy for tireless work with the Keswick Improvement Association and North Baltimore Neighborhood Coalition.

More residents were added in the fullness of time. One particularly happy pinning was Peyton and Elaine Eggleston on their wedding day, January 2, 2010.

Non-residents are also among our ranks. Larry Dammons carried the Alonsoville mail. Others were visitors, such as Baltimore Sun columnists Dan Rodricks, Rob Kasper, and Fred Rasmussen.

Members are urged to wear their pins for special occasions, and we gather for a toast to the fallen at funerals. Survivors of our deceased members are sometimes handed-down society pins. Rene Gunning was buried with his – I was a pallbearer and placed it on him.

A recent audit of remaining pins compared to signatures in the Book of Sedgwick revealed how many pins have been lost in the laundry. I would expect nothing less. It’s Alonsoville.



Once Upon a Time

In the 400 block of Cold Spring, the Drop Ditch Studio, which sold children's clothes, had a donkey who lived for years in the back of the store.

~ Daphne Mohr, 409 Wingate Road

Keswick History Notebook

Ice Cream and Me

By Nick Sheridan*

I was a young man in New England when I first made ice cream in a wooden churn, We added salt to the ice, which seemed strange to me. Then we filled the inside canister with a mix of strawberries, sugar and rich, heavy cream. Turning the churn handle took patience. As if by magic, the liquid mixture turned gloppy, then firm. We filled our bowls. It was delicious.

I've made ice cream ever since, often combining unusual ingredients. For my 40th birthday, my wife treated me to a posh ice cream maker with a built-in refrigerant, which multiplied the times I created frozen delights. One time my sister and I added goat cheese, tarragon and mashed peas to the cream, surprisingly, a good side dish with roast chicken. Once, at the end of a garlic-celebration dinner, I slipped a mashed clove of garlic into orange ice cream. No one noticed it right away.

Recently, I made a pink grapefruit gelato with coconut milk for my dairy-allergic wife. My concoctions have included grape nuts, cilantro, chili peppers, croutons, rhubarb, and browned butter. I go exploring for the most intense, crunchiest, and freshest flavors I can find. Did you know that Bassets of Philadelphia throws out their leftover banana ice cream after 48 hours? The rich fruit flavor fades all too quickly. That's culinary ethics for you. Their store is an essential stop for me whenever I'm in Philly.

Am I obsessed with ice cream? Surely not, though I do occasionally wake my Charlene with ideas for new combinations. My bucket list includes chocolate and Sichuan peppercorns; sweet potato and lime; sweet sherry and mandarins; butternut squash and orange; summer tomato, dates, and hashish; red beets, blackcurrants, and ginger; Serrano peppers and fish oil.

Thirty years later the machine, like me, has retired and been replaced with a new one. So, friends and neighbors, watch out. Samples are on the way!

** Nick has been cooking since he was seven. He gained professional experience at restaurants up and down Charles Street before launching a small catering company that focused on non-profits: lunches, fundraising auctions, crab feasts, and Christmas parties. His specialty was designing wedding receptions. From Pennsylvania to D.C., Cuisine Catering and Event Planning created magic through food, music and reception locations..*



Snow Portrait, Photo by John Dean

Winter Joint Woes

By Princess (Lourdes Filippi)

OTD, OTR/L, CHT

Clinical Specialist

JH Outpatient Center

Johns Hopkins Hospital

For those of us who are human barometers and can tell when bad weather is afoot as our joints start aching and speaking roughly to us, know that it is just another symptom of arthritic changes. So, what is arthritis and what can we do about it?

Arthritis is a global diagnosis that covers over a hundred different types. The most common are osteoarthritis, commonly referred to as OA, and rheumatoid arthritis, or RA. OA is a degeneration of the joints from wear and tear, affecting more than 32.5 million adults in the US (CDC Data). Injuries sustained when we were younger can make us prone to these wear and tear changes and susceptible to aches and pains. There are also common sites of joint degeneration since they sustain more loads during our daily activities and work tasks, such as the neck, spine, hips, knees, the base of our thumbs, and the small joints of our fingers. RA, on the other hand, is a chronic inflammatory disorder, often hereditary, where our body's immune system attacks tissues and organs, such as the eyes, heart, lungs, skin, and small joints of the fingers, to name a few. This condition is best managed under the care of a rheumatologist.

Arthritic changes in the joints are often irreversible and we learn to live with them. However, if these aches and pains affect the quality of our lives and stop us from doing things we truly enjoy and are meaningful, it may be time to consult your doctor.

For most of us who experience these joint pains occasionally, we need to follow joint protection techniques. Simply, these are strategies we employ to limit further strain on our bodies. Here are six principles to guide us through our unique lives and journeys.

RESPECT THE PAIN. Pain is our body's way of letting us know something is wrong. Ignoring this signal may cause further damage.

BALANCE REST AND ACTIVITY. Plan your day and know your limits. Both the front and the backyard do not need to be done at one time. Or cleaning the house from top to bottom. Do it in sections. It is better to wake up the next day pain-free than sore for several days.

EXERCISE AND KEEP YOUR BODY STRONG. With joint changes, your muscles will provide the needed stability during activities. But here is an important thing to remember: exercises should be completed in pain-free ranges. (Hint, read the first joint protection principle.)

AVOID POSITIONS OF DEFORMITY. Some positions and movements we do can place excess strain on joints with arthritis. Changing our positions frequently can alleviate this. Be mindful of your posture. Stretch often. Use a sit-to-stand table when doing long desk work. Use the other hand, or maybe both, when needing to hold a position for a while. Why not prop it up on a stand instead of holding a heavy book or tablet?

REDUCE EFFORT AND FORCE. Gadgets are our friends. Kitchen utensils with bigger handles are easier to hold and carry. It is easier to push than pull. Slide a full pot or bowl instead of lifting. A good jar opener is a lifesaver. Although it may be more cost-effective to buy a bigger bag, the pain you avoid when carrying a lighter bag of bird seeds is worth more than the savings.

USE LARGER AND STRONGER JOINTS AND MUSCLES. Harness the power and stability of our larger muscles and joints. These are meant for power. Your fingers and thumbs are meant for dexterity. Engaging our core muscles when doing work also lessens the load on our hands and fingers. Carry groceries with totes that stay over your shoulders rather than carrying small-handled bags with your hands. And since this last entry addressed bags, isn't it a pleasant surprise that a smaller crossbody purse is more than enough when filled only with essentials?

You can learn more and access other resources through the Arthritis Foundation website.

Keep warm and cozy everyone!



Winter Beauty, Photo by David Bolton

The Strange Case of the Moroccan Dresser

By Larry Grubb

It was a morning like any other morning. I pumped some caffeine into my body, kissed the brunette beauty in my bed goodbye, and headed for the mean streets of Baltimore. I headed straight for the Maryland Historical Society, a comfortable dive where I had picked up some good leads on some previous cases. The regular patrons were hanging out, some in worse shape than I was after a long night digging in musty places they had no business digging in. But their troubles were not my concern; you get mixed up in other people's genealogies and all you get is heartbreak. I had my own trouble, and his name was Wilhelm Grubb. A shifty character, Wilhelm was making a career out of staying one step ahead of me. But these guys are all alike: You wait long enough and they slip up. It's usually a lot of little things: a baptism here, a real estate transaction there, and pretty soon you got 'em nailed. Wilhelm was no exception, just a little bit better at it than most.

Feeling lucky for no good reason, I flipped on the Microfiche to the 1829 Baltimore City Directory and there he was: William Grubb, Moroccan Dresser. I played it cool, not letting him see my hand shaking as I turned off the machine. I had to hand it to him, he had guts. I had him cornered and he didn't try to run. He stood there and dared me to try and figure out what the heck a Moroccan Dresser was. I knew it was his profession, but that was all I knew. Seemed to me that there probably weren't too many Moroccans in Baltimore who couldn't dress themselves, but there were parts of town even I didn't go into, and the Moroccan section was one of them. I took a deep breath to steady my nerves. I wanted this guy bad, but I'm no hero and the Moroccan section had a reputation as tough as an unindexed census, the kind of place that you could go into and not come out. I readjusted the Microfiche and found myself staring down the barrel of a 22, the 1822 Baltimore City Directory, to be exact. He was there again, only this time he had dropped the Moroccan moniker and was going by the name of Wilhelm Grubb, Tanner. This was the slip I had waited for. I knew a tanner worked with leather, and a quick trip to the dictionary confirmed it: Moroccan was a fine soft leather made from goat skins and tanned with sumac, and dressing was synonymous with tanning.

It's like I said before: You keep pushing and sooner or later they all slip up. I Photostatted him and he didn't flinch. I admire that in a man. As I pulled my trench coat around me and turned to leave, I noticed another genealogist staring at me with a look of admiration and fear. "Yeah, I know," I said. "It's a dirty job, but somebody has to do it."

One Last Word

By David Bolton

In the fall of '77, I was in my fourth year of driving a cab, a perfect job for a fiction writer in San Francisco. The city was loaded with characters, including Norman Mailer, who jumped into the back of the cab one full-moon evening. He wanted to go to North Beach. In the rear view, I recognized him by that mound of fluffy white hair. "Let's talk about books," he announced.

"I've written two, what have you written?"

"My last book was *Marilyn*."

"You don't look like Norman Mailer."

“Thank you.”

We bantered through that 10-minute ride, great fun. In front of the City Lights bookstore, he climbed out of the Volare (worst car ever made), and I had to say something. “What advice would you give to an aspiring novelist?”

Mailer paused and looked me in the eye. “Find an honest agent!...if you do, let me know.” He burst into laughter. Off he strode into the blinking lights..

Actually, I already had an agent, Elizabeth Pomada. Try as she might, the woman couldn't sell the Maya fable, *Rainman*, though we did get a nibble and a nice letter from Putnam. Just couldn't pull the trigger. A big letdown. Little did I realize that it would take 45 years and many rewrites before the book found a publisher for *Love Thief*, but that's another story.

I got robbed a few days after my encounter with Norman. Got me in the project parking lot, quick, almost businesslike. But it was the second time, and hackers do get shot. I had the back window blown out at Hunter's Point one Saturday evening. Time to switch to the day shift.

Anyway, let me get to the point. A few days later I was stuck in traffic around Union Square. The sun was beaming through the windshield, making me squint. Another perfect blue day, 300+ days and counting. I missed the change of seasons.

I inched along, listening to KJAZZ. Then Sinatra started singing “Autumn in Manhattan.” A wave of nostalgia washed through me. *Gotta go home... to the “brown and holy East”* (Jack Kerouac).

I moved back the following January. I cherish the memory of coming out of the Mount Royal Tavern at 2am with my best friend, Dave Yeakle, gone but not forgotten. We traipsed back to his apartment. It was snowing, coating Bolton Hill. The city was still, no sirens, no rumble of traffic, just the hiss of snowflakes. It was magical.

I love winter, especially when it snows.



Can we go back now?

Photo of Winston by Pam Gearhart