

California Breezes

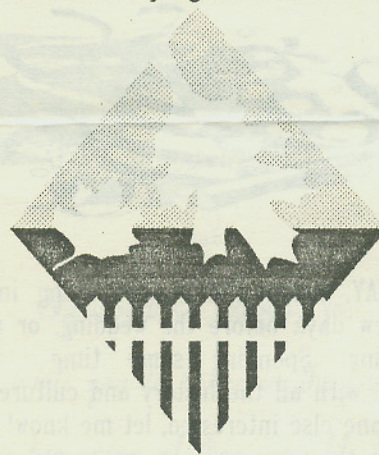
COLUMN LEFT

What Would You Say?

It was the other day as I started to walk down the beach in Santa Monica (sorry!) that these thoughts came to my head. It so happened that Mark called and left a message the night before, informing me of his new phone number. Now what was surprising about this was not that he got a new phone number, but that he *called* me to let me know about it. I stopped and thought about the significance of this, because it has not been often that I have talked with or even exchanged letters with this member of my family. Developing this line of thinking further, I wondered what kind of conversation I would have with any given sibling if I were to spend the day, or an hour or two with them. What would I say? I think it's easier to know just what we would say to the President of the United States, or to the Pope, or to O.J., but what about a brother or sister, with whom we have limited contact?

We all came from the same household, growing up in Inkster (yes, we really did!), and yet we have all gone our separate ways, getting married once or twice, staying single (so far), changing addresses about as often as changing our careers. We occupy several different areas of this country, have different philosophies on life, and it's only once every so often that we all get together and get that chance to sit and talk to each other. I wonder what I would talk about with each brother and sister if given the chance? Would I be full of news about life in Southern California (everyone knows about the 'quakes, fires, mudslides, and riots); would I talk about my job, my friends, my dates, the weather, or reminisce about the family and the "good old days" (whatever that is)? Or would I take a chance and open up my heart, to share the struggles of being gay in today's society, of trying to fill the loneliness that comes with being a single man. Would I share my intimate joys, of moments that brought laughter, of feelings of love that were real, if unexpressed?

Would I take the chance to be vulnerable, to be *myself*, and risk the judgment or reaction of the

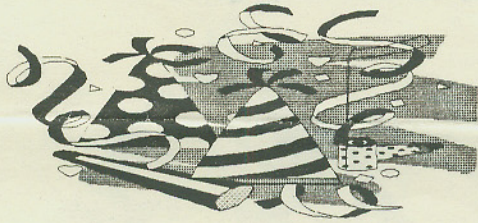


listener? Too often the guard is up when talking with someone about our lives. It's easier to say the correct things, those things that we know will meet with respect and approval, knowing (or perhaps not realizing) that what we keep hidden is as much of the fabric of our lives as the stuff we reveal. Yet it is that guard that keeps us from getting closer to others. It is fear that props the guard up, that keeps others at a safe distance. While I am not advocating turning into open books to every soul I encounter (God knows there are enough of those on Donahue, Sally, *et al*), I am saying that perhaps as we get older, the guards we put up are not as necessary, and the reasons for keeping them there are no longer valid. Fear of rejection, of judgment, of ridicule has no place in our relationships, right?

So, as the clean, white sands of Santa Monica sifted through my toes on that other afternoon, I thought of the upcoming family reunion (oh yeah, someone's getting married!), and of the opportunities to chat with family members I haven't seen in a while. I thought of *everyone* having these same opportunities, and so the question remains, what would you say?

Happy birthday to Bill this month! Any others I have missed?

Also, happy belated ones to Mark and Jim!



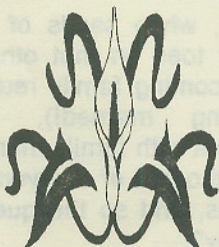
BY THE WAY, I am thinking of flying into Boston either a few days before the wedding, or right after the wedding. Spending some time could be interesting, with all the history and culture one finds there. Anyone else interested, let me know!

BY THE WAY, Mark's new phone number is:

(810) 5691364. Are you only accepting non-collect calls, Mark?

BY THE WAY Lynn and Woody, where are you two going to honeymoon? We'll be sure to notify the tabloids!

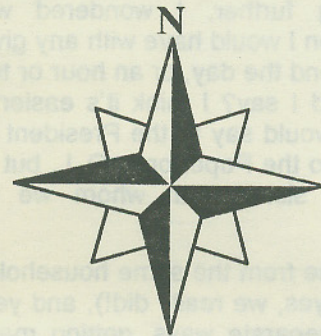
BY THE WAY, Greg and my 20-yr. high school reunion is being held the same day as the wedding. See what we are giving up? This wedding better be good!



Summer Finds the Janssens With Their Show on the Road

July has been a busy month for us. We spent a couple days in Chicago, a big experience for country bumpkins like us. Troy and Ron enjoyed a White Sox -Brewer game and fireworks after on the Fourth of July. Troy won free tickets from a fantasy baseball contest from the local newspaper. Then we spent the next day at Shedd's Aquarium and had a great time there. We just got back from a trip up north camping. The Janssen family has a reunion each summer and we spent the weekend in cabins at Wilderness State Park near Mackinaw. Ron and I are going to try to squeeze in a trip to Cedar Point this summer, since they have a brand new roller coast I have to try.

We are looking forward to the Schneider family reunion in September. We want to spend a few extra days traveling, but don't know where yet.



Musings From "Up North"

At this writing, Traverse City is immersed in their eight day bacchanal--the National Cherry Festival. The area celebrates the cherries that have been growing here for generations, the tart and the sweet. Of course, this is only early July, and the cherries are hard, little green knobs, not reaching maturity and tastiness

until the end of this month, or even August. So, all cherries that are sold here, including all cherry products, are imported from the West Coast (some, though, are left over [frozen] from last year.). That's no reason not to have a Cherry Festival, though I always wondered why this celebration cannot be held in August when we can glorify *our* own freshly plucked fruit. Nevertheless, on with the show.

I work midnights at the hospital downtown Traverse, and catnap during the days. The weather recently has not been conducive to comfortable slumber: brilliant sunshine, temps in the 70's, the air redolent of white pine and East Bay. I toss and turn on my low-end Sealy Posturepedic, knowing the outside, as sweet as fresh honey, is beckoning me. Hence, the bags under my eyes and the slightly irritable nature when I return to work that night. But on my days off--three one week, four the next--I unwind quite nicely.

Because of the Festival, the Blue Angels have been practicing all week for their July 2nd and 3rd air shows, (which took place over West Bay). These two to three hour practices take place over my house. Nobody else's, just *mine*. Six navy blue jets roaring over my roof, soaring and pirouetting over the bay, sound waves rattling my already maligned pictures on the walls and seemingly careening through my bedroom, alighting finally at the foot of my bed while I'm trying to doze. Then I awoke, pulled on a pair of shorts, walked outside and down to the East Bay on a fine Saturday afternoon and watched their show. Spectacular! Such awesome finesse, such magnificent, stout-hearted maneuvering, such mind-blowing fuel bills!

I pay all utilities in my upper flat. I have plenty of windows but they are poorly constructed, letting in the cool wintry winds last year. My highest gas bill (natural gas) was \$99.95 for January. Everything is electric, except heating and the water heater. Does anyone feel this amount is excessive? I kept my place at about 62 F.

This past winter was the coldest since 1976. The bays were frozen in January, and already greater than 100 inches of snow had fallen, none of it melting. Then spring came swirling up from Down Under, and all that snow ran in giant rivers to the bays.

Saturday, July 9th, I'll be running a 15k race as part of the Cherry Festival's closing festivities, a festive jaunt along Old Mission Peninsula and ending in town passing, I hope, millions of cheering, festive folks who will be lining the streets waiting for us

sweaty idiots to finish and get outta the way of the waiting "Festival-Closing, Grand Finale-Grand Poobah of All Parades" parade! My practice time running the 9.3 mile course was 77 minutes, including the foreboding McKinley Road Hill. Running up McKinley Hill is like trying to jog up a tree! This will be my last race, because the way I train for it, I feel injuries are imminent. Running is for fun (really!) not for competition, except only with myself.

Lynn Marie Schneider

and

Sherwood C. Steven, Jr.

invite you to share in the joy
of the beginning of their new life together
when they exchange marriage vows
on Saturday, the twenty-fourth of September
Nineteen hundred and ninety-four
at three o'clock in the afternoon

Resurrection Church

651 Millbrook Avenue

Randolph, New Jersey

SEE YOU ALL THERE!--MIKE