

California Breeze

Thanks!

as the holiday season is upon us, the traditions of stuffing turkeys, then stuffing ourselves at the dinner table, are accompanied by the gathering of friends and family beside the hearth, toasts to each others' well being and the continuance of these relationships into the new year. Roasted bird or goose, simmering stuffing, chardonnays refilled in glasses held by those we love—these are the signs of the holidays. Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years—moments in which we stop the treadmill some of us are on, long enough to enjoy the company of friends, while the leaves fall to the ground, or the snows swirl their icy dance from the heavens. Times of merriment, of joy, of reflecting on the real meaning of the season. Boy, the year goes by fast, doesn't it? Winter into spring, into summer, into fall, and here we are again. What happened during the year that we can be proud of, that we want to remember? What is it that we can give thanks for?

I think I can only speak for myself. I believe that I have grown a bit closer to the family this past year. Editing this rag and catching up on the phone has given me this sense of closeness. I have bared my soul here, only because of my love for my family and my family's love for me. We are all imperfect, we are all human. We all make mistakes, act selfishly at times, yet we are still accepted and loved by each other. We are all pretty different, I have to say. Young and well, not so young, content and not content, open and private, this family lives its own lives. We don't always understand each other, but we shrug our shoulders and say, "What the heck, he/she is still family." That's the bond of love I give thanks for. Not every family can say that.

I give thanks for my health. For a man of almost 40, I think I am in pretty good condition! I *am* getting older, but I am getting better, too! I have escaped the dreaded HIV that has plagued many of my community, and I still have most of my hair, can still fit into a pair of 32 x 32 pants, and still I draw those second looks from young women and men alike. So, who am I to complain?

I am thankful that I have a good job, especially in this economy. A good company to work for, decent pay (but never enough!), and a bright future allows me to sleep well at night.

What gives me reason to be grateful are the experiences of the past that has made me who I am today. I have been shaped by those experiences, and even though I am in a different place today than I would have imagined 10 years ago, my friends, my travels, my loves, my triumphs and my losses matured me, like the grape on the vine, waiting to be harvested for the bottle. And as I get older, I have to smile as I realize the changes that have come over me. The things that were so important then compared to what is so important today. Some things haven't changed, though. The need to be connected to people. The need to love, and the need to be loved. Thank God for that! That is his gift to me, so I need to respect and reverence it.

I sit in front of this terminal, with a lingering glass of wine that gives a warm and mellowing glow inside me (I think it said it would on the label), and I feel good about life. I wonder about the rest of you, about what it is that you would give thanks for. I have an idea about many of you, because you have shared some of yourself—here and in other ways. I hope that on the 23rd, as you gather with family or friends, as the wonderful smell of roasting turkey fills the house, as the second and third and fourth bottle of wine gets uncorked, as the football games get ignored by the lively conversations, that you stop and give thanks for—whatever it is that needs to be recognized. Happy Thanksgiving!



inside...

Bill's Dash as the Marathon Man: page 2

Some tips for holiday entertaining: page 3

Reflections from Greg: page 4

Old war stories from Dad: page 5

The early morning Canadian sky was a deep, dark blue. The stars were fading and the waning moon was sinking westward. The temperature was 43 F and windy. A boisterous crowd of about 2700 runners mulled around the Starting Line. Then, a KABLAM! Everyone let out a roar. People were screaming and cheering, horns were tooting, and at 8:00 a.m. precisely, the race began. I felt like Johnny Reb amidst the throng of yelling soldiers and flashing bayonets, running to do battle against the evil Yanks. No, instead it was another Detroit Free Press/ Mazda International Marathon beginning.

I was so excited my neck hairs stood straight up for the first two miles. The thick crowd oozed amoeba-like through the downtown streets of Windsor, Ontario. Stores were closed, it being a Sunday morning. Traffic was blocked off. At major intersections traffic lights flickered indifferently. Curious observers, swaddled in housecoats, hair in curlers, clutching cups of coffee, peered over their balconies. Hordes of spectators, clad in fur-trimmed parkas and knitted hats and mittens cheered and urged us on. I was enjoying the show immensely, just trotting slowly along. The front runners far ahead were flying like Mercury into the open arms of the rising sun. Policemen and women were stomping their feet, arms folded tightly across their chests.

Everyone looked chilled except for us. Already, Ouellete Avenue was awash with discarded gloves, hats, shirts, and old sweatpants.

MILE 6. The Tunnel. The only marathon know that goes underwater. Into the darkness I went, down the incline. The walls seemed to be bleeding Detroit River water. Some people shouted just to hear their ricocheting echoes. I picked up speed. Back out into the bright sunlight and downtown Detroit, USA. A turn around the Renaissance Center, down a few side streets past pastel-painted Port-a-Potties,

cheering friendly faces passing out cups of Gatorade and water and wedges of oranges, peanut butter cookies, hard candies, and wads of Vaseline on tongue depressors (for those chafed inner thighs), wide-eyed bundled, smiling spectators shouting encouragement.

Down Atwater, past rugged, burned-out husks of buildings, the glistening river slapping against cement docks and abutments, lovely Harbor Town, a diamond in a coal pile; the tall blocks of the Medusa plant, then, the Belle Isle bridge.

MILE 13. The wind wasn't too noticeable until Belle Isle. Then, the sun disappeared, the sky churned with black clouds and the wind pushed us along the bridge onto the island. The spectators became scarce, the run turned into work. I passed an elderly man exclaiming to no one, pointing at the sky, "That goose must be lost," referring to a lone Canadian goose honking down at us. Then I came upon a young, light-skinned Afro-American man who was so wrapped up in himself he could have run off a cliff and not notice. He was huffing and puffing, and with each breath he took, he exhaled a solemn "Hallelujah"...inhale, "Hallelujah", inhale, "Hallelujah", inhale, "Hallelujah". I shuffled past him, thinking he was climbing the Stairway into Heaven.

MILE 20. My third pee stop. And my last. I saw men dash over to sides of buildings, corners of houses, behind sparse shrubbery, and some with a devil-may-care attitude just standing off to the side, relieving themselves in full view of everyone. No shame. No sense of propriety. Even some women came dashing out of bushes back into the race with shirttails hanging out of their tiny shorts, wiping their hands on their sweaty shirts. Not me. I wanted a Port-a-Potty. And at Mile 20, I wanted one NOW. A slightly swifter runner beat me to the open one. Damn, I thought, running in place, watching marathoners trudging by, time ticking, my patience fading fast. I rattled the door to the other potty, but there was no response. Locked and no one inside? Damn.

More people ran by. More time ticked on. Out of patience. What was he DOING in there—polishing his shoes and flossing his teeth? "C'mon, let's go, let's go" I shouted. I pulled on the door a few times, nearly pushing it off of its foundation. Finally the guy opened the door and came out, scowling at me. I scowled back, slamming and locking the door behind me, hoping he doesn't waste his valuable time pushing my Port-a-Potty over out of vengeance.



(Continued from page 2)

Down Gratiot and the cold wind slammed into me like a locomotive. Then another gust, then another. I picked up speed despite this torment from Hell. While others were walking or plodding, or dawdling and wobbling, I turned on my jets! Where did this energy come from? CARBO-BARS? Gatorade? Celibacy? In any case, this brawling wind was no match for my desire to finish under four hours.

MILE 25. Along Woodward, trash and debris flew all around, as if a hundred helicopters were hovering twenty feet above me. Empty discarded cups clattered along the avenue, sounding like applause. The cheering bystanders became louder. More and more people crowded near the Finish Line at Hart Plaza. My throat tightened and became stridorous; it became harder to breathe. I gave one last push and ran—galloped—to the Finish Line, trying to get the best time.

Someone congratulated me and flung a silvery space blanket around me. Someone else congratulated me and delicately placed a purple-ribboned bronze medal around my bowed head. I gasped a "Thank you", and I wanted to burst. I needed to cry. I did neither. Instead, ravenous, I immediately sloped over to the Food Table and grabbed a bagel and a couple of yogurts, a banana, a granola bar, and a Gatorade. Walking on stilts, I went down to the river and sat down and began biting and chewing and slurping and gulping. All I could think of was one thing: Why was that other pastel Port-a-Potty locked with nobody inside it?



A FUNNY MOVIE that I saw recently is called, "Kicking and Screaming," a low-budget, non-commercial film in the spirit of "Diner", about a group of friends who graduate from college and face the anxieties of what comes next. Each character is very different, and pretty funny in their own way. If this movie comes to a theater in your town, I recommend it. It would probably play the best in towns like Ann Arbor, certain areas of Houston, and certainly New York City, especially the Greenwich Village area.

I AM GETTING BACK into doing volunteer work again. It's been a

(Continued on page 4)

bill

Tips for Holiday Entertaining

1. Do not underestimate the drinking capacity of your guests. Running out of booze will cause them to wonder if they are drinking too much or if you are a cheapskate host. (And you know what their answer will be!)
2. Invite only interesting or entertaining people. Those who recently have been operated on or have lost a loved one in a drive-by shooting will only make everyone else uncomfortable, not to mention the loss of appetite as a result of graphic descriptions.
3. Do not allow "double dipping." (Dipping twice with the same piece of food.) This will prevent the guy with the cold sore on his lip from spreading his own brand of holiday cheer.
4. Conversation about religion or politics should be avoided. That is, until it's time to do the dishes. Then only the ones who are still sober will offer to help, while the drunk ones decide who's really trashing the country: the Democrats, the Republicans, the Conservative Christians or the flaming liberals.



◆ Keeping the Family Informed! ◆

(Continued from page 3)

while since I was last involved in it, the tutoring thing with the kid(s) at Boy's Town of the West. Again I will be involved with young people, 24 and under. I got in touch with a Rev. Ken, from MCC (Metropolitan Community Church), and after chatting for a while over the phone, he steered me toward this coffee shop he runs down in West Hollywood on Friday and Saturday nights. He provides there a "safe haven" for gay kids to hangout, instead of roaming the streets and the bars. He serves free soft drinks, lets them watch t.v., listen to music, and is available for counseling, if it is asked for. Some of the kids have been steered into going to the church, although the religious or spiritual aspect is not pushed at the coffee shop. All I will do, with other volunteers is hangout with whomever drops in, help serve the snacks, and be available for conversation.

FUNNY, FUNNY STUFF: If you enjoy jaw-aching, stomach-hurting, laughing-til-you-cry humor, then you **MUST** get a copy of Jeff Foxworthy's "You Might Be a Redneck If..." album. He's from Texas, and even though his current t.v. show is not very funny to me, this comedy album is! His stories of being a "good 'ol boy" will have you in stitches. I played it at a party this summer and we all just sat there and howled. Greg, you especially would enjoy it, considering you're a Texan.

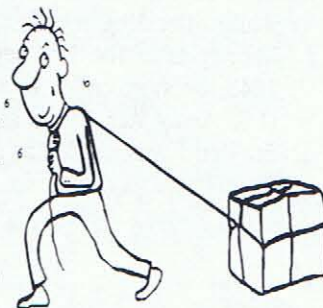
A sample from it: "If your father walks with you to school because he's in the same grade as you, you might be a redneck. If you go to a family reunion to meet girls, you might be a redneck. If going to the bathroom at night involves a flashlight and a pair of shoes, you might be a redneck. And if seeing a sign warning you to 'say *No to crack*' reminds you to pull up your jeans, you might be a redneck." Funny, funny stuff.

Santa to Pass This Year

It has been decided that this Christmas, there will be no gift exchange. (The U.S. Post Office thanks you!) Instead of drawing names at Thanksgiving, then wondering what the heck that person whose name we drew wants or needs for Christmas, the feeling is that we can *experiment* this year and have none of that nonsense. I mean, c'mon, what feeling do you associate with a check in the mail from a family member? Not the same as we all remember as we used to tear through carefully wrapped boxes, in hope that Santa did get our wish list. And that shirt or sweater—that ol' standby gift—to add to the others we received from well-meaning people. (Just think, the landfills will be smaller than usual this year!) I say, "Okay, I can support this." Besides, nothing on my Christmas wish list costs under \$100!

Tidbits from Texas

It seems that the matter of happiness has become a subject of much thought as of late, so I thought that I would broach it with my own input. Like seemingly many others in this family, I have been concerned with trying to find out what would make me happy, and what exactly is happiness. Trying to define this term is similar to trying on pants—it fits everyone differently. In other words, what makes me happy might bore someone else to tears. So, I figured that you cannot define happiness in a way agreeable to everyone. Or can we? After a lot of thought, my conclusion is this: happiness is being content with who you are, where you are, and with what you have. That means that you cannot continue to chase after the elusive "bigger and better" in this life, for this is a pursuit that will never end. But this does not mean that to improve one's life, however, is a goal not to be attempted. Some people are never content with what they have, or who they are, and they remain miserable, chasing after a dream never able to be realized. One other thing, those who have a strong faith in God usually are more content with themselves and their lives than those who continue to search for the reason of their existence alone. Note that my definition of happiness leaves a lot of room for personalization in everyone's own lives, and that's the way it should be, because we get our kicks in different ways, everyone finds happiness in their own way. The key to it all is to figure out if we are what we want to be, and have what we want to have. Remember that a strong relationship with Christ can only help.



(Continued on page 5)

We enjoyed the visit of Lynn and Woody so much last month, and I was so happy that the kids got to spend some quality time with their aunt and uncle from New Jersey. They not only got to spend some time with us and the kids, but we were able to do some fun things, too. We took in a 3-D IMAX movie down in Galveston, after a nice lunch in a restaurant above the gulf on a sunny day. The weather was superb, with the rain holding off until the day they were to leave. Lynn carved a pumpkin with the help of Stefanie, which we put on the front porch with a light inside it. Arianna cried and cried the day they left, and even continued to say that Aunt Lynn was coming over this day on a daily basis. All of us can hardly wait for the next visit with them!

We will have most of the month of December without the help of our girls from El Salvador. They have air fare to go back home for Christmas, so the house will be ours for the last three weeks of the month. Like last year, I am requesting that no gifts be sent to myself or Frinee by anyone, for the same reasons as before. This holiday can become very expensive, and I do not wish for anyone to over-extend themselves for our sakes. Anyway, Happy Holidays from this part of the country!! We all will be keeping everyone in the family in our thoughts!

from your brother with love,
Greg

BACK HOME..... WITH DAD

As the holiday season approaches (I consider Thanksgiving and Christmas holy because we celebrate God's gift to us) I am just about acclimated to the cold weather. The screens are down allowing a clear view of nature, the urgency of tending the little garden is over, and the new smaller birdfeeder is up and very popular with our feathered friends. So far it is completely squirrel-proof. How'd I do that? I stretched a stout cord from the aluminum pole on which I had previously mounted the old feeder to the edge of the wall extended from the side of the front porch. Midway there on hangs the new feeder. So far the squirrels come, look longingly up at the potential meal but have to settle for the seeds dropped by the birds from the feeder about 2 feet above the edge. May I claim victory yet?

Recently, as VJ Day and the end of World War II was celebrated, it brought to mind my own experiences of those early days of the 1940's. I had enlisted in the Reserve Corps while attending my first year at the University of Detroit. Shortly after the 2nd semester was underway in March of 1943, we were called to active duty and I was assigned to the U.S. Army Air Corps as it was known as back then. They decided I was needed as an airplane mechanic, so after some brief basic training in Florida, I was sent to Gulfport, Mississippi, to the Airplane and Engine School. Next, at Long Beach, California, at the Douglas plant, I learned about caring for the B-17 bombers. After a brief furlough home I went to

Seattle to the Boeing plant to learn about the B-29 Superfortress bombers. From there I was sent to Salina, Kansas, where they were forming B-29 squadrons for the eventual missions of winning back the land and islands Japan had invaded and taken over, and on to bombing Japan itself, 1600 miles away from the Island of Saipan, where I was sent. We arrived via troop ship shortly after the Marines had secured the island after bitter fighting. An air field was quickly built and soon B-29s were flying in and we were getting them ready for action. Iwo Jima, an island base on the way to Japan, had to be invaded and conquered first and then Japan began feeling the firsthand effects of the war. Even though Tokyo and many other major industrial cities of Japan were severely and thoroughly damaged, the Japanese Emperor and war generals refused to stop the fighting. As a last resort, a B-29 took off from Tinian, across the narrow strait from Saipan, and delivered the world's first atom bomb on Hiroshima. This had to be repeated on Nagasaki before the Japanese leaders were convinced to surrender.

We lost B-29s but none to which our ground crew was assigned. Early on Saipan was attacked by Japanese planes and we lost a few B-29s on the ground. Fortunately I was not on the "line" during these attacks, although I saw Jap planes fly in low over the coastline very close to our camp as they headed for our airfield.

The Lord was very good to me then and all my life. The older I get the more I realize how important it is to do as God wills and that His way is the only way to peace. Will the world ever catch on? Christmas time is an excellent opportunity to recall God's greatest gift to mankind. Jesus came to turn souls back to God; to change an "eye for an eye" attitude and philosophy to one of forgiveness and love for one another as God loved each of us. Mother and I pray every day for each of you, that through Christ, you will find hope and love and strength to endure your trials in this life and obtain eternal happiness in the next.

May you all have a very HAPPY AND HOLY CHRISTMAS!



"This is

the true joy of life—

being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one;

being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap;

being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

George Bernard Shaw

California Breeze

Michael P. Schneider
13539 Wyandotte St.
Van Nuys, CA 91405



John & Melissa Schneider
3266 Rosedale
Ann Arbor, MI 48108